

INSPECTION REPORT

WHITEHALL JUNIOR COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Walsall, West Midlands

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104162

Headteacher: Mr A White

Reporting inspector: Mrs S E Hall
21750

Dates of inspection: 9th – 12th June 2003

Inspection number: 246355

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Delves Road Walsall West Midlands
Postcode:	WS1 3JY
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr K Draper
Date of previous inspection:	19 th January 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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21750	Mrs S E Hall	Registered inspector	Art and design Design and technology	The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well pupils are taught. How well the school is led and managed. What the school could do to improve further.
9333	Mr K Schofield	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes and values. How well the school cares for its pupils. How well the school works in partnership with parents.
28686	Mrs E Walker	Team inspector	English Religious education	
19765	Mrs P Shannon	Team inspector	Geography History	How good the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils are.
11901	Mr W Lowe	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education Special educational needs	
26405	Mrs C Bond	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Music	
3751	Mrs T Cotton	Team inspector	Equal opportunities English as an additional language	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Whitehall Junior Community School is in Walsall in the West Midlands. The school was relocated to a new site in 1989 and is designated as a community school. Currently there are 284 pupils aged from seven to eleven, making it larger than average. Last year 38 per cent of pupils were eligible for free school meals, which is above average. The proportion of pupils whose mother tongue is not English is 59 per cent, which is very high. Most of these pupils are of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. There are 30 pupils targeted for extra help with learning English, eight of whom are at the early stages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is 19 per cent, about average; eight of these pupils have formal statements of need, which is above average. There is little pupil mobility. Socio-economic circumstances are below average and the school is part of the Excellence in Cities initiative. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school at age seven is well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a school that welcomes and includes all pupils, which provides a satisfactory standard of education and has strengths in the pastoral care provided for pupils. Overall standards are low but the pupils make satisfactory progress. Teaching is satisfactory, as is the quality of leadership. Financial management is efficient and day-to-day organisation is smooth. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils have good attitudes to school, and their behaviour is very good.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The pastoral care of pupils is good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The support for pupils at the early stages of learning English is good.
- Parents have very positive views of the school.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics and science.
- The quality of teaching and learning.
- Procedures to assess the progress pupils make and the use of this information to inform future teaching.
- The monitoring of the school's own performance.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress, including in the six main areas identified in the previous inspection of 1998. There has been good improvement in raising standards in information and communication technology (ICT) by improving resources and teachers' knowledge, so pupils' skills support work in other areas of the curriculum. There has been satisfactory improvement in securing a long-term development plan with an effective financial forecast, although monitoring lacks rigour. The staff and the governing body are now more involved in prioritising areas in school planning and improving the effectiveness of these plans. Statutory requirements are now met with regard to information provided by the school. There is a somewhat better level of challenge for higher attaining pupils but further improvement is still needed in developing pupils' independent study. There has been unsatisfactory improvement in raising standards in speaking and listening and this remains a key issue for improvement. Although overall standards are often low, the quality of teaching, leadership and management remains satisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
lowest five per cent	E*

Pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge that are well below average and their speaking skills are very limited. Information shows that when the pupils in this and last year's Year 6 took national tests in Year 2 the standards achieved were well below average and in the lowest five per cent of schools in the country in reading and mathematics. In the 2002 national tests pupils aged eleven achieved standards that, whilst above those achieved at the age of seven, were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. When standards are compared to those of schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals they were below average in English and science and well below average in mathematics. Current standards in English are below average and those in mathematics and science are well below average.

Over time, standards have been low, especially in mathematics. However, there have been some recent improvements in English, mainly because the school has prioritised the development of writing. Assessment information shows that the school is adding value to pupils' early achievements and the large majority make at least satisfactory progress. School targets for 2003 are well below national averages and lower than last year, but appropriate. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily although problem solving skills are weak.

Standards in ICT, religious education, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education are average. This is often because pupils make better progress when involved in practical tasks than when sitting and listening. They enjoy activities when they have to do something, have more positive attitudes and try harder. Most pupils' learning is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and this is often good in activities when working with additional support staff. The relatively small numbers of higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils speaking English as an additional language make satisfactory overall progress although those at the early stages of learning English, who receive additional teaching support in small groups, make good progress. There is no significant overall difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good overall. Pupils have positive attitudes to school but many are very quiet and contribute little to discussions and lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well, are courteous and polite, and work and play well together.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils take on responsibilities happily and there are very good relationships, although there are few opportunities for them to show initiative and carry out lines of investigation.

Attendance	Below average. Whilst attendance is improving and most pupils arrive punctually and attend school regularly, a minority do not. Several families take extended holidays in term time, which disrupts learning.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. A strength is in the effective management of the pupils, which enables them to feel secure and happy. Teachers have caring relationships with pupils, who are encouraged to concentrate and behave well. All other aspects of teaching, including teachers' subject knowledge and the ability to teach basic skills, are satisfactory. The teaching of English and mathematics is sound and this enables pupils to make reasonable progress in the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching in all other subjects is also satisfactory. However, in a considerable proportion of lessons, pupils are expected to sit and listen for too long and there are not enough opportunities for them to solve problems and carry out investigations and research. Teachers' planning and what they expect of pupils are satisfactory, although more could be expected of pupils both in terms of how much they contribute to discussions and in the challenge in some tasks. Teachers meet the needs of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language, in a suitable manner. The progress of pupils at an early stage of learning English is good because of the support they receive.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school has a broad and reasonably balanced curriculum, which reflects national guidelines and meets statutory requirements. Extra-curricular provision is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The identification of the particular needs of these pupils is effective. The support provided is good and enables them to make sound progress towards the targets identified for them.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The large numbers of pupils speaking English as an additional language are supported satisfactorily in lessons. The extra support for those at the early stages of learning English is good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. Pupils are helped to develop a set of values and beliefs, an ability to distinguish right from wrong and an understanding of others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The pastoral care of pupils is good and the work of the learning mentor is effective in supporting groups of pupils. Procedures to assess the progress pupils make are unsatisfactory, as is the use of this information to inform future planning.

Parents have very positive views of the school but, despite the efforts of the staff, few parents choose to play an active part in supporting the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy have complementary skills and manage the school effectively. However, school organisation, development planning and some procedures lack clarity and rigour in pursuing the best course of action to raise standards further. The roles of subject co-ordinators are under-developed in identifying and pursuing areas for improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The chair of governors is shrewd and provides good leadership. Other governors are supportive and keen to develop their first-hand knowledge of the school in order to help the school move forward.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Whilst the school has introduced procedures to monitor and evaluate its work, they are not very extensive, do not sufficiently involve subject co-ordinators and lack the necessary clarity and rigour to identify areas for development.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Financial resources including additional grants are used appropriately, with funds to develop the role of the learning mentor being used well. The school looks for value and quality in choosing goods and services. There is a good number of support staff. Accommodation is satisfactory overall although the open plan design allows noise to intrude into other classes and affects pupils' concentration. Resources are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best. • Children like school. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More consistency in the use of homework. • The school working more closely with parents. • More information about how their children are getting on.

Inspectors agree that pupils like school and that all other areas identified by parents are satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 The pupils' attainment when they enter the school, mostly from the local infant school which most pupils attend, is well below average as shown in the National Curriculum tests taken at the age of seven. This information shows that on entry to the juniors attainment has been consistently well below the national average in reading and usually so in writing and mathematics over a period of several years. There is relatively little mobility in and out of the local area. When the pupils in last year's Year 6 group and this year's group entered the school at seven their attainment was in the lowest five per cent of schools in the country in reading and mathematics. Pupils often have very limited speaking skills, which affect the progress they make in many subjects.

2 In the last two years in Year 6 there has been a considerable proportion of pupils who have special educational needs. The school prides itself on being a welcoming and fully inclusive school and on how it successfully integrates pupils with a range of learning needs. A large proportion of the pupils have English as an additional language and, whilst many of these pupils speak English well, some are less confident and are reluctant to contribute to discussions.

3 In the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils aged eleven the standards were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. When standards are compared to those schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals, attainment was below average in English and science and well below average in mathematics. In comparison to schools in similar contexts, the progress that many pupils have made, since the end of their time in the infant school, has been well below average. Standards in mathematics have been consistently below those in other subjects.

4 National Curriculum test data for pupils aged eleven indicate that over several years there has been only slow progress in raising standards in English, mathematics and science. In 2002 the pupils' average point score fell from the previous year in each of these subjects. The gap between what pupils achieve here and what is achieved nationally has remained for some time and in some areas appears to have widened since the last inspection.

5 However, in the last two years the school has made strides in analysing test data to track the achievements of pupils in both national and other tests. This information shows that whilst attainment is still low the school is adding value to what the pupils know and can do. Analysis of data for 2001 and 2002 shows improvement in value added performance of all children who arrived in school at Level 2 or above in mathematics and writing. For instance, 60 per cent of the pupils who entered the school having achieved Level 2c in national tests at seven achieved Level 4 at the age of eleven, with improvement above the national average. The school also identifies that in 2002 pupils who entered the school having achieved Level 2a in reading tests at the age of seven all achieved either at least the expected gains of two levels and several achieved the higher levels. Similarly 95 per cent of those who entered at the lower Level 1 achieved either Level 3 or 4, indicating considerable progress.

6 Current standards in English are below average and those in mathematics and science are well below average. Pupils' low levels of communication skills, particularly in speaking, affect their attainment in all areas of learning. While pupils are currently making

satisfactory progress and this is sometimes good within the lessons observed, the progress they have made over time has been quite slow which means the school is still not achieving well compared to most other schools. Standards are not as high as they appeared in the previous inspection, when judgements were that standards in English, mathematics and science were average. However, these judgements were not subsequently borne out by the National Curriculum tests in mathematics and science. Results were broadly in line with the national average in English.

7 As a result of recent improvements in writing, pupils currently make satisfactory progress overall in English and sometimes this is good. The school has implemented the National Literacy Strategy appropriately and this work is having a positive impact upon learning. There are significant weaknesses in pupils' speaking skills. This is an important area for development that was highlighted in the previous inspection and which the school has not done enough to address. Not enough is done in day-to-day activities to ensure that all pupils take part in discussions either by being required to share their ideas and thoughts, working with talking partners, in group activities or in drama or role-play tasks.

8 Standards in mathematics and science are currently well below average. The school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy appropriately and this is having a positive effect in mathematics. However, the programme has not been monitored sufficiently to ensure that all teaching provides the necessary rigour and challenge to move the pupils' mathematical thinking forward enough. There are weaknesses in the speed and depth of pupils' understanding of mental calculations. The main weakness is that the school has not worked hard enough to improve the opportunities for problem solving and investigative learning in mathematics and science and this has had a major impact on restricting pupils' learning.

9 Standards in all other subjects are average. This is predominantly because pupils make better progress in practical learning activities than when they are required to sit and listen to their teachers. Standards in ICT, religious education, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education are broadly average at the end of Year 6. Standards in ICT have improved considerably since the introduction of a suite for the specific teaching of computer skills.

10 The quality of pupils' learning and achievement is satisfactory overall. Most pupils make appropriate gains in their learning and a minority make good progress. Most pupils achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their capabilities. Those pupils who receive additional support either in school or at home often make good progress. However, the gaps in pupils' learning over time are often considerable and some pupils, of all abilities, do not consistently achieve as well as they could because the quality of teaching does not challenge them sufficiently.

11 Pupils with special educational needs of all kinds make satisfactory overall progress in relation to their prior learning and abilities. There is no evidence to suggest that their general progress is different from that of their peers. They work hard in lessons whilst moving towards the targets set out in their individual education plans.

12 The school has recently begun to identify a small group of pupils as gifted and talented in particular areas of learning and is beginning to use extension materials to help provide challenge for them to achieve well. However, the attainment of many of these pupils is still relatively modest in comparison to other schools and this work is at the early stage and has not yet had time to raise standards.

13 There is a targeted group of 30 pupils from Years 3, 4, and 5 taken from the wider whole school number of 184 pupils who have English as an additional language. Within the targeted group, eight pupils are identified as at the early stages of learning English. The majority of pupils are from Pakistani and Bangladeshi minority ethnic groups. A significant number of pupils have difficulty with the concepts of language and mathematics. When receiving support pupils have greater opportunity to contribute in a small group situation and, because their contributions are valued, gain in confidence and begin to take a more active role in their learning. However, although working at steps well above the early stages of English acquisition, pupils sometimes speak too quickly and with unclear diction.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14 Pupils' behaviour and relationships are strengths of the school. Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They respond particularly well to the school's emphasis on the need for a calm and purposeful working environment. During lessons, the great majority of pupils respond positively. The good attitudes and willingness to achieve are also evident in after-school clubs. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to maintain the very good relationships, and behaviour has become a strength. Pupils' relationships and behaviour are a credit to the work of their parents and teachers. Almost all parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that their children like school. Parents spoken to outside the school confirmed this view. Some parents travel a great distance to bring their children to the school because they believe in the values it promotes.

15 In most lessons, pupils work well in groups and value the contributions made by their classmates. They readily exchange ideas and share materials happily. In all subjects, the pupils respond positively when working on well-planned tasks. From the start of the school day, the great majority of pupils follow instructions carefully and settle to work quickly. Good levels of concentration are evident and pupils persevere enthusiastically with tasks that they find challenging, especially when there is a practical element to their learning. However, some pupils struggle to maintain this interest and concentration when required to sit and listen for lengthy periods.

16 Behaviour is very good. Pupils are very polite and friendly. They give visitors a cheery greeting and generally have confidence in engaging in constructive conversation. Staff members, including non-teaching personnel, know each individual very well and provide a good level of pastoral care, although there are some minor concerns over mealtime arrangements and during the mid-day break. Pupils are generally confident to speak to adults about personal issues or to share any worries they have. For the relatively small number of pupils who have difficulty in maintaining good behaviour, the school's learning mentor has been especially successful in providing support that has resulted in behavioural improvement. Bullying is not a significant problem in the school, although all members of staff are continually vigilant and deal with any rare incidents quickly and effectively. There are suitable activities to support the personal, social and health education programme, which supports behaviour well.

17 As pupils progress through the school, they develop a very good level of self-discipline. For example, pupils take ownership of their own behaviour through the 'Playground Pals' scheme. Older pupils give guidance by acting as mentors for their colleagues. Pupils demonstrate that they understand the impact that their actions have on others. They take very good care of the building, property and resources.

18 Pupils with special educational needs relate very well to their classmates and adults. For example, a pupil who often finds it difficult to behave was overheard addressing his teacher, in a one-to-one conversation, as 'Mrs Angel'. The very good relationships give

pupils confidence to join in all school activities and explore new areas of their learning. The school actively fosters positive attitudes in its pupils to those members of its community who have special needs of any kind.

19 Pupils speaking English as an additional language are keen to learn and boys and girls collaborate well, and share their ideas. This was evident in a Year 5 lesson, when pupils drew up their own friendship contracts, suggesting the importance of trust, kindness and loyalty. The pupils in this group are particularly well behaved and show great enthusiasm in class. At play, others accept them in a most friendly way, reflecting the inclusive way of life in the school.

20 Attendance rates are beginning to rise but currently are below the national average and this has an adverse effect on teaching and learning. The school recognises the problem. Since the last report, an improvement has been made but the school needs greater co-operation from parents to eliminate the number of unauthorised absences and reduce the holidays taken in term time. With these aims, the school's learning mentor has recently been successful in enhancing communication with parents.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, the same as the findings of the previous inspection. In the 66 lessons observed, teaching was very good in almost 11 per cent, good in 36 per cent, satisfactory in 50 per cent and unsatisfactory in three per cent. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all subjects. Whilst teaching is sound overall there is sometimes a lack of sparkle and imagination in teaching and this does little to make learning exciting and meaningful. There is rarely a 'buzz' created in lessons and some pupils at times appear passive and indifferent learners. Occasionally staff, including those in senior roles, are too accepting of mediocre teaching.

22 The most consistent strength in the quality of teaching is the good management of pupils. Sometimes, and especially in Year 4, this is excellent. The warmth shown by some teachers, especially when supporting pupils with special educational needs, is a credit to them and the school. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 4 numeracy activity where pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties were persuaded to do the work planned. The teacher used well-directed praise to raise their self-esteem, which in turn improved their learning. Most staff, and particularly those who are enthusiastic in their teaching style, have good relationships with pupils so that many are keen to please their teachers, as seen in Year 6 when pupils become 'star of the day'.

23 Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach are satisfactory. All teachers teach English and mathematics skills at least adequately and they follow the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies appropriately. This allows pupils to develop the ability to communicate and calculate and make satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy. Staff knowledge of teaching the skills of ICT, whilst variable, is satisfactory overall and has improved since the previous inspection. However, not enough use is made of classroom computers to assist learning in day-to-day learning activities across the curriculum.

24 The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. Reading skills are developed quite well through shared reading activities as part of literacy lessons, where most pupils' learning is satisfactory. In addition some pupils receive additional support to develop reading skills and this boosts the progress they make. The skills of writing are taught reasonably well, having been a focus for improvement across the school. However, the teaching of speaking skills is much more limited and a key issue for improvement. Teachers do not do enough to ensure

pupils learn how to speak to an audience by practising these skills on a regular enough basis to develop a widening vocabulary relevant to all subjects. Basic numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily but the school has not done enough to teach pupils investigative and problem-solving skills.

25 Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all lessons and taught and supported well. The good relationships that exist between staff and pupils and the effectiveness of classroom support have a positive effect on pupils' learning. The individual education plans provided by the school contain clear, concise and attainable targets and are used well by teachers to plan work for their pupils with special needs. The school has worked hard to try to ensure that, although pupils with special needs receive the support they need, they are given the opportunity to develop a sense of independence in the classroom.

26 Provision within the targeted groups for pupils with English as an additional language is good, and so is the progress that these pupils make. This is because the school has clear assessment procedures for identifying pupils who need extra help with developing their skills in English. This information is used well to focus provision for 30 pupils, eight of whom are at the early stages of English acquisition, from Years 3, 4 and 5. Presently, three part-time teachers and one bilingual learning assistant support pupils at a more individual level in small groups outside mainstream classes. Provision is for morning sessions only and work is planned with class teachers and linked to lessons in literacy and numeracy.

27 The school has begun to identify the needs of pupils identified as being gifted and talented and subject co-ordinators have organised materials within each subject to support the teaching of these pupils. However, the sample of pupils' recent work does not indicate that much of this work is undertaken and these pupils often make only satisfactory progress.

28 Teachers' planning is satisfactory overall. Staff plan quite well in year group teams to ensure activities are very similar for all three parallel classes within the year group. This supports equality of access and opportunity well. Most staff identify the aims of lessons appropriately and share these with pupils so that they know what they are to focus upon, although the aims of some lessons are rather vague and imprecise. The planning of many lessons identifies different, but linked, tasks for pupils of different abilities.

29 The expectations the teachers have of pupils are satisfactory overall but variable. Where teaching is good, expectations of both behaviour and of what pupils can achieve are high. But, on too many occasions, even in groups set by ability, not enough is consistently expected of pupils of all levels of ability and this slows the pupils' learning. This is largely because not enough use is made of formal and informal assessment information when planning activities for a class or groups of pupils. This impacts upon the progress made by higher, average and lower attaining pupils. In some lessons, and as seen in the sample of recent work, pupils are not expected to work hard enough to overcome the gaps in their learning.

30 The methods teachers use to organise their lessons are satisfactory overall, with some good features. Most teachers explain things well so that pupils build up their learning effectively. Teachers group pupils by ability for some activities, and setting arrangements are becoming effective in English and mathematics in the promotion of higher standards. Where teaching is effective, teachers make good use of questions to encourage pupils to identify what they think, but overall this practice lacks consistency and not enough use is made of directed questions to involve pupils who offer little or nothing in such discussions.

31 Pupils particularly enjoy practical activities. These were seen to very good effect in a design and technology session in Year 4 where pupils made more and more complex pivot and lever arrangements to produce a mechanism for a book with moving parts. However, practical activities, investigations and problem-solving activities are not a big enough part of many lessons and this affects pupils' learning. On too many occasions staff simply explain things to pupils, or occasionally demonstrate an activity, and not enough is done to ensure that pupils learn from first-hand experiences.

32 There are many challenges for staff in organising activities within open-plan areas of the school where noise can be, and is, a major factor that limits the type of activities planned by teachers. Some staff are reluctant to teach lessons that may be noisy, because of the effect on other classes. Others seem inured to the issue of noise which is extremely intrusive in many lessons and is an issue for the school to manage.

33 The use of time, support staff and resources is satisfactory overall, but is very variable. Most teachers are well organised and have resources readily to hand. The pace of most lessons is appropriate but occasionally it is too slow. Where time is used well and time targets are set for completion of tasks, the pace and productivity are good. Where pupils spend too long listening to teachers, their concentration dips. For instance, in a Year 5 literacy lesson, time was not used to good effect when the teacher talked for too long and did not allow enough time for the pupils to get onto the main task, which affected pupils' learning. The use of support staff is reasonable. In the best instances staff of high quality make a considerable impact upon lessons; they work closely with teachers and offer high levels of support to the pupils.

34 The quality and use of ongoing assessment are satisfactory, with some areas of strength and others in need of improvement. Almost all teachers offer good verbal feedback to pupils and in some cases this is very effective in raising pupils' self-esteem. This is seen to particular effect in Year 4 in the warm and caring relationships between some staff and pupils with behavioural difficulties. This is epitomised where at least one pupil calls his teacher 'Mrs Angel' because of the care she has shown him and his family. Staff generally move around the class well and offer guidance to pupils on how to improve. The marking of pupils' work is, however, very variable and does not do enough to support learning. The best examples clearly indicate to pupils how to improve their work, whilst on other occasions marking is cursory. The use of both formal and informal assessment data to inform the planning of lessons is unsatisfactory overall and a key issue for school improvement.

35 The use of homework is satisfactory although a considerable proportion of parents identified some concerns in the parents' questionnaires and noted that this is inconsistent. Most staff set homework on a reasonable basis in English and mathematics but less effectively in other subjects. However, even when homework is set, some pupils do not complete this, which makes the use of homework to support learning difficult to manage.

36 The learning of the majority of pupils is satisfactory overall and they make sound progress as they move through the school. Where targeted support is available pupils learn well. In lessons where teaching is good, pupils sometimes make good progress. Whilst there is some monitoring and evaluation of teaching this is not as extensive as often seen and has not been effective enough in helping raise the quality of teaching in order to improve learning.

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

37 As at the time of the previous inspection, the quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory overall. Planning includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, social and health education. It is generally broad and relevant to the pupils' interests, meeting the statutory requirements for the curriculum and collective worship. Additional features include a range of initiatives such as setting in Year 6 for literacy and extended writing sessions, together with setting in all year groups for mathematics. The time allocated for each subject is appropriate to deliver the curriculum. However, scrutiny of pupils' work shows that some aspects of the curriculum have not been covered in sufficient depth in some classes of older pupils.

38 The school has made good progress with the key issue from the previous inspection related to the use of ICT. As a result ICT now regularly supports other areas of the curriculum. There has been less progress with the other key issue identified, in provision for pupils' speaking and listening skills. Strategies in place have not enabled standards to rise sufficiently. There are not enough planned opportunities for all pupils to develop their confidence in speaking.

39 Subjects are suitably planned. The use of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority materials and published schemes of work ensures appropriate coverage and progression. Planning is good for literacy, numeracy, ICT and religious education. It is satisfactory for all other subjects. There is provision for pupils who have aptitudes in music and sports and the school is further developing its support for more able pupils through its involvement in the Excellence in Cities initiative. The appointment of a learning mentor is proving effective in improving attendance and helping some pupils to access the curriculum more successfully.

40 There are appropriate strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills. The teachers are familiar with the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy, which are now firmly in place. Opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects are satisfactory overall. However, more guidance is needed on how to support pupils' speaking and listening skills and the use of technical vocabulary in subjects. Further opportunities are needed for pupils to write imaginatively and for problem-solving and investigative activities in mathematics and science.

41 Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Their needs are identified and assessed quickly and help is given through group and individual work. Some of their work is focused on the targets outlined in their individual education plans and the rest is well planned to meet their particular needs. Individual education plans are written in a way that makes them easily comprehensible to both parents and staff and contain short-term targets, teaching strategies and review dates. The school is developing its curricular provision for those pupils it has identified as gifted and talented.

42 The school has an appropriate policy to support race equality. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well integrated into the classes and are occasionally withdrawn for individual or group support where their specific needs are best met in this way. They follow the same curriculum as other pupils and are supported by bilingual assistants or additional teachers. Lessons focus well on both subject language and content and there is sound provision overall for the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, within the planned curriculum, there are missed opportunities to develop and improve speaking skills through role-play and drama. The range of provision, including withdrawal for small group teaching and support in classrooms, contributes effectively to the progress which pupils make. However, targeted support is part-time and this means that

pupils return to work in mainstream classes in the afternoon. Their access to the curriculum in such sessions needs evaluating along with the adequacy of adult support.

43 The school enriches pupils' learning experiences well through a good range of extra-curricular activities. There is a strong tradition of sporting opportunities and good provision for musically able pupils. The clubs for sports are well attended and make positive contributions to the pupils' physical development. The governing body has demonstrated the value it places on enriching the curriculum. For example, the school subsidises visits and visitors in each year group. Pupils comment on how much they enjoy these experiences. These cover most subjects, for example, an annual visit to a Shakespeare play, a visit to a Hindu temple, a visit to a local leather museum and other places of historical interest, and a drum and dance workshop. These extend pupils' appreciation of various subjects and add excitement and interest. Older pupils have a residential experience in Snowdonia, which supports their social development well and there is an annual musical cultural exchange to France.

44 The school's provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. The co-ordinator has developed a well thought out scheme of work, which covers a range of relevant and interesting topics. Time is allocated each week providing pupils with opportunities to discuss a range of issues that includes health education, and local, world and environmental events. These discussions and debates support pupils' speaking and listening skills. Whilst pupils' views are valued in these class sessions there is currently no School Council for pupils to make suggestions. Appropriate attention is paid to sex education for older children through a ten-week programme, which includes reference to drug misuse and healthy lifestyles.

45 The community contributes to the pupils' learning through a range of visitors to school. The local university also provides swimming facilities for pupils, and the school provides placements for a number of students. The school has arrangements in place that help pupils transfer smoothly through each stage of their education. For example, the school is involved in a local project concerned with school transfer arrangements. Pupils from the school have been used in the local authority's transfer document 'Movin' on up!' There is regular liaison with the local infant school and good links with local secondary schools. From discussion with pupils they feel well prepared for transfer to secondary schools.

46 Overall, the provision for the spiritual, moral social and cultural development of the pupils is very good: this is an improvement since the previous inspection. There are many and varied opportunities within the curriculum to promote moments of reflection, whether through visual stimulation using photographs of high quality to encourage pupils to write a poem; through sharing the musical experiences of the school orchestra; appreciating the form of a movement in physical education; or considering how they would console a grieving person as part of a religious education lesson. Pupils respond well to the spoken word and appreciate sharing time together in assemblies, which give time to reflect to consider the needs of others. In their writing about a child in a book they are reading who appears to be able to predict the future, pupils in Year 6 reflect very carefully, and are aware of and write sensitively about the emotions and feelings of the child. They indicate that whatever gifts she has "they would have been given by God".

47 The moral development of the pupils is very good and parents value the high expectations of behaviour the school places on their children. Older pupils understand and know right from wrong and younger pupils follow the good role models they present. Pupils recognise and celebrate both their own and others' achievements. The good behaviour reflects the strong emphasis the school places on caring about others. Playground Pals and sharing equipment are all part of the caring attitudes which pupils display in the playground

when they support each other very well in their games. Pupils are very polite, treating each other with respect and apologising without prompting when they feel they have shown an uncaring attitude.

48 Pupils are encouraged to use their initiative and carry out tasks, which help in the smooth running of lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make a significant contribution to activities and they play a full part in the life of the school. Teachers are effective in developing positive relationships between themselves and their pupils by valuing their efforts and responses. Teachers encourage pupils to listen to each other and value individual contributions. Pupils work well together in lessons and support each other very well so that they are mature and confident by the time they leave the school.

49 The provision for pupils' cultural development is now very good. Pupils have a good awareness of their own heritage. Pupils are regularly taught about and use discussions to explore other major world faiths in their religious education lessons. The good use of a wide range of artefacts helps to extend their understanding of the traditions of other beliefs. The school goes to considerable lengths to make sure the pupils have good access to a wide range of different arts and cultures by bringing specialist groups and individuals to perform at the school. The pupils are exposed to other cultures through their work in religious education and English and music. Pupils experience a range of visits including residential visits to Wales and France. These links are being extended so that pupils can further these relationships through various areas of the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

50 The pastoral care of pupils is good. All adults in the school are committed to ensuring that the pupils are provided with a safe and caring environment. In keeping with the findings of the previous inspection the school continues to provide a caring environment. There are good procedures for child protection and welfare. However, some aspects of educational and personal support are less effective and procedures for monitoring academic performance through assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.

51 Child protection procedures are well managed and teachers are clear about their responsibilities. Advanced training is planned for the deputy headteacher, who has specialist responsibility for child protection, and for the learning mentor. Five members of staff are trained in first aid ensuring that the school has good procedures in the event of accidents and emergencies. Health and safety reviews, together with risk assessments, are carried out both on and off the school site. Teachers are constantly active in promoting good safety procedures, and a member of the governing body supports the school with risk assessments. The school building and grounds are well cared for, with the interior maintained to a high standard.

52 Having recognised the need for improvement, the school's processes for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The school celebrates high attendance levels by presenting certificates to individual pupils as well as a weekly award for the best class attendance. Using the pupils' own initiative, the Playground Pals have introduced a scheme for rewarding the class with the best weekly attendance by participating in a special games session with the successful class. Notably, the learning mentor dedicates extensive attention to making contact with parents in the event of an unexplained absence. This activity has been particularly successful in reducing cases of unauthorised absence during recent months.

53 The school has established effective procedures for promoting the very good behaviour that is found at Whitehall Junior Community School. There are clear guidelines for dealing with any incidents of oppressive behaviour and the rare cases of bullying that occur. All pupils know that bullying will not be tolerated. Lunchtime supervisors and other members of staff are usually vigilant about care although on occasions there is a lack of consideration for the pupils. For instance, sometimes there is no vegetarian meal option for the pupils. They are required to pack up their lunch if they have not finished at the required time and some mid-day staff raise their voices to the pupils.

54 Pupils are generally confident in talking to adults about any problems they may have. Pupils are responsive to the consistent approach adopted by all adults, who have high expectations of behaviour. Pupils assist in the management of behaviour through the activities of the Playground Pals. The pupils themselves founded this proactive group of older pupils, who care for the welfare of all pupils. For the small number of pupils who find it difficult to behave well, the learning mentor organises group sessions as well as one-to-one counselling. Teachers report an impressive improvement in behaviour for pupils in this category.

55 Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are sound. The process is based on the caring ethos of the school and is supported with an effective personal, social and health education programme. Teachers know the pupils very well, and they work closely with classroom assistants to provide pupils with close support. For example, before the start of the school day, more than 20 pupils attend the Breakfast Club. Parents see the school as a caring community where staff are very approachable and pupils are helped to become mature and responsible. However, there are not many opportunities for pupils to show initiative by carrying out their own research and there is no School Council.

56 Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are very well supported. Teachers and other adults give these pupils positive encouragement to promote their self-esteem, so that they play a full part in all aspects of school life. The very good level of management of individual statements by the special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that the school fully complies with their provisions. There is also full compliance with the Special Needs Code of Practice and outside agencies are used effectively to provide support. Requests for statements are fully supported by the necessary documentation thanks in the main to the good level of record keeping maintained by the special educational needs co-ordinator.

57 The school's strong emphasis on pupils' social and moral development permeates every aspect of school life. Pupils are given many opportunities to help with the smooth running of the school day by helping in assemblies, during break times and in lessons. In particular, the choir and orchestra perform to a very high standard in some assemblies.

58 School assessment procedures and the use of this information are unsatisfactory overall and a key issue for further improvement. However, there are some aspects of assessment that are sound and an appropriate model for other subjects, including the developing analysis of the 'value added' information gained from national test results. National and optional tests are used each year throughout the school to check levels of learning against those of other local schools. Results of these are analysed to identify specific areas of curriculum need and to highlight concerns. Satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' learning have been developed in literacy and numeracy, where formal systems have been introduced since the last inspection to ensure that progress is carefully tracked. The school has useful information in English and mathematics to confirm that most pupils build up their learning in a satisfactory way as they progress through the school.

Teachers assess progress in daily lessons, based on learning targets for groups of pupils that reflect appropriate planned learning.

59 At present the procedures in almost all subjects other than English and mathematics are informal and are not sufficient to ensure that staff know what progress pupils are making in the full range of subjects. In other subjects, procedures for recording what pupils know and can do are generally unsatisfactory. A useful and manageable system is currently being trialled for ICT. In a range of other subjects, teachers note what pupils have achieved but are unclear about the level of learning. No clear records are kept that indicate progress from day to day or from year to year, particularly in the development of skills. Planning for future lessons is, then, based on how the curriculum is devised and not on the learning needs of the pupils in the class. Extensive and comprehensive assessment records are maintained for newly arrived pupils for whom English is a second language. These are effectively used to provide appropriate learning for those pupils.

60 The use of assessment information to inform future planning is unsatisfactory. At present the information available does not feed into teachers' planning sufficiently, particularly for the lower and middle achieving pupils. Targets are too broad, and analyses of results are not focused sharply enough on individual needs. Information is not used well enough to check if pupils are learning at a fast enough rate, or to note if they need extra help. Similar systems are being developed for assessment in science, but the results of monitoring reflect only the present position and have not yet been satisfactorily used to focus on improving teaching and learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

61 Parents' views of the school are very favourable and this is a strength of the school. Parents do not hesitate to tell visitors what the school stands for and the caring environment that it provides. Since the last inspection, the information in the school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents has been improved and now conforms to statutory requirements.

62 The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is satisfactory. Although the school welcomes parents and many strategies have been tried, it has been found difficult to persuade more parents to come into school in a supportive role. The school is well aware that few parents help in school. Only a few parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. However, at the meeting, parents expressed confidence in the school's ability to address any of their concerns and made it clear that the school provides a welcoming atmosphere. In the questionnaires, the large majority agree that they were well informed about how their child is getting on and that the school works closely with parents.

63 The school works hard to involve the parents of pupils with special educational needs and does what it can to draw upon their knowledge of the child's particular problems. It provides clear and accurate information on the progress of the pupils concerned by ensuring that parents are fully informed about the contents of individual education plans and statements. It is made clear to parents that they can approach the school at any time for information or advice, and consultation opportunities are provided on a regular basis. Leaflets dealing with special educational needs are provided in a number of languages.

64 The school provides parents with a range of satisfactory information. This includes the prospectus and the governors' annual report, both of which are well presented and informative. To keep them abreast of school activities, parents receive well-written newsletters. Parents also receive annual written reports on their child's progress and an opportunity to feed back their comments. The reports are clearly written, and comments on

English, mathematics and science provide parents with a good picture of their child's progress as well as the level of work undertaken. Comments on the work covered in other subjects do not always indicate how well their child is achieving. However, parents are given plenty of opportunities to discuss their child's progress during three consultation evenings each year. These sessions, which are very well attended, also offer parents the opportunity to discuss the setting of individual targets for improvement. Invitations to the parent-teacher meetings are translated for people with English as an additional language and interpreters assist during meetings

65 To help parents to understand educational changes and innovations in teaching methods, the school has organised curriculum events. The parents' meeting about language development was poorly attended but more parents came to the day and evening sessions on mathematics. The school plans to have more meetings for parents to explain what their children learn at school. The contribution of parents to their children's learning at school and at home is satisfactory and a home-school agreement is in place. Parents are well informed about the school's expectations when their children transfer from the infant school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

66 Both the leadership and management provided by the headteacher and key staff are satisfactory overall. The headteacher is highly regarded by the staff, governing body and parents. A key strength is the headteacher's ability to ensure staff feel valued and part of the team. As a result, morale is high and relationships both between the staff and between staff and pupils are very good. The headteacher is viewed by parents, staff and governors as accessible, caring and responsive.

67 The school is effective in achieving its agreed school aims. The staff and governors are successful in establishing a curriculum that includes and values all pupils' contributions, where pupils respect each other's ideas and beliefs. The school has created an atmosphere where pupils work well together, demonstrating very good behaviour and positive attitudes to work.

68 The headteacher's delegation of management responsibilities is satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy meet regularly for day-to-day organisational needs and for more strategic decision-making. They have complementary skills and manage the school effectively. The deputy head is experienced and well respected. She works closely with the headteacher and supports staff well. She has a leading role in helping the school to move forward and is introducing a model of self-evaluation. To this end she has led training sessions for staff and members of the governing body, which is helping them to move their roles forward.

69 The school has a large management team. It includes the year leaders as well as co-ordinators with responsibility for English, mathematics, science and ICT, together with any staff with responsibility points. The management team, whilst overly large, is effective in ensuring that year groups run smoothly. They organise meetings, support staff on a day-to-day basis and are an effective channel of communication. They have some involvement in strategic decision-making. They contribute to discussions related to the budget, staffing, standards and priorities for the school development plan. For example, they have successfully reviewed the role and responsibilities of support staff within classes. More use could be made of their expertise in supporting the school in a systematic way to analyse assessment data, improve the quality of teaching and raise standards.

70 The provision for special educational needs is managed and led well. Record keeping is good and the maintenance of statements is very good. There is generally good

communication between the governor with responsibility for special educational needs and the school's special educational needs co-ordinator. The special educational needs co-ordinator gives a very good level of support to all aspects of this area of the school's work.

71 The role of subject co-ordinators, while satisfactory overall, needs further development. Most manage their subjects appropriately. The co-ordinators' opportunities to influence their subjects have improved in some areas since the time of the previous inspection. They monitor planning and review the pupils' work and feed back their findings to the management team. However, currently their focus is not rigorous enough, as there are no established criteria on which they base their monitoring. The co-ordinators for English, mathematics, science and ICT have opportunities to observe teaching and learning. However, because the monitoring is linked to specific priorities in the school development plan, they do not monitor on a continuous and systematic basis. This limits their overall capacity to influence fully issues related to teaching and learning.

72 While the school has identified the need for other subject co-ordinators to observe teaching and learning, they have not yet had the opportunity to do so. This limits their ability to address any inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum. It also limits their opportunities to influence the quality of teaching and therefore the standards pupils are achieving. Therefore the procedures for the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are unsatisfactory.

73 There has been satisfactory overall progress with the weaknesses identified with the school development plan at the time of the previous inspection. All staff and governors are now involved in prioritising areas for development and the plan has an effective financial forecast, with monitoring procedures in place. However, these procedures lack rigour. The plan is used appropriately by staff and governors to check progress with the school's identified priorities. While the school has introduced procedures to monitor and evaluate its work, these have a narrow scope. The school lacks the necessary clarity and rigour to identify clearly areas for development and to take effective action. There are some systems for assessing the academic performance of different groups, but these are often informal and unsatisfactory. However, better use is now made of tracking to identify pupils who need specific support. For example, there is careful tracking of writing by groups of pupils with targets linked to areas of identified weaknesses.

74 Whilst there are many pastoral strengths in leadership, the headteacher has found it hard to establish clarity and rigour in strategic management through a determination to raise standards. School developments and improvement have sometimes taken too much account of staffing considerations rather than being based on how best to improve learning. There has been an acceptance of the *status quo* being good enough. This is shown in both major and minor examples of what could be improved as epitomised by lunchtime and other arrangements that are viewed as satisfactory. There is not enough determination to build excellence into what the school provides. While the school is identifying more accurately its strengths and diagnosing areas for development, there is not enough focus on identifying the key decisions that will have the most impact on driving standards up. For example, although the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills was previously a priority in the school development plan, the outcomes have not proved fully effective. Other priorities have been identified although this crucial area still needs further action in order that all pupils can effectively access the curriculum.

75 The governing body carries out its statutory duties in a satisfactory manner. The chair of governors is very experienced and shrewd. He not only ensures meetings are conducted efficiently but has also developed the role as a critical friend of the school well. Whilst other governors are less experienced, and some are new to their roles, with the

guidance of senior governors they are making good progress towards becoming an effective body. Their role in shaping the direction of the school is satisfactory. Most governors are developing links with specific areas of school life and the organisation and management of areas including the curriculum. However, some governors are not yet in a position to be able to be influential in shaping the direction of the school.

76 Governors have satisfactory involvement in school development planning. The previous inspection identified the need to involve them in prioritising areas for development in school planning to improve the effectiveness of these plans. This has improved. Governors have a sound understanding of the strengths of the school and are pleased with the quality of the pastoral care that has been maintained over a period of time. However, not all governors are as clear about the weaknesses of the school such as how the quality of teaching impacts upon the progress pupils make. Governors have shared the senior management team's sensitivity over monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching rather than pursuing a rigorous programme of monitoring to improve pupils' learning. To some degree governors tend to accept satisfactory provision rather than pursuing excellence.

77 The school's strategy for appraisal and performance management is securely in place. The headteacher and deputy are team leaders and a cycle of observations has been established. The targets are appropriately linked to priorities in the school development plan. Senior staff meet with non-teaching staff regularly and training needs identified are addressed. The school is committed to the support and training of all staff. This was recognised last year when the school achieved Investors in People status.

78 The school is managed well on a day-to-day basis. The school staff work well together as a community, and care for the pupils. The school office staff are welcoming and efficient in their responsibilities. The caretaker is flexible and accommodating. She keeps the school secure and liaises with the cleaning contractors and building contractors as necessary. She takes real pride in keeping the site clean and litter free.

79 Educational priorities are supported through sound financial planning. The management of the school is satisfactory and with some strengths. The headteacher and office manager have established clear and effective procedures to manage finances on both a day-to-day and long-term basis. Day-to-day management is smooth and efficient. Long-term financial management is sound. The school budget is set in an appropriate manner, taking account of the main priorities identified in the school development plan. The budget is carefully tracked to ensure that expenditure is within the appropriate parameters. Governors are appropriately involved in such work. There are suitable procedures to ensure best value is achieved in purchasing, although there is not enough clarity in evaluating expenditure and standards.

80 Historically the school budget has been fairly tight, although in more recent years monies have been received by the school towards the end of the financial year to be spent within the school year. In some cases this has led to a considerable carry-forward into the next financial year. However, funding has been earmarked and subsequently used for specific projects in an appropriate manner. For instance, the school has benefited considerably from the additional funds available through schemes including the Excellence in Cities project. These funds have been well used to develop the role of the learning mentor who is an effective addition to the support that the school provides for different groups of pupils. However, it is less clear how effective the use of other funding has been in raising standards as the monitoring and evaluation procedures in all aspects of school life lack rigour and clarity.

81 Overall funding is spent appropriately and resources are adequate. Staff organisation and expertise in morning sessions ensure the pupils' needs are being met. This is a similar picture to provision at the time of the previous inspection. Support teachers and assistants are well deployed and make a valuable contribution to classroom learning. They are effective, have been fully trained and are well briefed by teaching staff. Some use is made of teachers' strengths to plan and deliver specific subjects. There is a well thought out induction programme. Staff support each other well in year groups and new staff are quickly made to feel valued members of the team. There is a good team spirit amongst the staff.

82 The school is appropriately staffed, with a good number of support staff. The non-teaching staff provide effective support for different groups of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and any pupils who have behavioural difficulties. However, staffing levels for the large numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language are barely satisfactory, and provision to develop and provide for all the pupils who need additional support in developing their language skills is spread too thinly.

83 Learning resources are good overall and used well to support pupils' learning. There are very good resources for religious education, history and physical education. For all other subjects they are good, except for science, where they are satisfactory. There are good resources for supporting pupils with special needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language. Good use is made of clubs, visits and visitors to enhance the curriculum.

84 The accommodation is satisfactory overall but has weaknesses that impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The school has a spacious hall, a large music room and an attractive library. These are all used well to support the curriculum. The ICT suite is in regular use and consequently pupils' skills are improving. However, the room lacks sufficient ventilation, which can cause difficulties on hot days. While there has been extensive remodelling of four classrooms, with partitions constructed to improve soundproofing, more action is required for the other teaching areas. The school works hard to overcome these difficulties through its timetabling arrangements. However, the open-plan layout of most rooms, which allows noise to carry from one area to others, is distracting for pupils. This makes it difficult for some pupils to concentrate and hear what the teachers are saying. The school grounds are limited but this is compensated for by use of an additional field. The playground has seating and some floor markings for games, although there is no sheltered area. The external building is generally well maintained and in good repair.

85 Overall, taking all factors into account, whilst the school expenditure is very high there are many strengths in the quality of the pastoral care of pupils and the school generally achieves satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 1. Raise standards of attainment in speaking and listening, reading, writing, mathematics and science by:**
 - considerably extending the opportunities for pupils to develop their confidence in speaking to be able to use a wider and more descriptive vocabulary (paragraphs 1, 6, 7, 24, 38, 40, 42, 44, 86-90, 11, 133, 144);
 - developing pupils' reading skills to a higher level (paragraphs 1, 5, 87, 91, 92);
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to write imaginatively and in depth (paragraphs 1, 97, 114);
 - developing the opportunities to undertake problem-solving and investigative activities, particularly in mathematics and science, so that pupils are more actively involved in their learning (paragraphs 8, 24, 31, 40, 100, 104, 110, 111).

- 2. Improving the quality of teaching by:**
 - improving teachers' knowledge and understanding of what constitutes effective teaching in order to identify where improvements need to be made (paragraphs 21, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 69, 72, 76);
 - ensuring that the organisation and pace of lessons are effective in providing activities that motivate pupils to try hard (paragraphs 33, 104).

- 3. Improve the assessment of pupils' progress and the use of assessment information by:**
 - extending the opportunities to assess pupil progress in a more formalised and regular manner in all appropriate subjects (paragraphs 51, 58, 94, 111, 117, 124, 129, 137, 147, 152, 157, 165);
 - using this data to inform planning to provide the highest possible level of challenge for pupils throughout the curriculum (paragraphs 60, 69, 98, 102).

- 4. Make the monitoring and evaluation of planning, teaching and learning more rigorous by:**
 - drawing up and implementing a programme of regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school by senior staff and curriculum co-ordinators using appropriate criteria (paragraphs 36, 50, 60, 71, 72, 76, 109, 129, 150).

MINOR ISSUES THE SCHOOL SHOULD CONSIDER –

- Raising the levels of attendance to at least the national average (paragraph 20);
- Improving the quality of the learning environment inside the school building in order to provide quiet areas in which the pupils can concentrate (paragraphs 32, 84, 97, 109, 128, 135, 144).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	7	24	33	2	0	0
Percentage	0	11	36	50	3	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 nearly two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	284
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	105

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	71

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	184

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	42	34	76

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	27
	Girls	23	19	25
	Total	39	36	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	51 (53)	47 (47)	68 (86)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	23	20	22
	Girls	23	15	21
	Total	46	35	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	60 (59)	45 (64)	56 (73)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	77	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	11	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	34	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	115	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	20	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	6	0	0
Black or Black British – African	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18
Average class size	24

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	290

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002/03
	£
Total income	851,458
Total expenditure	894,076
Expenditure per pupil	3,093
Balance brought forward from previous year	100,049
Balance carried forward to next year	57,431

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	283
Number of questionnaires returned	85

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	32	1	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	41	5	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	29	5	4	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	36	13	12	0
The teaching is good.	60	32	7	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	38	8	7	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	29	4	4	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	26	4	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	47	34	13	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	60	33	2	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	32	6	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	56	29	7	1	6

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents are generally very appreciative of what the school does although quite a number would like homework to be used more systematically and several do not think that the school works closely with them.

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

ENGLISH

86 In the 2002 National Curriculum tests, attainment at the end of Year 6 was well below average. Inspection findings are that the current standards pupils reach by the end of Year 6 are below average. Standards at the time of the last inspection were said to be in line with national expectations except in speaking and listening, where they were below. This indicates a decline in standards since the time of the last report.

87 Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average; however, pupils make satisfactory overall progress and sometimes there is good progress, particularly in writing. Pupils make less progress in speaking and listening and reading where progress is satisfactory, but not so evident as in writing. The school has focused on developing pupils' writing skills since the time of the last report. Standards are better now because a significant number of pupils have developed good skills in handwriting and spelling by the time they are eleven. However, there are too few pupils achieving the higher levels because they have ground to make up, particularly in their reading and speaking and listening skills.

88 Those pupils who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress but do not have sufficient opportunities in Years 3 to 5 to understand and extend their vocabulary through a range of discussions and reading a wider range of books. A high proportion of pupils are still developing their competence as speakers and need to hear and to practise good models of English. For instance, responses such as, "I liked play football" and "We might playing when we are going in Year 4", are typical and are also reflected in the pupils' written work.

89 Teachers are aware of the need to provide opportunities for speaking and listening but do not do enough to plan stimulating and challenging activities on a regular enough basis. This was a key issue in the previous inspection and remains so. Some pupils ask and answer questions with confidence. Most listen carefully to each other and, where encouragement is given, attempt to extend their ideas and present their own ideas and opinions. For example, in a Year 6 lesson pupils consider carefully the emotions of the principal character in a book they are sharing. A pupil explores these by questioning a pupil who is in the role of the mother. The maturity and responses the pupil makes are good; both the questioner and the respondent use the new vocabulary they learn to develop their understanding very well.

90 In Year 4 pupils are encouraged to discuss the issues they would raise in a letter of complaint by using short discussions with each other identifying persuasive words and considering how best to phrase their letters. They offer interesting suggestions to the teacher when she assumes the role of the council official who is considering the complaint about a noisy dog, for example, "It has got to a crucial stage and I do not feel able to go to work in the morning." In some lessons seen during the inspection imaginative teaching and interesting activities to extend speaking and listening helped pupils to develop and expand their skills. The use of these worthwhile sessions is often wrongly curtailed because the need to complete a written task is deemed to be essential. This cuts short the opportunities to develop pupils' vocabulary and help those pupils who are developing their spoken English when it is an additional language. In some classes there are few opportunities for pupils to speak at any length in either prepared or informal activities, and the development of pupils' speaking skills is not a high enough priority.

91 Throughout the school, reading skills are promoted at least satisfactorily as part of the literacy session. Pupils are interested in stories and are anxious to share the group reading books. Teachers and support assistants promote good role models when they share the 'big book' aloud with the pupils and use the texts well to promote discussion and raise grammatical points. Pupils are interested in reading, and whilst their skills are not well developed particularly in Years 3 and 4, they listen carefully to each other and help those who find reading difficult. The teachers rarely use opportunities in other lessons to develop reading skills. The limited opportunities for pupils to read in other lessons restrict their progress and mean that pupils' reading experience is limited to times when they read to an adult.

92 By Year 6, a few higher attaining pupils are reading longer and more complex novels and enjoy unravelling the plot and sharing their ideas with each other. The very good questioning by the teacher and use of role-play ensure pupils have a good understanding of the feelings and intentions of the main characters. They are very anxious to predict where the story may lead and can support their thinking with well-argued propositions about whether the character has good or bad personality traits. However, a number of average and lower attaining pupils are still hesitant and do not have a sufficient range of strategies to help them to become more effective readers and enjoy reading. The majority of pupils are given books from the school reading scheme. It is the only the older, higher attaining pupils who can express a clear preference about their favourite authors and the books they read. The school library has recently been relocated and is beginning to be used on a more frequent basis, particularly by non-fiction readers. Pupils have some knowledge of how to use these books to find information, but are not given sufficient opportunities to use their research skills to support their work in all areas of the curriculum.

93 Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to write in many and varied styles through the good use of the National Literacy Strategy. Standards in writing have been a clear priority in the school development plan. The school has worked hard on improving handwriting and spelling skills and these are now generally satisfactory. The use of the literacy strategy produces some good results, particularly in the writing of poetry. In Year 4, as part of a series of lessons on different types of poetry, the interest the teacher created stimulated some very good results and higher attaining pupils were extended very well to write in free verse from their original theme. The pace and interest the teacher created ensured that all pupils completed the task and recognised how well they had achieved by using a series of questions to measure their progress.

94 Whilst pupils show a good understanding of what is expected of them, many average pupils and those for whom English is an additional language find the tasks complex and rarely complete work to the required standard. Pupils with special educational needs make better progress when either the teacher or a support assistant works with a small group because the task is tailored to their needs. The time given to the tasks is often not enough and the assessment of whether pupils have met the lesson objective is not sufficiently measured before moving on to the next aspect.

95 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Lessons are well planned in line with the National Literacy Strategy and build progress based on the strategy. Not enough account is taken of how much progress pupils have made in previous lessons or the complexity of the task, especially for those pupils making slower progress.

96 In the good or very good lessons teachers recognise the need to ensure pupils have a good understanding of what they are expected to achieve. The lessons are well paced and stimulate the pupils through skilled questioning and the use of a variety of strategies to engage their interest. The effective use of ICT enabled a group of pupils with special

educational needs to write an interesting poem in the style of Wordsworth. This was achieved because pupils were supported through a purposeful discussion and a presentation to set the Lake District scene. Very occasionally teaching is unsatisfactory and there are weaknesses in some otherwise satisfactory lessons because the teachers talk for too long and do not allow pupils enough time to complete interesting and challenging tasks.

97 The classrooms present some constraints upon concentration and learning, particularly in the open-plan areas when pupils have to contend with the noise around them and cannot fully concentrate on their own task or respond to their own teacher. The teaching of basic skills is good overall, particularly in Years 4 and 6. Pupils are grouped in ability sets to develop their extended writing skills: these are used well, particularly by higher attaining pupils, who make good progress in these lessons. Pupils are encouraged to use the skills they have learnt in other lessons. However, time and planning constraints mean that pupils rarely have the opportunity to use their own imagination or to write a longer piece in a personal style.

98 There is some inconsistency in the quality of the marking of pupils' work. Where marking is good, teachers provide clear guidance to the pupils on how to improve their work. Pupils have targets that indicate how they can improve, but they do not always understand these targets and are rarely given advice about how to meet them. Procedures to assess the progress pupils make are satisfactory and progress is measured by the use of optional tests and writing tasks. The results are beginning to be analysed. However, the use of assessment information to inform future planning is less secure and is not yet used to identify and target individual pupils' needs so that gaps in learning can be avoided and the use of individual programmes can support the pupils.

99 The school has a very good range of resources to support the work in literacy and these are used well where teaching and learning are lively and interesting. The use of 'book weeks', authors and other visitors provides an additional stimulus so that pupils can relate their ideas to first-hand experience. The recently appointed co-ordinator has established a clear plan for improvement and is now addressing issues in the subject. She has a clear overview of the subject and supports her colleagues well. She has extended the use of the library, which is a pleasant place for pupils to work. Leadership and management of the subject at this early stage are satisfactory and have the potential to improve further, as opportunities to monitor directly the quality of teaching and learning are extended. The library contains a good range of both fiction and non-fiction books which are accessible to pupils through the use of an electronic system.

MATHEMATICS

100 At the end of Year 6 pupils attain standards that are well below national averages. There is very low attainment on entry to the school. Currently pupils are making satisfactory progress. This includes those with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and apply their knowledge of mathematics through solving problems.

101 The school is very aware of the need to improve the overall levels of attainment within the subject and has introduced a number of initiatives to further this aspect of its work. One example is the effective use of setting that seeks to ensure that pupils are working at a level best suited to their abilities. A strong feature of setting within the school is the movement of pupils between sets as they progress or when it is felt that they need a less demanding programme of activities. In doing this, the school makes good use of regular testing and teacher assessment. The information gained from the assessment process is used to set termly targets for pupils.

102 There is, however, a need for a more rigorous approach to the use of the information gained from assessment with the development of a system of individual pupil tracking to enable the school to use the information gathered to greater effect when planning the curriculum. Since the previous inspection the school has improved its provision for higher attaining pupils, but this is an area that has still to be developed to its full potential. The needs of those pupils considered to be gifted and talented are now being addressed. For example, a very small number of pupils are following a mathematics curriculum two years ahead of their age. However, this arrangement is in the very early stages and its full impact on pupils' attainment has still to be realised.

103 Pupils in Year 6 are developing their concepts of number; for example they calculate the area of regular shapes using the formula length \times width = area and produce line graphs illustrating information that they have gathered. They solve problems; for example, if 10m of chain costs £4 how much does 30m cost? Middle and higher attaining pupils draw angles to the nearest degree and classify them. Pupils calculate fractions of quantities, for example, $\frac{9}{29}$ of 232 = 72 and find equivalent fractions such as $\frac{51}{60} = \frac{17}{20}$. They know that $\frac{1}{2} = 0.5 = 50\%$. In a set for higher attaining pupils they mentally calculate problems such as $\frac{1}{2}$ of $1.25 = 0.625$.

104 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but in a significant number of the lessons observed during the inspection, they were good. There were no examples of unsatisfactory teaching seen in the subject during the inspection. Where teaching is good teachers ensure that their lessons have a brisk pace that maintains the interest of pupils. However, in other lessons the pace is much slower and pupils sometimes struggle to maintain concentration. Teachers do not organise enough opportunities for pupils to carry out investigations and solve problems.

105 Lessons are planned that have a logical progression. For example, in a lesson on multiples of numbers the pupils were provided with a good learning experience by the teacher who encouraged them to explain their thinking and used their ideas effectively to move their knowledge on to the next stage. At each stage of the lesson the teacher ensured understanding with a good level of questioning that included all groups within the class and did not rely on pupils putting their hands up; the teacher decided who to ask. An important feature of most of the questioning observed during the inspection is the sympathetic way in which teachers deal with wrong answers; pupils are always left with their self-esteem intact. Teachers overall demonstrate a good level of subject knowledge and are confident in the classroom.

106 The mental arithmetic skills of the pupils are developed satisfactorily with daily sessions at the beginning of lessons. In most of the lessons observed teachers demonstrated a satisfactory level of expectation. Although this aspect of the school's provision has improved since the last report, there is still a need for pupils to develop their ability to work independently through the provision of more opportunities to solve problems. The use of homework is satisfactory overall. Pupils' work clearly indicates that although teachers' marking is satisfactory this is not consistent across the school. There is a need for a more rigorous approach towards poorly presented work and the use of written comments to further enhance pupils' learning.

107 The use of ICT within the subject is not entirely satisfactory; in only a very small number of lessons observed during the inspection was ICT being used by the pupils. However, there is evidence that it is used occasionally, for example in Year 6 work to plot results onto graphs. In a Year 6 lesson ICT was used effectively by the teacher to illustrate a mental arithmetic session. The links between mathematics and other areas of the curriculum

are somewhat tenuous, but examples of its use were noted, for example, work on shapes done by Year 3 pupils in which they used their literacy skills to write descriptions.

108 The school has adopted the National Numeracy Strategy and a range of back-up materials that ensure that the statutory curriculum being covered is broad and balanced. Overall, there is a satisfactory range of learning opportunities. Provision for those pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is good.

109 The management of the subject is satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator has monitored planning and pupils' work on a termly basis and has had a few opportunities to observe teaching throughout the school. The results of this monitoring are fed back to the teachers during staff meetings and in the form of written lesson comments. Despite the increase in monitoring and assessment of the subject, the test results and very low level of attainment achieved by the school clearly show that these aspects are not, as yet, fully effective. This is because of the lack of rigour in many systems and partly because the school does not have effective systems to support the development of the subject during staff illness. The subject's future development is dealt with in the school's overall development plan to which the co-ordinator has contributed. Over the past two or three years there has been a satisfactory level of staff training within the subject. The accommodation available to teach the subject has weaknesses in that the open-plan design means there is often a high level of disturbance from adjacent classes and it is sometimes difficult to hear what the teacher is saying at the front of the class.

SCIENCE

110 Attainment in science is well below the national average. This is borne out by the 2002 national test results for eleven year old pupils. Compared with those for similar schools, results are below average. At the time of the last inspection, standards were judged to be average, but national tests at that time did not confirm that judgement. There was an improvement in test results in 2001, but standards have dipped again since then. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to follow lines of scientific enquiry.

111 While teaching and learning are currently satisfactory across the school, enabling all pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language, to make satisfactory progress, there are some areas in the provision that lack focus and rigour. The most significant of these is the management of investigative work, but assessment of pupils' progress is also unsatisfactory at present. This is limiting the opportunity for all pupils to achieve to a higher level. Teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement are not always as high as they should be. Pupils' difficulties with speaking and listening, spelling and general language development also affect standards. There have been some recent changes in the commitment to raise standards, but overall the school has made too little improvement in provision for science since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are generally given effective support either from well-briefed support assistants or through effective pairing arrangements. This enables them to follow experiments appropriately, and most record results carefully. They make satisfactory progress.

112 Science is taught through a range of topics, based on nationally produced schemes of work. These are a recent innovation at the school, and it is taking some time for the benefit of these changes to show. The co-ordinator ensures that all pupils have an appropriately varied curriculum that covers the required learning of the National Curriculum, and all classes in each year group follow the same planning. Year 4, for example, learn how much force it takes to move an object over different surfaces, with each class using a Newton meter to ensure the accuracy of their observations. This builds on work about

stretching materials carried out in Year 3 and follows on work about the human body and investigations into solids and liquids.

113 Pupils generally develop a sound knowledge base. They have positive attitudes to science, and enjoy the activities, particularly where there is a practical element to their work. Many topics include the use of ICT, often linking mathematical learning appropriately by recording results on computer-generated graphs. Year 6 record data on the time taken for various solids to dissolve and Year 5 produce bar charts of 'ear defenders' after completing investigations into sound insulation. Some higher achieving pupils in Year 6 are able to record their experiments well, using a format that outlines the equipment needed, the process of the experiment, predictions about the outcome and conclusions from the recorded results.

114 Pupils are not encouraged to think scientifically about their experiences often enough, or to put real effort into their learning. There is no consistent emphasis on using a framework for writing up investigations in the school, and where such a format is used, there is too little insistence on pupils doing this as well as they can. Consequently, many pupils in the school have incomplete records of their science activities. Diagrams are frequently left without labels, and appropriate technical language is incorrectly spelt. A high proportion of pupils have difficulties with written English, writing phrases such as "breth in ocksigan", or using spellings such as 'Wensday', 'bubl', and 'swich', finding it difficult also to write in coherent sentences. The necessary words for writing up experiments are not often displayed in classrooms, leaving it to chance that pupils will be able to use and spell them correctly. Marking of work does not pick this up appropriately.

115 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Some teachers are able to provide good opportunities for pupils to organise and set up experiments, with an effective structure to the lesson that enables pupils to know exactly what is expected of them. In these lessons pupils are able to collect their own equipment and work collaboratively so that each pupil takes responsibility for an aspect of the activity. This is so in Year 3, as they learn about light and shadows using appropriate equipment to test out the opacity of different types of paper. Light sensors are used to give accurate readings, and good support is given to pupils to enable them to understand the scientific concepts of the lesson, and to use the correct technical language, such as 'transparent', 'opaque' and 'prediction'. In this year group and in Year 6, there is good emphasis on the notion of fair testing, and most pupils are clear about the correct criteria for this. There is little evidence that this is consistently taught throughout the school, however.

116 Although most teachers share the intended learning well with pupils, sessions to pull together the outcomes rarely give pupils enough opportunity to explain their understanding of this by using scientific terms. Some lessons are too dominated by the teacher, and others lack an appropriate structure. Opportunities to observe and record pupils' progress are then very limited, as many pupils get too little chance to learn appropriately or to demonstrate their understanding individually. Day-to-day assessment of individual progress is therefore affected, giving teachers little information to enable them to identify specific learning needs for future lessons.

117 The school has begun to develop more effective assessment procedures. The co-ordinator has recently designed some more focused charts to record pupils' progress at the end of each unit of work. These are not yet in use, but will help to sharpen assessment practice. Teachers currently carry out assessments against targets printed in pupils' workbooks. These reflect the descriptions of learning outlined in the National Curriculum, but they are not consistently completed by the teacher, and are not used to identify individual areas of need. Pupils take part in nationally produced tests each year, and the

school analyses the outcomes of these to check specific gaps in curriculum coverage in units of work. Graphs and tables are produced to demonstrate each year's relative progress. As yet, however, this information is not being used sufficiently to improve teaching and learning, and is not fed into teachers' planning with enough rigour to enable teachers to address the individual learning needs of pupils. This is having a detrimental impact on the challenge offered to pupils, as teachers do not always have high enough expectations of the work pupils can do.

118 Resources are satisfactory, and are currently being improved and re-organised. The school has plans to develop specific areas of the grounds to provide outdoor opportunities for scientific investigations, which will aid the cross-curricular links that are being developed.

ART AND DESIGN

119 At the age of eleven, attainment is broadly average, which indicates standards have dipped since the previous inspection when they were good. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Boys and girls make the same progress. Recent work is attractively displayed in the long school corridors. This enhances not only the appearance of the recent work but also serves to raise pupils' self-esteem by showing them and their parents how their work is valued by staff. There are effective cross-curricular links, which add value to their work in other subjects, such as history. Art and design activities make an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Shared planning for the three classes in each year group supports equality of access to an appropriate curriculum for pupils in different classes.

120 Pupils' recent work shows that they make broadly satisfactory progress over time in developing their sketching skills although the sequential development of these skills is an area for improvement. Recent work in Year 6 on figures in action show the use of a digital camera supporting satisfactory awareness of the scale of the human body and the relationship of the length of limbs to each other. The sketchbooks of pupils in Year 6 indicate that pupils practise shading techniques using different grades of pencil. Pupils have produced observational drawings of plants, and drawings of daffodils using chalks and pastels show satisfactory progress made in creating 'smudged' effects when blending colours.

121 Through their work in history, pupils in Year 5 are able to identify the main features of designs on Greek vases and interpret these into their own work. In Year 4, pupils made satisfactory progress in developing an understanding of shape and structure when they produced designs inspired by Van Gogh's *Chair*. In several activities pupils used their sketchbooks in a satisfactory manner to try out their ideas before choosing those that they thought most suitable. Most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of pattern and make good progress in this area. For example, pupils in Year 3 made progress that was at least satisfactory when designing a decoration for a cup, saucer and plate.

122 Much of the work around school is neat and carefully produced. However, there is little that is big, bold and colourful and which stops pupils or visitors in their tracks. Whilst there are a few samples of work using clay and other media to create two- and three-dimensional work this has not been much of a feature of recent work; this limits pupils' progress. However, in work linked to both the history and design and technology curriculums, several pupils make good progress when creating a 'God's Eyes' woollen hanging in the style of the Aztecs. Pupils in Year 5 also make good progress in investigating and combining visual and tactile elements when sewing and weaving an attractive variety of

decorative materials to fine net to attach onto previously tie-dyed backgrounds when creating cloud effects.

123 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. A feature of most lessons is the good relationships established with pupils that motivate them to try to improve their work. Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and behave well as seen when producing outside sketches by using viewfinders to give a focus to their work. However, pupils' sketchbooks show that, whilst progress is satisfactory overall, they do not have enough practice to improve their techniques.

124 The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator is keen and enthusiastic and liaises well with colleagues. However, there is little or no opportunity for her to monitor at first hand the quality of teaching or to work alongside colleagues to improve their skills in teaching the pupils how to improve aspects, including drawing skills. This does little to enable the co-ordinator to influence the development of knowledge, skills and understanding across the school. Work in pupils' sketchbooks is often untitled, undated and unmarked and is of little use as an assessment tool to track the development of drawing skills both in the current or in subsequent year groups. There is no formal assessment of standards and this makes it difficult for the co-ordinator to identify where improvements are needed. Whilst there is some use of ICT to support learning, this is fairly limited and an area for improvement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

125 Standards in the subject are average, which is similar to the findings of the previous inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. Boys and girls achieve equally.

126 Pupils have a reasonable understanding of how to investigate, develop, plan and communicate design ideas. There is no significant difference in the standards reached in the different strands of the curriculum. Pupils in Year 6 make satisfactory progress when designing and making simple models incorporating electrical circuits to power fairground rides. In work earlier in the year they have studied shelters, such as tents, houses and bus shelters by looking at materials, the purpose of the shelter and its design.

127 In Year 5 digital photographs show that pupils made satisfactory progress when making musical instruments such as shakers, blowers and simple guitars. Similarly they made satisfactory progress designing and making their own biscuits. Pupils in Year 4 are currently making at least satisfactory progress in producing examples of moving mechanisms that can be used to make a book with moving parts. Satisfactory progress has also been made in Year 4 when pupils designed, made and evaluated simple torches and money holders. The evaluations show pupils have identified some of the problems encountered over design features and choices of materials and decorations. The photographic display of this work interests other pupils, staff and parents and serves to raise the self-esteem of those who made the items.

128 Teaching and learning in the lessons observed and as reflected in the sample of pupils' recent work was satisfactory overall. Teachers realise that many lower attaining pupils are well motivated by practical learning activities. Therefore the emphasis in many lessons is on the making element of the curriculum where many pupils try quite hard. This is well illustrated when one class of pupils in Year 4 tries really complex arrangements of moving mechanisms by adding more and more pivots and levers. Teachers manage the behaviour of pupils well and move learning on from a low starting point. However, at times the background noise from other classes makes it difficult for teachers and pupils alike to

concentrate. The planning of lessons across year groups ensures that pupils have equality of access to the different elements of the curriculum and all groups of pupils are fully included in activities, including the design and evaluation elements.

129 The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and has monitored planning to ensure this matches the range of activities of the national guidance. However, there has been little or no monitoring of teaching and little assessment of standards. This makes it difficult for the co-ordinator to identify whether standards are high enough, whether teaching builds in a continuous and progressive manner on what the pupils know understand and can do, and where improvements are needed. Not enough use is made of ICT to support the design element of the curriculum.

GEOGRAPHY

130 As at the time of the previous inspection, by the age of eleven attainment is average. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some that is good. As a result the majority of children, including pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress.

131 Due to timetable arrangements only three lessons were observed. Therefore judgments about the standards progress and teaching are based largely on scrutiny of work and discussion with pupils. Teaching is satisfactory and most pupils make satisfactory progress in their skills and understanding. Scrutiny shows that teaching is good in some Year 3 classes and good throughout Year 4. In these classes, pupils make good progress. It is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6. This is because some aspects of work in Years 5 and 6, while adequate, lack depth.

132 The curriculum develops geography skills progressively. Teachers build up pupils' skills appropriately. In Years 3 and 4, pupils develop their mapping skills and their understanding of the local area through a number of local visits and special events such as the visit to Woodgate Valley. In Year 5, pupils contrast and compare physical and human features of Llandudno and Walsall. In Year 6, pupils continue to develop and apply their geographical knowledge and mapping skills and have the opportunity of a residential visit to Snowdonia. Recent improvements in planning mean that work is organised for different groups. However, scrutiny of work shows that work is rarely modified for pupils with difficulty recording their written work. While they make satisfactory progress, some pupils could make better progress if work was adapted for them.

133 Research skills are systematically developed. Pupils get regular opportunities to use texts and photographs as source materials, and to access information from the Internet. This is an improvement from the time of the previous inspection. There are good opportunities to develop environmental awareness through topics on pollution and litter. Writing, number and ICT skills are used appropriately. However, pupils' speaking skills need further development. Work scrutiny shows that generally pupils take pride in their work, which is usually neat.

134 Year 6 pupils enjoy geography and their attitudes to work are good. They have adequate general knowledge and are able to name some major rivers, oceans, cities and continents across the world. They have some understanding of the significance of human and geographical factors on people's lives in both Kenya and Britain. However, a significant number of pupils have difficulty expressing their ideas.

135 In all three lessons observed there were a number of pupils who were reluctant communicators. Some were quite passive and needed a lot of encouragement to talk. For example, in a satisfactory Year 5 lesson, whilst pupils' understanding of issues related to coastal erosion was adequate, many struggled to use the correct terminology. One pupil used the term 'evaporation' for 'erosion'. Some teachers are developing strategies to help pupils communicate more effectively. For example, some classes have key vocabulary available and attractive displays such as mountain and fell walking equipment to stimulate discussion. In a well-taught lesson in Year 6, pupils contributed more when the teacher provided time in small groups to discuss their research findings about mountain regions. Further work is needed to ensure pupils systematically develop confidence in using correct terms across the school. The long gap between the geography topics in some years does not help pupils retain their geographical vocabulary. The layout of some open-plan rooms is distracting for some pupils and makes it difficult for them to concentrate and hear what the teachers are saying.

136 The curriculum makes a very good contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of different cultures and countries. A display of significant events from newspapers, such as the 50th anniversary of Sir Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing's ascent of Mount Everest, also widens pupils' interest and appreciation.

137 Geography is well led. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. She has led a number of improvements since the time of the previous inspection. The policy and scheme of work have been updated and resources are good. Planning is thorough. The use of progress boards with work displayed from Year 3 to Year 6 helps pupils and staff to see the range of experiences and skills covered. The use of ICT has improved and pupils comment on how much they enjoy using the Internet and library for study and research purposes. The co-ordinator's role has been enhanced. She monitors planning and pupils' books, with a report to the management team. However, as at the time of the previous inspection, there is no formal assessment system, although its introduction is planned and the co-ordinator's role needs further development. She does not have the opportunity to observe teaching and learning or to work alongside her colleagues. This limits her opportunity to address any inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum. It also limits her ability to influence the quality of teaching and therefore the standards pupils are achieving.

HISTORY

138 As at the time of the previous inspection, by the age of eleven, most pupils' attainment is average. Teaching is satisfactory and as a result pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils identified as having special needs and those who use English as an additional language make the same progress as their classmates. This is because they have good provision and support in lessons.

139 Due to timetable arrangements only three lessons were observed. Therefore judgments about the standards, progress and teaching are also based on scrutiny of work and discussion with pupils. Scrutiny shows that teaching is generally good in Years 3 and 4 and satisfactory in Years 5 and 6. This is because some aspects of work in Years 5 and 6, while adequate, lack depth. This limits the challenge for some more able pupils. Recent improvements in planning are in place to cater for more able pupils.

140 The curriculum is good. It includes a well thought out programme of visits and visitors. These considerably enhance pupils' appreciation of people who lived in different times and places. An impressive feature is the inclusion of the contribution of ethnic minority groups in Walsall during the Second World War.

141 Pupils' skills are developed progressively. In Years 3 and 4 teachers develop well pupils' understanding of local history. These skills are developed through practical experiences such as visits to the Black Country Museum and a local leather factory. In Years 5 and 6 pupils learn about life during the First and Second World War. Visits, such as a visit to a local air museum, and talks from visitors who have personal memories add real interest. Pupils are taught to think of themselves as historians. To this end some classes have produced attractive class folders and fact files on the lives of well-known figures including Muhammad Ali, Julius Caesar and Boudicca.

142 Research skills are systematically developed. Pupils are taught to use books, the Internet and objects to interpret information. For example, Year 5 pupils looked at images from Greek pottery for information. All classes use the Internet. In a very well taught Year 4 lesson, the teacher provided good quality resources that enabled pupils to research the rituals and customs of Aztec civilisation. Her lively teaching, very good quality resources and clear questioning excited the class and particularly extended some very able pupils.

143 Some good use is made of drama to fire pupils' imagination. For example, Year 3 re-enact important events through drama, becoming Celts and Romans. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on the lives and experiences of people in the past. Year 4 pupils consider life in Tudor times and Year 5 pupils write about what it feels like to be an evacuee. Writing, number and art skills are used appropriately to support history. Improvements in planning mean that work is planned for different groups. However, scrutiny of work shows that some pupils have difficulty recording their written work. While they make satisfactory progress, some pupils could make better progress if written work was further modified.

144 Some pupils' speaking and listening skills need further development. In the lessons observed there were pupils who were passive and reluctant to communicate their ideas. Some teachers have good strategies to encourage discussion. For example, in a well-taught Year 3 lesson on a well-known local figure, Sister Dora, pupils had talking partners and had to devise their own questionnaires in readiness for a visitor. The open-plan rooms, however, present difficulties. Background noise is distracting for some pupils who find it difficult to concentrate.

145 There is good support for pupils with special needs. Great care is taken to fully include them. In one lesson observed, a pupil with emotional difficulties was able to return to a lesson and continue learning successfully, because of the tactful and sensitive support of a teaching assistant and the headteacher.

146 Year 6 pupils enjoy history and they have adequate general knowledge. They recall factual information from the Second World War. They have some understanding of the differences between historical fact and opinions. However, not all know the difference between primary and secondary sources. Most have an appropriate understanding of events in different periods of time.

147 History is well led. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable and has worked hard to bring the curriculum to life for the pupils. She has made a lot of improvements to provision since the time of the previous inspection. A scheme of work is now in place that draws on the richness of local history. ICT provision has improved, as has the opportunity for regular research. Resources are very good. However, there is still no formal assessment system. The co-ordinator's role has been enhanced, with time to monitor planning and pupils' books, but she does not have the opportunity to observe teaching and learning. This limits her opportunity to address any inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum. It also limits her ability to influence the quality of teaching and therefore the standards pupils are achieving.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

148 Attainment is average at the end of Year 6. The school has worked hard to address the issues raised by the last inspection. There has been considerable improvement since then when standards were below average. The curriculum for ICT has been reorganised, all teachers have received training and all pupils have effective support in their weekly lessons in the new computer suite. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some good teaching in Years 3 and 5, and pupils are keen to learn. ICT skills are taught using learning from a range of other subjects in the curriculum. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for who English is an additional language, are now making satisfactory progress.

149 Lessons are well planned and teachers make effective use of the good resources available. All teachers use the interactive whiteboard well in the ICT suite, as a tool for demonstrating and modelling intended learning. Pupils are then able to follow the lesson on individual computers, and common errors or misconceptions can be rectified through further demonstration. Pupils in Year 6, for example, are able to design spreadsheets to present information, and to copy and paste columns and cells as they make changes to a formula. They think carefully about how such a formula can be used in the classroom, and take pride in their ability to print out the information they will need, and then close down the program. However, more than half type hesitantly, using only one finger and spending time scanning the keyboard. This slows their progress considerably. Year 3 and 4 pupils have better typing skills overall, and are able to make more rapid progress, for example as Year 3 learn to open and reply to e-mails. Consequently, the work rate of pupils in those classes is greater. All pupils are able to see and follow intended processes as the image is projected onto the whiteboard, and are then able to open their own e-mail correspondence immediately afterwards. Composing a reply and sending it to the teacher enables her to check pupils' capability as part of the assessment process.

150 Pupils work in pairs in the ICT suite, sharing the tasks. Although there is some effective collaborative work, the partnership arrangements need further monitoring, as some pupils are too dominant, reducing the learning opportunities of their peers. Effective support is given in all classes to enable the majority of pupils to complete the planned tasks, many of which link to other areas of learning. Year 5, for example, searched the Internet for information concerning Llandudno, which linked to geography. This was a challenging task for most pupils, but good attitudes and clear explanations ensured sound learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is now generally good in the school. Teachers prepare lessons well and encourage pupils to work independently, so pupils are gaining in confidence. Where teachers are unsure of a new unit of work they make commendable efforts to try the programs beforehand, following advice from the co-ordinator. Teachers encourage pupils to explore and try different solutions to problems. They have high expectations so pupils know they must try things for themselves. Year 4, for example, are able to explore options using a tool bar when presenting data that requires extra columns, and have to think for themselves about adding captions to the axes on their graphs.

151 Pupils generally behave well and work hard in lessons, but learning is adversely affected by shortcomings in the accommodation. The school has recently invested heavily in new equipment, which is mostly set up in the ICT suite. The room has poor ventilation, creating a hot and stuffy atmosphere. This is often detrimental to pupils' concentration, especially towards the end of lessons when teachers are encouraging pupils to consolidate their new knowledge. The air-conditioning, though reasonably effective, is very noisy, leaving teachers with a choice between temperature and audibility. Neither solution is currently helpful to pupils' progress.

152 The co-ordinator has done well to bring about so much improvement in the provision since the last inspection, and leadership and management of the subject are good. Her enthusiasm and commitment indicate that the momentum to improve will be maintained. There are plans to review the current range of computers, and to increase the access in the classroom by the purchase of more laptops. There is an appropriate range of software programs and CD-ROMs. Assessment procedures are at an early stage of development, relating generally to the learning levels covered by specific units of work. The school is in the process of introducing an improved system to assess the development of skills as pupils move through the school, but this has not been checked through yet. A good addition to the curriculum has been the lunchtime computer club. This is open to pupils of all age groups and is very popular.

MUSIC

153 Attainment in music is average. Pupils make satisfactory progress, and derive great enjoyment from some of their musical experiences. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language also make satisfactory progress. About 20 per cent of the pupils from Year 4 to Year 6 have particular talents in music or are part of the school choir or orchestra, and some receive instrumental tuition at school. The attainment of these pupils is above national expectations, and they make good progress. This was judged to be the case for most pupils in the school at the time of the last inspection. Standards have dipped since then, as the school has focused more heavily on other subjects. However, the strong links the school has with the Conservatoire in Paris, and the opportunities that some pupils have to visit and perform there, contribute effectively to the positive cultural ethos of the school.

154 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some good teaching of older pupils. Year 6, for example, know that *The Pirates of Penzance* is an operetta by Gilbert and Sullivan and enjoy listening to extracts of the music as they learn to identify differences in selected phrases. The wider experience and accelerated learning of those pupils who have recently visited France give the class confidence to use such technical language as 'trio', 'solo', 'contralto', and 'chorus'. The tasks are challenging, requiring attentive listening before pupils are able to offer suggestions about the composition of the various groups featured on a CD. Pupils' knowledge develops well in response to the teacher's high expectations.

155 In other lessons, this is less evident, and teachers' expectations are too low. Year 4 pupils, for example, enjoy a worthwhile musical experience as they learn to hand-jive to *At the Hop*, and then play the rhythm and pattern of the tune on different instruments, but there are many missed opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of music during these lessons, for example when xylophones and glockenspiels are called big bars and claves are called clickers. Pupils are unable to play these instruments correctly without guidance and support, and have few opportunities during the lesson to use musical terminology. Pupils in Year 5 are able to compose a melody based on the pentatonic scale as they imitate the rhythm of Ogden Nash's poem *The Termite*, and every group performs their composition well, combining sounds with expression.

156 Singing in assemblies is pleasant and tuneful. The pupils show a good understanding of clear diction, and this is demonstrated very well by the choir's performance of songs from their French concert. They are able to sing in two-part harmony to a good standard. The orchestra also performs well, with good tonal playing by the violin, cello and bass players, enhanced by the expert piano accompaniment of the music co-ordinator. Such experiences provide pupils with good opportunities to compare the different kinds of music they hear, and those performing are encouraged to refine and improve their work

appropriately. The school has also enabled pupils to hear and play African drums, providing a day's workshop and performance by a visiting drummer.

157 There is no formal system of assessment for most pupils in the school, although there are assessment opportunities contained in some of the schemes of work. These are not used consistently to provide a clear record of progress or to ensure that teachers' planning enables pupils to build up their skills and knowledge systematically as they move through the school. The co-ordinator has provided some helpful advice and guidance to accompany the schemes of work, but he has no opportunities to check on the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Music is not currently identified as an area for improvement, and the school has taken too little effective action to maintain the previous high standards of the majority of pupils. Leadership and management of the subject are not as effective as they need to be to raise overall standards further. Resources are good, with a wide range of instruments, including some from Africa and Asia, which are safely stored in the spacious and appropriate music room.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

158 Standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 are generally in line with those expected nationally, except in swimming. Pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 are on course to achieve the expected national standard by the time they reach the end of Year 6. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress, with occasional examples of good and very good progress, in the acquisition of games, athletics, gymnastics and dance skills.

159 In swimming the pupils are attaining standards that are below those expected nationally. The school's system of swimming instruction, where different age groups go swimming on alternate terms, is not meeting the needs of all its pupils for the regular practice of skills and this inhibits their overall progress. However, about 45 per cent of the pupils do reach the expected standard and others are working towards it.

160 Teaching within the subject is satisfactory overall with some examples of good and very good practice. For example, in a Year 4 games lesson, focused on the acquisition of throwing and catching skills, the teacher provided a series of well-structured activities, and demonstrated a good level of subject knowledge and encouragement that led in turn to a worthwhile learning experience for the pupils. A marked feature of this lesson, and indeed all other lessons observed during the inspection, was the care taken to fully include pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language.

161 In an example of very good teaching in gymnastics, pupils in Year 6 were encouraged to develop their own movement routines using apparatus. The activities provided, and the high level of general organisation and instruction, led to a very good learning experience for the pupils. The teacher emphasised the need for full co-operation and the pupils responded very well to this. The main feature of the lesson was the high level of teacher expectation and challenge offered to the pupils and their positive response to it. At the end of the lesson the pupils were encouraged to assess the performance of others in a positive way and offer suggestions as to how it could be improved; the majority were able to do this well. However, this is a feature of the school's general lesson provision that needs to be further developed.

162 During lessons teachers ensure that they and their pupils are appropriately dressed for the activities taking place and there is an emphasis on group and personal safety. Good warm-up and cool-down routines were a feature of most of the lessons observed. In some

lessons there was a tendency for teachers to intervene too often or not enough and this sometimes restricted the pupils' acquisition of the skills being taught.

163 The moral and social elements of the subject are well addressed by the school and pupils respond positively. They obey the rules of games, respect the performances of others, work with enthusiasm and co-operate with each other and their teachers during activities. For example, they place trust in each other during gymnastic sessions where their safety depends on how others react to the rules. Pupils are well behaved and listen carefully to the instructions they are given.

164 The school provides a satisfactory level of competitive games opportunities, for example competitions covering Staffordshire Hardball Cricket, Walsall Softball Cricket and the local football association, rugby seven-a-side and netball. There is a satisfactory range of after-school clubs concerned with sports, for example football, cricket, netball, tennis and badminton.

165 The general level of management within the subject is satisfactory with a well-formulated scheme of work that provides a broad and balanced set of learning opportunities for the pupils and ensures compliance with statutory regulations. The co-ordinator has not had the opportunity to monitor teaching within the subject but looks at planning and agrees a yearly overview of what is to be covered with all the teachers. There is, however, a lack of assessment and recording of the attainment and progress of pupils throughout the school. This was mentioned in the last report and as yet has not been addressed effectively. However, since the last report there has been an improvement in the balance and variety of the activities offered to the pupils. The subject has been well resourced over the past few years with a good yearly budget; this has resulted in a very good level of both large and small equipment being available for teaching. An important and very good feature of the school's provision for the subject is the central sports hall that is used well during lessons.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

166 Standards are in line with the levels expected by the locally agreed syllabus by the time pupils are eleven. Pupils make good progress throughout Years 3 to 6. In learning about religions, the majority of pupils are confident and competent in their knowledge of many of the faiths that they share in the school community. Their understanding and knowledge of learning from religion is good but not as well developed. This represents a slight difference from the time of the last report when standards were above those expected for pupils in Year 6.

167 The quality of teaching is good overall. Lessons are well planned and build on pupils' earlier experiences and knowledge very carefully. As pupils progress through the school they develop their understanding of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Sikh beliefs. By the end of Year 6 pupils are able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the practice and traditions of all the major faiths. They can identify common threads and compare the differences between them.

168 Pupils in Year 3 respond very well, both from their own knowledge of their Holy book, and in response to the teachers' sensitive questions, about why it is important to show respect. The introduction of the key vocabulary and the sense of expectation intrigued the pupils so that many were in awe of the box which stored the Qur'an and then by the book itself. This was because the teacher shared her own good knowledge and encouraged pupils to contribute their thoughts and reasons to the discussion. The positive attitudes are reflected in the pupils' efforts. In most lessons pupils produce lively and perceptive

responses to their work. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory pupils are not as willing to respond to the questions because they do not challenge pupils sufficiently.

169 In a Year 5 lesson, the teacher used the experience of a recent visit to a local crematorium to enable pupils to develop their understanding of death and how to recognise the emotions that people display. The very good use of discussion between pupils supported by other adults was sensitively and carefully handled through appropriate questions. The extended role-play enabled all pupils to share their ideas with each other and understand how they may respond to the grieving process. The pupils reflected very carefully, often bringing their own knowledge and experience on how to comfort and recognise the grieving process. Pupils' speaking and listening skills were extended well and they were able to draw comparisons based on the new knowledge they had learnt and on their own experiences.

170 Good use of imaginative and interesting stimuli enables pupils to respond to the lessons. The sharing of knowledge and understanding is a key feature of lessons. Teachers use their own and the pupils' knowledge to good effect to promote pupils' understanding and celebration of their beliefs. The school draws on its relationships in the community and the very good resources it has available in the school to extend pupils' knowledge. In a Year 4 lesson, preparation for a wedding stimulates pupils to discuss why and how ceremonies are different. They use their literacy skills efficiently to find information about the process after first discussing and recalling the earlier lessons on the aspects that are expected when a marriage ceremony takes place. Using role-play and dressing in a traditional white dress demonstrate the symbolism of various traditions. Pupils, whilst impressed by the bride and bridesmaid, identify that different colours are reflected in different faiths. This results from the information gained from parents, who demonstrate different types of foods and dress; visits to the local church; and the priest's visits to the school. The pupils' knowledge of the local mosque and temple contributes to the wealth of experience pupils can share and is used well in their lessons.

171 Leadership and management of the subject are good. The well-developed syllabus is based on the Walsall Agreed Syllabus and uses national and local guidance to meet the particular needs of the school. The co-ordinator has recently taken on responsibility for the subject and has further developed the resources, which are now good. The scheme of work gives clear guidance about how and what to teach. Teachers' planning is regularly monitored and guidance given so that resources and ideas to support teaching and learning are used effectively. There are no opportunities for assessment within the subject. Pupils' attainment cannot be measured. The school's policy for religious education reflects the aims for the school. The subject has not featured in the priorities for the school development plan and has not been reviewed in recent years.