

INSPECTION REPORT

SALISBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Darlaston, Walsall

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104178

Headteacher: Mr M Wheeler

Reporting inspector: Mrs S E Hall
21750

Dates of inspection: 27th – 30th January 2003

Inspection number: 246358

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Salisbury Street
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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P Robinson

Date of previous inspection: 20th October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21750	Mrs S E Hall	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	The school's results and achievements. How well the pupils are taught. How well the school is led and managed. What the school could do to improve further?
1329	Mr K Oliver	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes and values How well the school cares for its pupils. How well the school works in partnership with parents.
19765	Mrs P Shannon	Team inspector	Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage Science Religious education	
27592	Mr B Duckett	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education	
19583	Mrs K Smith	Team inspector	Geography History Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
2063	Mrs J Hicks	Team inspector	Special educational needs Educational inclusion English as an additional language English Art and design	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Salisbury Primary School is a community school in an urban area of Walsall in the West Midlands. The local economic circumstances are generally unfavourable. There are 252 pupils aged from three to eleven in this average sized school, with slightly more boys than girls and with only a small number of pupils moving in and out of the school. Approximately 86% of pupils are of Asian ethnic heritage; 78% speak English as an additional language. Currently 25% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. However, several parents do not register their eligibility because of concerns about Halal food sourcing. There are 21 pupils on the school's special educational needs register; numbers have dropped recently and are now below average. There are two pupils with a statement of special educational need. The attainment of most children on entry to the school is well below average overall, especially in the key skills of communication, language and literacy.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school, which provides a good quality education and which has improved in many areas in the last two years. Whilst standards are generally below what is expected for the age of the pupils, most achieve well from a low start. The quality of teaching and learning is predominantly good and is most effective for the oldest pupils. Leadership is good and the management of the school is efficient. Overall the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The provision for pupils' pastoral care is effective with procedures to promote good behaviour being very successful.
- The quality of teaching and learning for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is good.
- The attitudes of the pupils to school are good and the relationships between pupils and with staff are very good.
- The provision for moral development is very good and that for social and cultural development is good.
- Parents' views of the school are very positive.
- The quality of leadership and the management of the school is good.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics and science.
- The monitoring and evaluation of planning, teaching and learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997 and since then has made good overall improvement in both the areas identified and in the general organisation of the school. The previous report was very appreciative of the many pastoral and multi-cultural strengths of the school. These have been maintained well. The school was required to raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT); these have considerably improved. There is now a computer suite that is used regularly by all pupils in the main school and staff are now more confident in their usage of computers. Pupils now achieve well in this area of learning. The school has made satisfactory improvement in development planning and involves the governing body more in the planning and review process although more remains to be done to extend governors' direct involvement and knowledge of the day-to-day work of the school. There has been broadly satisfactory improvement in the provision for spiritual development although the school does not provide opportunities for pupils to participate in daily collective worship. Whilst standards in many subjects appear to have fallen since the last inspection the previous judgements that standards were average were not borne out in the intervening national tests where attainment has been low.

STANDARDS

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

* Note the category for similar school comparisons has been adjusted to reflect possible numbers of pupils not registered for free school meals because of concerns about providing Halal food.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			*similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	E	E	E	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	E	E	E	C	
Science	E	E	E	C	

The overall attainment of most of the children when they start in the nursery is very low, especially in the key area of communication, language and literacy. The development of speaking skills, which affects their achievement in all subjects, is an issue throughout the school. The adjusted National Curriculum test results in 2002 show that, at the age of seven, standards in reading were below average, those in writing were well below average and in mathematics were average when compared to schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals. The results also show that standards are well below the national averages. Inspection findings mirror the test results and indicate that standards of speaking, reading, writing and mathematics are well below average. There has been only slow progress in closing the gap between what younger pupils achieve in this school compared with pupils nationally.

The adjusted National Curriculum test results in 2002 show that, at the age of eleven, when compared to standards in similar schools the pupils are doing better, with attainment in English being above average and in mathematics and science being average. The test results also show that standards are still well below the average of schools nationally in English, mathematics and science. The school exceeded both its targets for 54% of pupils to achieve at least the expected Level 4 in English and for 50% to do so in mathematics, with the agreed targets being well below the national average. Inspection findings are that in Year 6 attainment is well below average in English, including speaking, and below average in mathematics and science. However, because of good teaching, pupils are making good progress and achieving well from a low start.

Standards in religious education, design and technology, geography, history and music are broadly average for the age of the pupils at the end of both key stages. Standards in physical education are below average. Standards in ICT are below average at the age of seven but average by the age of eleven whilst standards in art and design are the opposite. Pupils' learning and achievement are good overall, although they are more consistent for pupils in the juniors than elsewhere in the school. Some children in the Foundation Stage and the infants make less progress because less is expected of them. A large majority of pupils do not speak English as their first language, but they achieve as well as other pupils. Pupils with special educational needs do not always achieve as well as they might because the school does not identify those with particular needs early enough and the amount of additional support is limited.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are conscientious and get on with learning well although some offer little in discussions.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Playtimes are trouble free and in class invariably good behaviour means everyone can get on with the business of learning.

Personal development and relationships	Good. There are very good relationships between pupils and with staff. Pupils readily take responsibility for themselves and others, but there are relatively few opportunities for pupils to show initiative.
Attendance	Very low. This is well below the national average. Several families choose to take extended holidays in term time. During the period of inspection 5% of pupils were on holiday, which disrupts their learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, especially for those pupils in Years 3 to 6. This indicates similar overall findings to those of the previous inspection. As pupils are in mixed age classes for two years, staff know the pupils well. Underpinning teaching throughout the school is the staff's commitment to supporting the pastoral care of pupils. All pupils are valued for their achievements and effort. A feature of teaching is the use of praise, which encourages self-confidence, and promotes a climate where pupils feel comfortable. The management of pupils is good. Teachers explain things well and usually provide a good level of challenge to the pupils although more could be expected of some younger pupils including in the nursery. Within the Foundation Stage, teaching is better in the reception classes than in the nursery. The teaching of English and mathematics is satisfactory in the infants and good in the juniors. The teaching of many other subjects including science and ICT is also better for older than younger pupils. The teaching of physical education is unsatisfactory. Pupils make good overall progress and this is best in Years 5/6.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and reasonably balanced. The school makes appropriate use of national guidance for the teaching of all subjects. Extra-curricular provision is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils is managed in a satisfactory manner. Individual education plans are sound overall although of variable quality and the early identification of needs and support available is limited.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Teachers and learning support assistants support the many pupils with English as an additional language. This work could sometimes have a sharper focus and be given a higher priority.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Very good moral and good social provision promotes very good relationships. Pupils are taught to enjoy and respect the wealth of cultures and traditions in the school community. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory although the school does not comply with requirements for collective worship.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. The pastoral care of pupils is very good. Procedures for assessment are satisfactory although on occasion, especially in English, data could be used to track the progress of pupils more closely in order to provide the highest appropriate level of challenge.
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Parents think highly of the school and staff and are committed to developing their involvement in the education of their children.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	There is good leadership and management by the headteacher and senior management team. The subject leadership in the core subjects is effective although not as good in other subjects. The management of areas including special educational needs and English as an additional language lacks dynamic leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school and those in senior roles have good understanding of their responsibilities and of the importance of extending the direct involvement and knowledge of governors in the life and work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. While there are procedures to monitor the quality of planning, teaching and learning, they do not cover all areas of the school's work and sometimes lack the necessary rigour, for example in evaluating the nursery.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There is good financial management on a day-to-day basis but too large a budgetary carry forward. The school evaluates value for money in acquiring goods and services. There are good levels of staffing, although best use is not always made of the skills of classroom support staff. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and there are many areas requiring refurbishment. Resources are satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That children are happy, they like school and behave well. • That pupils make good progress and are expected to work hard. • That teaching is good, as is leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons. • The use of homework in a systematic manner. • More information about how their children are getting on at school.

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents and that the range of activities outside lessons is unsatisfactory. The use of homework and the information to parents are satisfactory but are areas that the school could develop further.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 Many children enter the nursery with only limited early education beyond their family and several are at the very early stages of learning English. The attainment of most of the children is very low especially in the key skills of communication, language and literacy. This affects their achievement in all areas of learning. School assessment information indicates that children's early attainment is very low in comparison to recognised national targets (the 'Early Learning Goals'). Children make generally satisfactory progress in the nursery and good progress in the reception classes. Nevertheless, attainment in the crucial skills of language and mathematics remains poor when the children enter Year 1, and skills in most other areas, whilst variable, are either below or well below average for the age-group.

2 The previous inspection report indicated that, at the age of seven, attainment in English, mathematics and science was in line with national expectations. However, these judgements were not borne out by results of national tests in that or any other subsequent year and appear optimistic.

3 In 2002, the National Curriculum test results show that at the age of seven standards were well below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared to schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals, and adjusted to take account of those choosing not to register, standards in reading were below average, those in writing were well below average and in mathematics were average. Inspection findings generally mirror the test results and indicate that standards of speaking, reading, writing and mathematics are well below average at the age of seven. Minor differences between the inspection findings and national test scores are due to the small differences in the natural abilities of different groups of pupils. There has been only slow progress in closing the gap between what younger pupils achieve in this school and what pupils achieved nationally.

4 The 2002 National Curriculum test results for pupils aged eleven showed that standards were well below the average of schools nationally in English, mathematics and science. The adjusted comparisons with schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals showed that the pupils were doing better, with attainment in English being above similar schools and in mathematics and science being average. Inspection findings are that in Year 6 attainment is well below average in English, including speaking, and below average in mathematics and science. However, because of good teaching, pupils are making good progress and achieving well from a low start. The gap between what older pupils achieve in this school and nationally is narrowing.

5 National Curriculum tests in the years from 1999 to 2002 show that attainment has been consistently well below the national averages in each area of English and in mathematics and science at the ages of seven and eleven. However, within these overall judgements there have been some improvements, with, for instance, more pupils achieving the expected Level 4 at the age of eleven in all three subjects in 2002 than the previous year. The pupils exceeded the targets for 54% to achieve at least the expected Level 4 in English and for 50% to do so in mathematics. However these targets were not particularly challenging and were well below the national average.

6 At the age of seven, pupils listen and respond well, but their speaking skills are very limited and poor in comparison to what is expected for their age. Many pupils answer briefly when asked a question and, although some offer their ideas in discussions, many do not.

Whilst some of these pupils are at the early stages of speaking English, most have reasonable understanding but lack confidence and are not always required by teachers to contribute to discussions. Pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring speaking and listening skills, but by the age of eleven speaking skills are still well below average. Overall their confidence in speaking is limited and this is a key issue.

7 At the age of seven, reading skills are well below average although most pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. Pupils often take their reading books home and many share these with their families. By the age of eleven, reading skills remain well below average even though clear progress is made at the junior stage. Many pupils have secure technical skills and read accurately, but their understanding of the text is relatively weak. Pupils' writing skills are below average at both seven and eleven. They make a slow start, but progress is generally satisfactory at the infant stage and better in the juniors. Handwriting is a weakness, especially in Years 1 and 2, when many pupils form their letters incorrectly. Older pupils often present their work well, but they do not join their writing early enough or consistently and seldom work in pen.

8 At the age of seven, pupils' understanding of mathematics is well below average but the progress they make is satisfactory. Several pupils have better understanding of numbers than they do of other aspects of mathematics such as shapes, space and measures. By the age of eleven, pupils make good progress in mathematics and, although standards are below average overall, they are improving. The effective teaching of the mathematics co-ordinator contributes to this good achievement.

9 At the age of seven, teacher assessments in science indicate that standards are very low and amongst the lowest five per cent of schools in the country. Pupils struggle to achieve well in experimental and investigative tasks. Inspection findings are that standards are slightly higher than teacher assessments indicate although they are well below average for the age-group. By the age of eleven, standards improve and although they are below national average pupils make good progress because of the good teaching they receive.

10 In the previous inspection the standard of attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) was identified as a key issue for improvement. The school tackled this issue well and pupils now achieve well from a low start. Although standards are slightly below average at the age of seven, the attainment of most pupils at eleven is average. Standards in art and design are the opposite of this and average at the age of seven but dip below average at the age of eleven. Standards in physical education are below average throughout the school largely because teaching does not ensure pupils make continuous progress in acquiring the required level of skills. Attainment in all other subjects, including religious education, design and technology, geography, history and music is average for the age of the pupils at seven and eleven.

11 The progress the pupils make improves as they move through the school. The progress made in the foundation stage is satisfactory overall although that made in nursery is not as marked as it could be. The progress pupils make in Years 1/2 is satisfactory although sometimes more could be expected of the pupils. The progress pupils make in Years 3/6 is better and is generally good, because in Years 5/6 teaching is consistently good.

12 Most pupils achieve satisfactorily in the Foundation Stage and the infants and well in the juniors. Whilst there are minor variations in the standards attained by boys and girls there is no significant pattern of difference and the expectations of the staff are that boys and girls will achieve equally. The school organises lessons in literacy and numeracy activities for groups of higher and lower attaining pupils in the infants and juniors and this is

an effective strategy. Higher attaining pupils make reasonable progress, with a growing number achieving the higher levels at the age of eleven. The school has identified no pupils as being gifted and talented in any specific area of learning. Overall the improvement made since the last inspection has been good. However, more remains to be done particularly in English and some aspects of other subjects to enable even more pupils to achieve well.

13 Pupils who do not speak English at home usually make similar progress to others in their class or group, except that their achievement in reading comprehension is, for obvious reasons, at a lower level than the others. This affects their learning in other subjects. In a few cases where these pupils also have significant learning difficulties, the language support available is not sharply enough focused to prevent them from falling further behind. Despite good teaching in the juniors, these factors combine to produce a relatively large group of older pupils whose literacy skills are low.

14 Two pupils with statements of special educational need are receiving sensitive support, tailored to their individual requirements, and are achieving well. Pupils in the juniors with identified emotional and behavioural difficulties have benefited from a locally funded intervention programme and are making generally good progress. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties, some of whom are not included on the register of special educational needs, do not generally receive the high quality one-to-one or small group support that could help to narrow the gap between them and their peers. They cannot be said to be under-achieving, but are not doing as well as many other pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15 Pupils' attitudes to school, which were praised by the previous inspection, are still good. They clearly enjoy their time in school, feeling that it is a good, safe place in which they are able to learn and play with their friends. The start of the school day is a good example of these attitudes. It is a calm, well organised occasion with pupils happily meeting and greeting each other and their teachers. Pupils get on well with each other and all the other adults who work with them. There have been no recent exclusions.

16 Pupils' behaviour is very good overall. They know what is expected of them and understand the benefits of good behaviour. In classes, as a result, no time is wasted dealing with problems arising from bad behaviour. Teachers are able to get on with their teaching and pupils with their learning. A good example of this occurred in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, when two pupils were excitedly working together to solve a money-based problem. They realised that they were getting 'carried away' and unselfconsciously apologised to their friends for any disturbance they had caused. The behaviour of a group of Year 5 boys, as they walked from school to the local swimming pool, was exemplary. However, in some lessons a small number of pupils call out during discussions which affects the concentration of others.

17 Pupils of all ages are capable of sustained periods of concentration and doing good work both in groups and on their own. They are conscientious, enjoy learning and frequently show maturity which is beyond their years. In a reception class mathematics session, for example, pupils enthusiastically spotted 'Ted the bear's mistakes' in a basic counting game, giving 'thumbs up' and 'thumbs down' responses to Ted's answers. In a really challenging Year 6 lesson about 'making the correct choice' pupils quietly got on with their discussions and research with minimal input from their teacher.

18 Pupils enjoy success and are very generous in the way that they watch, listen, learn from and praise each other. A Year 2 lesson, based on an indoor version of rounders, was filled with applause, mutual encouragement and a real feeling of fun as pupils mastered the

necessary self-discipline and techniques of throwing, catching and running. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson, pupils were obviously delighted when one of the least able pupils quietly found and proudly shared a correct solution to a tricky problem. Pupils thrive on responsibility where this is given. Older pupils help to look after younger ones at breaktimes. Year 6 pupils organise playground games for younger ones whilst others patrol the corridors to make sure that pupils move safely around the school and do not go where they shouldn't. However, the opportunities for pupils to show initiative are more limited and there is no recognised school council.

19 Lunch and playtimes are happy social occasions with pupils and their supervisors getting on very well with each other. There have been no recent exclusions. Every day, during the inspection, the dining hall hummed with conversation as pupils sat and ate their lunches. Both the infant and junior playgrounds are filled with an exuberant mixture of running and chasing games and pupils who just want to stand around and chat. Although there is the occasional burst of boisterous behaviour, no bad behaviour or bullying were seen. During one wet lunchtime pupil behaviour was exemplary with many quietly getting on with reading, games and even doing some extra work. Pupils confirmed that what the inspection team saw was normal for the school.

20 Pupils are tolerant, respectful and sensitive to others' needs and beliefs. In a Year 4 religious education lesson about Sikhism the atmosphere was such that a pupil was able to share his personal view of heaven with the rest of the class. A whole school assembly, in which pupils heard of the success of their pre-Christmas 'Shoebox' campaign to provide presents for poor children in Eastern Europe, was a remarkable celebration of others' happiness and had an almost tangible sense of achievement.

21 Twelve pupils in the junior age-group with emotional and behavioural problems have benefited from an external funded project, the 'Starfish programme', which provides personal support in school and a programme of activities out of school to build self-esteem and to help pupils to manage their own behaviour. This initiative has had very beneficial results for the pupils involved, and the school is now monitoring the success of the project.

22 Attendance is very low when compared with national averages. A major contributor to this is the extended in-term holidays taken by families who visit their family homes in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. During inspection week, for example, twelve pupils were away on holiday and this affects their learning. The majority of pupils arrive at school on time but the school's overall standard of punctuality is spoilt by a small group of parents who, for one reason or another, fail to get their children to school on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23 The quality of teaching is good overall, which maintains the findings of the previous inspection. The lessons observed showed a fine balance between that which is satisfactory and that which is good with teaching in the foundation stage and for pupils in Years 1 and 2 being satisfactory and that for pupils in Years 3 to 6 being good. There is consistently good teaching in Years 5/6, which enables an increasing proportion of pupils to meet the expected standards in national tests. In the 67 lessons observed during the inspection teaching was very good in 7% of lessons, good in 52%, satisfactory in 37% and unsatisfactory in 3%. The proportions of very good and good teaching are similar to that seen in the previous inspection, with slightly less unsatisfactory teaching than previously.

24 The teaching of children in the foundation stage of learning is satisfactory overall, which shows a dip in quality since the previous inspection. As previously, there are many strengths in the pastoral care of the children, which enables them to make a happy start to

school life. Parents are very pleased with the links they develop with the foundation stage staff and are appreciative of the warm and caring atmosphere created for the children. However, teaching is stronger and more effective in the reception classes, where it is good, than in the nursery classes where teaching is not as effective as it might be. Teaching in the nursery whilst generally satisfactory lacks impact. The nursery is spacious but best use is not made of the space to create a stimulating, bold, colourful and imaginative environment to interest and challenge the children. There is currently no specific role-play area to promote imagination and animated responses. Not enough use is made of open-ended questions in the day-to-day activities to encourage the children to answer in more than one word or short phrases and this does little to enhance children's speaking skills. Children in the foundation stage and the infants sometimes make less progress because less is expected of them than of older pupils.

25 Teaching for pupils in Years 1/2 is satisfactory, with several good features. This shows a slight dip in quality since the previous inspection. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is good, with some very good teaching. This enables the older pupils to make good and sometimes very good progress. A particular strength in teaching throughout the school is in the consistently good management of pupils, which ensures they are taught in a calm and orderly environment where they can concentrate well. Teachers support pupils according to the needs of groups and individuals. There is mutual respect between teachers and pupils and proper habits of work are developed.

26 Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach is good overall, but stronger in the juniors. Staff explain things well so that new ideas make sense to most pupils. Teachers competently teach all aspects of the National Curriculum other than physical education. Teachers in the infants teach the skills of literacy and numeracy satisfactorily and these subjects are taught well in the juniors. The teaching of mathematics for the older pupils is particularly successful because of the skills of the mathematics co-ordinator. This consistently challenging teaching makes a significant impact upon the progress the pupils make in mathematics.

27 The teaching of basic skills is good overall, although again this is stronger for the older than the younger pupils. Teachers are generally confident in the teaching of reading skills and most pupils make reasonable and often good progress although phonic skills are not always taught well enough to support reading at a higher level. The teaching of writing is satisfactory although not enough attention is paid to developing neat and correctly orientated letters in the infants. This results in some pupils making only limited progress in developing a neat and attractive written style. Teachers provide some opportunities to develop pupils' skills and confidence in speaking on a one-to-one basis but not enough chances to speak to larger groups. There are limited opportunities for role-play in structured tasks or in drama activities. This does little to develop pupils' confidence in speaking to an audience or in developing self-esteem.

28 The teaching of the basic skills in using numbers is good and enables pupils to learn to carry out mental calculations well by the time they leave the school. Basic skills in ICT are taught well. Staff have undertaken considerable training in this area since the previous inspection and effective use is made of the subject co-ordinator to teach skills across the age range. Scientific skills are taught in a satisfactory manner. However, in mathematics, science and several other subjects teachers do not organise enough open-ended problem solving or investigative and experimental activities to enable the pupils to become confident in these areas. Quite a lot of these activities are teacher dominated.

29 Teachers' planning is satisfactory across the school. Planning takes account of what the pupils already know and how individual lessons fit into longer-term plans. However,

planning rarely identifies the targeted level of achievement for different groups of pupils and therefore does not give a sharp focus to what is expected. The aims of lessons are clearly identified in planning although these are not always shared with the pupils and this limits pupils' knowledge of their own learning. Planning and provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory although there is room to develop this further.

30 Teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve are satisfactory overall and are good in Years 5/6. The planning of lessons often identifies how tasks offer a relevant level of challenge for different groups of pupils. However, the overall level of challenge offered to the pupils with above average attainment is not as consistently high as it might be, especially in English. Staff sometimes do not expect enough of pupils. However, teachers of the oldest pupils attempt to challenge and inspire pupils further by providing pointers to a deeper understanding and make clear to pupils the expectations of what they can achieve. This is well illustrated in a very good literacy lesson for lower attaining Year 5/6 pupils when reviewing the difference between myths, legends and fables. Here pupils who initially offer little are skilfully drawn into the activity through the support and praise of the teacher who moves their intellectual understanding forward.

31 The methods teachers use are satisfactory overall and are usually good in the juniors. Teachers explain things well so that most pupils gain new information and consolidate what they already know. Pupils are often grouped by ability from Year 1 onwards in English and mathematics and sometimes in other subjects. This is an effective strategy in promoting higher standards. However, teachers' use and style of questioning to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding is very variable. Open-ended questions to promote reasonable length responses are not used enough to develop speaking skills to a higher level. Teachers are sometimes too accepting of the fact that quite a large proportion of the pupils offer little to discussions. Some, but not enough, practical activities are organised to support learning well.

32 Most staff make efforts to ensure that all pupils are fully included in lessons. At best, teachers do everything they can to involve each child, for example adapting questions for the slower learners, giving pupils with limited English plenty of time to answer and providing enthusiastic encouragement for the quieter ones. In other cases, the support for learning is not as strong. In many cases pupils, including those whose command of English is not secure, are not given the opportunity to reinforce their learning by offering explanations in their own words. Although arrangements for grouping pupils are generally helpful, planning to cater for individual differences presents a mixed picture and is not always good enough.

33 The use of time, support staff and resources is satisfactory across the school. The use of time is adequate in most lessons but on quite a number of occasions, including in the reception classes, pupils are expected to sit and listen to teachers for too long. This affects their concentration. However, in the best lessons in Years 5/6 there is much better pace to lessons and activities move along more speedily. In the effective lessons, the pace is brisk and pupils work productively. Support staff are organised and used on a satisfactory basis. Some are occasionally used to help parents and pupils when they are new to speaking English but generally these skills are under-used. For instance, there is no full-time mother tongue support in the nursery. In other parts of the school where staff are available, they sometimes play a very peripheral role in lessons. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and enables them to make sound progress.

34 Learning resources are used in a satisfactory manner to extend pupils' learning. Good use is sometimes made of overhead projectors to illustrate various points to pupils. This is particularly effective in a very good mathematics lesson for the oldest pupils when the subject co-ordinator uses a big screen to exemplify how percentages, decimals and

fractions are linked. The ICT suite is used well to extend pupils' skills in using computers and a range of suitable programs. However, classroom computers are not used well enough and during the inspection some computers were rarely utilised.

35 The quality and use of on-going assessment is good. Because teachers have established good relationships with pupils they make effective use of praise which is appreciated by the pupils and helps to raise their self-esteem. The marking of the pupils work is mostly good and there are very good examples of this in Years 5/6 where some marking is detailed and very effective in identifying what the pupils do well and what they need to do to improve. The use of homework is satisfactory although a small number of parents would like to see this used on a more systematic basis. Staff are sensitive to the fact that many pupils attend mosque school in the evenings and have little time available to complete homework. However, the school is firmly committed to developing links with parents further and is keen to capitalise on their interest in supporting their children's learning and has plans to extend the use of homework on a more systematic basis.

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

36 In the previous inspection report the curriculum was judged to lack balance, being unsatisfactory in the provision for ICT and for art. The school has improved the provision in ICT and the curriculum for both subjects is now satisfactory. The statutory requirements for all subjects of the National Curriculum and for personal, social and health education are in place. Religious education (RE) meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Older pupils have swimming lessons and there are opportunities for instrumental tuition in brass, woodwind, recorder and percussion. All the school's curriculum policies and decisions support the full inclusion of all its pupils. The school does not however fulfil its obligation to provide all pupils with a daily act of collective worship.

37 The whole school curriculum is broad and generally balanced, providing a range of worthwhile learning activities, which are of good quality in English, mathematics, religious education, history and geography but less than satisfactory in art and physical education. There are 'booster classes' in the core subjects for half a term, taught by staff before school each morning. The performance of girls is monitored in these classes. The homework policy is implemented to a varying extent, reflecting the school's awareness of the after-school commitments of many pupils.

38 There has been a focus on making the curriculum relevant to the needs of pupils, resulting in all subjects having satisfactory or better breadth, balance and relevance, but also in some variations from the usual teaching time for individual subjects. In the core curriculum, time for English and mathematics is appropriately increased for some lower attaining pupils. In the foundation subjects, timings are in line with those usually applied apart from physical education, which has increased time in all parts of the school, reflecting the school's commitment to support development of a healthy life-style.

39 The school has satisfactory strategies for teaching literacy skills and those for developing numeracy skills are good. Other subjects are taught through a two-year 'rolling programme' of topics. Each has a scheme of work based on national guidance. The co-ordinator for each subject checks what teachers have planned for pupils in the half term ahead. Simple assessment sheets from the scheme of work are completed to indicate coverage of the curriculum. Parents would appreciate knowing areas of study in advance. There is no overall curriculum co-ordinator or formal review procedure, but evaluation of the curriculum takes place informally through teachers' feedback to subject co-ordinators on a weekly basis. Targets for development of core subjects and ICT are found in the school

improvement plan. There is a designated curriculum governor who takes an informed overview.

40 Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. There is effective use of the expertise of the school nurse who is known to pupils and parents. It is a priority for all partners in the school's work and now includes citizenship. Sex education is delivered according to the governors' policy and smoking and drugs awareness is promoted by visiting theatre groups. PSHE is taught in lessons, using a scheme of work, and also in pastoral time, when pupils can raise any issue of concern such as bullying. It contributes to the very good relationships in the school and helps to prepare pupils well for their secondary education.

41 An area of concern highlighted by parents is the lack of extra-curricular activities. This is supported by the findings of the inspection team. There are very few, making this area of the school's provision unsatisfactory. However, the school is considering changing the school day so that, by starting earlier, there will be time for clubs after school and before many pupils have another commitment.

42 The community makes a satisfactory contribution to the curriculum through increased involvement of parents, particularly through the newly established parents' association. Both the immediate and wider community provides strong support for the curriculum through the programme of links and visits made by pupils. In addition there are tentative links with a local mosque and the church visited as part of RE. There are good links with the main secondary school used by pupils. Teachers from there will be coming to Salisbury Primary to take classes next term.

43 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is satisfactory, but does not at present have a high enough profile. Although a list is maintained of children giving concern, the school does not identify special needs at an early stage, and time can be lost before the necessary interventions are put in place. A good number of pupils with mild emotional and behavioural difficulties are placed on the SEN register, but too few are identified as requiring extra support because of learning difficulties. Individual education plans are in place for all pupils on the register and these are kept up-to-date. In some cases targets are precise and crisply phrased, but there are also some instances of over-general targets. Good provision is made for pupils with statements of SEN, even though the extra staffing support required for some has not yet been forthcoming; this is because it has proved difficult to make the right appointment. Class teachers keep copies of individual education plans in their files and are generally aware of their content.

44 Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory, but as with SEN provision, is not given the priority that would be expected. All staff are experienced and knowledgeable in this area, because many pupils fall into this category, and classroom practice is generally helpful, especially in the reception classes. However, there are no clear arrangements for assessing the knowledge of children who are at an early stage of acquiring English and there is no structured programme to support their language learning. The skills of bilingual assistants are not always used to best effect; for example, assistants rarely use pupils' home language to check understanding or clarify meanings. External support is not always satisfactory, and the results of bilingual assessments undertaken by the local support team were available weeks later.

45 Provision for pupils' personal development is good. This has a positive impact on their attitudes, behaviour and relationships, which are also good. Very good moral and good social provision promotes very good relationships within the school. Pupils are taught to enjoy and respect the wealth of cultures to be found in their own and others people's

traditions. The school community shows enormous respect for the feelings, values and cultures of its pupils. It is very effective at promoting a harmonious climate that prepares its pupils for life in a multicultural world. Spiritual development is satisfactory and draws on the pupils' own beliefs and values. There have been improvements since the time of the previous inspection. The school has put in place times for reflection during the school day. However, provision for collective worship does not comply with legal requirements.

46 As at the time of the previous inspection, provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Weekly assemblies contribute to pupils' spiritual development through valuing pupils' inner worth and self-esteem. In a beautiful assembly, the school reflected on the personal connection they had with a financially disadvantaged part of the world. Real empathy was developed following involvement in the 'children helping children' shoebox appeal. Although there is no planned programme for spiritual development, the curriculum also plays its part, although more could be made of such activities. Younger children experience special moments of delight, for example when nursery children make sun biscuits, reception children blow bubbles and Year 2 pupils melt ice-cubes in a science lesson.

47 The school's programme of personal and social education together with the religious education programme, encourages pupils to think about the world they live in. Effective opportunities are provided for older pupils to reflect on their own beliefs. They explore ideas around difficult issues such as friendship, oppression and environmental issues. They consider intangible issues around loss, death and an after life.

48 Pupils' moral development is very well promoted. Teaching and support staff give clear moral direction and provide very good role models. They care about the well-being of the pupils, who appreciate this. Pupils decide their class rules, which are on display. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils respond very well to the school's reward system and as a result behaviour is good. Their efforts in all aspects of school life are praised. Pupils also show their appreciation for staff by giving them certificates. Pupils are encouraged to consider the needs of those less fortunate than themselves around the world and in Britain in a spirit of respect and care. They have opportunities to support many charities.

49 Provision for pupils' social development is good. Pupils are in a climate where they flourish. A strong feature of the school is the development of a special atmosphere, which begins when children start nursery. A mother and toddler group operates on a weekly basis before children enter the nursery so that most settle in quickly. A major focus of the school is on including all children. The result is a happy and caring school. A feature of most lessons is the opportunity to collaborate and share equipment and ideas. Personal development is well supported in the nursery and reception classes. Parents value the way pupils are helped to settle in so quickly. Pupils develop their personal initiative through a range of jobs around the school, including looking after new pupils.

50 While there are some opportunities for school clubs, overall extra activities outside class are not as strong as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Older pupils no longer have a residential experience or a range of activities after school. The school is aware of these issues and is actively looking at ways to improve provision. The school ensures that every pupil has a visit of some kind each term to enrich the curriculum provision. The personal and social programme helps pupils consider issues that affect their lives including being healthy or suffering stress. Although the school has chosen not to have a school council, pupils' views are sought on a range of issues.

51 Provision for cultural development is good. Pupils learn about British, European and non-European cultures through the curriculum, both within the school and through a range of visits and visitors that bring the curriculum to life. However, provision for music and art are less well developed than at the time of the previous inspection. The school programme for preparing pupils for life in contemporary Britain is very effective. Younger pupils appreciate different cultures through stories, play equipment, and by learning about different festivals. Older pupils are taught to appreciate current events in Britain and throughout the world by following news events. The school's religious education programme also teaches pupils to understand and respect the lives and traditions of different religious cultures. Pupils visit places of worship, which include a temple, church and gurdwara.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

52 The school governors, headteacher and staff are totally committed to ensuring that all pupils spend their school days in a safe and healthy environment. Security arrangements and child protection procedures are good. Such procedures are co-ordinated by an experienced senior teacher who is up to date with policies and procedures. All other staff are well briefed. There are good links with local agencies.

53 There are three fully qualified first-aiders and plans are in hand to train more staff to this standard. The governors, headteacher and site manager carry out regular safety inspections of the whole school site. They are very aware of the numerous hazards posed by the deteriorating state of the school's old buildings and work hard to minimise them. They continually lobby for improvements and repairs, which have a direct impact on the quality of life, learning, health and safety of the pupils. Current examples of the problems are the worn out lavatories, leaking roofs and inadequate drainage systems that sometimes require the school to close. Risk assessment procedures are good and all staff are involved in them. Nevertheless plans are in hand to broaden their scope and further develop them. There are also concerns about the role of pool staff in swimming lessons that require monitoring.

54 The school's arrangements for monitoring attendance and encouraging families to send their children to school are very good. Records, in spite of on-going problems with the computer-based system, are good. A very good first-day phone call system backed up by visits to pupils' homes by teachers and learning support assistants, deals with unauthorised and unexpected absences. The local education welfare officer is closely involved in the school's ongoing drive to push up attendance rates from their present poor levels. A major cause of this problem is the number of pupils who are taken on extended in-term holidays. During the inspection, for example, 5% of pupils were on holiday. The headteacher and staff do what they can to discourage this practice to ensure regular attendance.

55 There are good, informal systems for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well. They are aware of pupils' learning, personal development and cultural needs. In class, they encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. A good example of this was a Year 6 personal, social and health education lesson about 'making the correct choice'. Pupils of all abilities, after a careful briefing from their teacher, got on with 'unpicking' the problems and developing their own views on difficult 'world issues' such as pollution and food distribution.

56 The school has a very effective behaviour policy and procedures that successfully encourage pupils to behave, learn, develop and contribute to the school community. There is a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying and racism with the result that this is a happy, multi-racial community. There are reminders of rules on the walls of most classrooms but for the most part teachers gently tell pupils what is expected and lead through example. Pupils are helped to understand when and why their behaviour is unacceptable and then work out

what they should do to improve. This system works very well with the result that there is consistent calm and orderly atmosphere throughout the school. Good work, behaviour and contributions to all aspects of school life are rewarded through systems, which range from straightforward and immediate praise in class to special certificates, which are presented, in front of the whole school, at Fridays' praise assemblies. The school has appropriate procedures to support Internet safety.

57 The school keeps the needs of pupils with physical problems under regular review, and maintains a useful list of pupils giving concern. However, the school does not formally identify pupils as having special education needs (SEN) at an early stage, as required by the current Code of Practice. Most pupils on the SEN register are in the junior age group. There are also few clear arrangements for assessing or measuring the language competence of pupils at an early stage of learning English.

58 The overall procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. There are good procedures for assessment in mathematics, science and religious education. In English, ICT, history, geography and music, arrangements for assessment are satisfactory whilst those for art and design and for physical education are unsatisfactory. This is reasonable improvement on the previous inspection report where there were several areas for development.

59 The school has a comprehensive assessment, reporting and recording policy, which outlines the philosophy and rationale behind the assessment, and reporting of pupils' achievements. Current responsibility for its implementation lies with the subject co-ordinators, particularly those for mathematics, English and science. The systems, for these subjects in particular, enable teachers to track the progress of pupils in classes and ability sets more objectively. However, such systems have not yet been extended to cover all other areas of the curriculum. In some subjects, assessment is less structured, is largely by informal observation, and consequently has less impact on raising standards. The school has plans to re-appoint an assessment co-ordinator to work alongside the subject co-ordinators and the senior management team, in order to ensure a more effective implementation of a whole-school assessment and monitoring system.

60 Whilst procedures are satisfactory overall, assessment is sometimes not fully effective in practice. There is evidence of a mis-match of some pupils' work to their ability and more able pupils are not always rigorously challenged. Whilst an assessment focus and evaluation evidence is clearly identified on lesson plans, teachers do not always ensure that this information enhances future teaching and learning objectives. The school has adopted satisfactory baseline assessments in the nursery and reception classes. These results are cross-checked to ensure their validity. Value added performance is measured from reception to Year 6 to further identify pupils' needs in mathematics and English. Such results are also analysed in terms of gender and ethnicity in order to highlight trends in performance, particularly in language development and pupils' understanding in mathematics. Teaching staff and the senior management team carefully monitor the analysis of these tests and the subsequent strategies put in place to raise standards. This ensures the accurate and effective provision of targets of achievement for individual pupils and these are monitored for progress throughout the school in the main subjects.

61 The use of assessment information is satisfactory. The procedures the school employs has enabled the school to develop comprehensive learning plans to 'set' children according to ability and to further group them within ability units. Individual pupils across the ability range are tracked for progress. From all this information the school makes plans for further development of teaching and learning. The school recognises the need for further diagnostic testing and to link all assessment procedures to see how they inter-relate

between subjects. Whilst some staff have undertaken training on the application and analysis of assessment systems, the school has identified a need for further training for all teachers to raise confidence and competence in assessment procedures and to enable them to be applied more rigorously in practice.

62 The school pays reasonable attention to its assessment procedures when identifying pupils with special educational needs and those for who English is an additional language. Individual education plans are in place and there is a constant cycle of review with information about progress being fed back to teachers by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Pupils with special needs have targets set for both English and mathematics according to their need. However, these special needs are often not identified early enough and this delay has a negative impact on progress. Higher achieving pupils are also given individual education plans but only for mathematics and their progress in English and science in the juniors is not as carefully tracked in order to ensure effective continuity and progress throughout the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63 Parents are very pleased with Salisbury Primary School. They believe that it's a very good place in which all the staff work hard to help their children to learn and grow up. They are very supportive of the headteacher and all the other staff. Parents are even more appreciative of the school than they were in the previous inspection.

64 The school governors, headteacher and staff believe that a close working partnership with parents is essential if their pupils are to get the best that they possibly can out of their time in school. Parents appreciate the sensitive ways in which the school responds to the cultural and religious needs of the Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and white European communities who send children to the school. A typical example of this is the school's current campaign for Halal school meals to be made available.

65 The school regularly consults parents. A recent example of this was a ballot, which led to the non-controversial introduction of school uniform. Good links are also constantly being forged through initiatives such as the 'Lampost Bus'. This is a mobile computer classroom, which twice a week comes to the school. Twenty-five enthusiastic parents are using it to study for computer qualifications. The school is also seeking to address some parental wishes for more activities outside lessons.

66 Formal documents such as the governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus are well produced. Both documents are very informative. They contain useful information about all aspects of school life. Notice boards and letters home keep parents in touch with day-to-day events such as meetings of the parents' association. The majority of printed information for parents is available only in English. This policy, which appears to discriminate against those parents for whom English is a second language, is the direct result of informal research by the governors, headteacher, teachers and learning support assistants who are fluent in parents' first languages. Their findings are that translation from English, provided within pupils' families and communities, is the most effective way of reaching the greatest number of parents. Although this arrangement is satisfactory the school has long term plans to provide translations for those parents that wish it.

67 There are consultation meetings every term when parents are able to come into school to discuss their children's progress and targets. These meetings are well attended in the early school years but attendance drops off as pupils get older. By the time pupils reach Years 5/6 there is only 10% attendance with another 10% reached as a result of direct approaches by teachers. In spite of their failure to make full use of these meetings, a

significant proportion of the parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that they would like more information on how their children are getting on. The school is aware of this problem and relies on extensive day-to-day contact with parents in order to solve it. End of year reports, which go out just before the summer term consultation, are satisfactory. They contain detailed comments about progress in mathematics, English and science. Some also have broad targets for improvement in these subjects. The school has effective arrangements for informing and involving the parents of pupils on the register of special educational needs. Whenever possible, parents take part in reviews and are consulted when targets are drawn up.

68 For the last couple of years the school has operated an 'open door' system. Parents are welcomed into school at both ends of the school day and the headteacher is always willing to see them. Parents confidently circulate around the walkways and classrooms, speaking to their children's teachers as and when either they or teachers feel it is necessary. There is an impressively strong sense of community. Most pupils come from the nursery that is on the same site as the main school. Parents feel that the arrangements, which include visits and briefings, for bringing them and their children into the school community are "very good" and that staff are "so kind".

69 Parents make a satisfactory contribution to their children's learning. They are keen that their children should make progress. At present their direct support for homework is rather variable but they do encourage their children to work hard. However there is evidence, from the pre-inspection questionnaire, of a change with growing support for homework. There are relatively few parent volunteers to provide day-to-day help in classrooms and around the school although more help when asked to look after pupils on educational visits. The parents' association, which was only formed in September 2002, is already an important link between school and parents. It is a major means of communication, which through its weekly meetings is helping the school to reach out to a wider range of parents than ever before. It will soon be launching a multi-lingual newsletter. It has already organised several major social events, such as an end of term celebration and is planning its first major fund raising effort; to provide much needed furniture for the school's playgrounds.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

70 The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are good. Leadership and management were good at the time of the last inspection, although shortcomings in development planning, including financial planning, were identified. Despite significant subsequent problems with financial management, caretaking and accommodation, the quality of leadership and management has been well sustained and in some ways improved since the appointment of the present headteacher two years ago. The head has brought in some fresh thinking and is beginning to take the school forward. Raised expectations and consistent efforts, involving all staff, are slowly having a beneficial effect on standards. Most key issues from the last inspection have been tackled effectively, with good improvement overall.

71 On appointment, the headteacher inherited a management structure that was no longer entirely suitable. In a situation of falling rolls he chose not to appoint a deputy head, but instead to create a new senior management team with members taking it in turn to deputise. This innovative idea is serving its purpose, with senior teachers having good opportunities to gain management experience and to develop a whole-school perspective. As a result the senior management team is an increasingly well informed and experienced group that is beginning to influence development beneficially. Most co-ordinators provide

committed leadership in subject areas, although many are new to their roles and have further to go. A few subjects, most notably mathematics, are very effectively led and managed, with strong and well established arrangements for assessment, monitoring and analysis of test results. This is contributing to steadily improving achievement and test results.

72 The headteacher and staff work well together as a team and share a commitment to the welfare and achievement of all the pupils. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactorily managed, and administration is competent, with all the paperwork in order and up-to-date. However, this area is not given high enough priority. Learning needs are not identified soon enough and some pupils who would benefit from extra support are not included on the register of special educational needs. In comparison with other schools, a relatively large group of lower attainers is accepted as the norm, and this is a view that needs to be challenged. The school has received little advice or support in this area. Much the same goes for the school's arrangements to support pupils who are at a relatively early stage in learning English. Although there is a good level of awareness of the pupils' needs, the available bilingual support is not used as effectively as it might be to accelerate the learning of these pupils.

73 There are satisfactory procedures to monitor and evaluate the school's performance. The headteacher, members of the senior management team and core subject co-ordinators have monitored classroom practice, focusing on English, mathematics and science, as well as undertaking regular trawls of pupils' work to identify areas for improvement. There are agreed procedures and a useful format for observing lessons has been developed, but so far this monitoring has in the main been supportive rather than analytical. Although a start has been made, areas for improvement are not always identified clearly enough and there are not enough direct links with the school improvement plan. Some general shortcomings have not been picked up in the course of monitoring. Beyond the core subjects, most co-ordinators have had opportunities to look at colleagues' planning and at pupils' completed work, but they have not had a chance to gain an overview of teaching and learning throughout the school by classroom observation. In some subjects, for example art and physical education, this is inhibiting development. This issue is identified in the current school improvement and monitoring plans.

74 The governing body fulfils its responsibilities in a satisfactory manner. The school finds it difficult to recruit governors from the community, and many, including parent governors, are members of staff or have other close connections with the school. The headteacher and governors are well aware of the potential pitfalls here, and steps are currently being taken to broaden the base of the governing body. As matters stand, governors support the school well and those with specific roles undertake their responsibilities conscientiously. In general, the governing body meets its statutory obligations. All required policies and procedures are in place, including a policy for race equality. However, the school does not comply with requirements to hold a daily act of collective worship, even though this was a key issue at the time of the last inspection. Governors have made no attempt to regularise their position by applying to lift the requirement that worship should have a predominantly Christian content.

75 School development planning has improved since the last inspection, with all staff involved in a review of needs and priorities. Governors have every opportunity to consider plans at an early draft stage and to comment or challenge. The current school improvement plan has some strengths. Significant areas are identified for development, and are accompanied by clear action plans and rough costings. However, the plan includes no written performance review and governors' long-term objectives, financial plans and rolling programmes are not set out in enough detail. Professional development plans are not

mentioned and, in particular, the links between the school's main educational priorities and overall financial planning are not sufficiently specific.

76 Day-to-day financial management is highly efficient, with procedures followed scrupulously by the school's competent administrative staff. There are constructive relationships with local finance officers and all recommendations made by the most recent audit have been promptly acted upon. This area has improved significantly since the last inspection.

77 Educational priorities are satisfactorily supported through the school's budgetary planning. Overall financial planning has good features, with earmarked grants used effectively for the intended purposes. However, setting the budget has been complicated by uncertainties over the site and buildings, including abortive plans for a new school building. In order to cover the eventualities, governors allowed a carry-forward in the budget for 2001/2 that was greater than desirable. Plans for spending in the current year are bringing the budgetary surplus down to a reasonable level. The headteacher and governors have a clear understanding of the principles of 'best value' and do their best to secure value in the goods and services they purchase. Some good decisions have been made. For example, the school has decided to employ its own site manager rather than relying on the local education authority's caretaking and cleaning services. This successful move has saved both time and resources.

78 Staffing levels are good. The school has a stable team of hard-working teachers and increasing numbers of classroom support staff. The deployment of teachers within the school's 'unit' organisation of adjoining year groups is effective, enabling due allowance to be made for occasional non-contact time where staff have administrative or managerial responsibilities. However, the deployment of classroom support staff and their precise contribution to each lesson is an area requiring further development. Sound arrangements for performance management are in place. There is a regular programme for the professional development of all staff but some non-core subjects such as the teaching of physical education have not been a priority and this has limited further development.

79 The quality of the school accommodation is unsatisfactory, largely because of the age of the building. Services such as heating and drainage require constant repair and problems have resulted in short term school closures. The extensive glass-covered corridors are not fully weatherproof and the ceilings in some classes are in poor repair. A floor has recently subsided, leaving one classroom uninhabitable. These and many other minor issues are a continual drain on school finances and staff time. Nevertheless, many rooms are of a good size and within each class, staff do their best to create an attractive and comfortable learning environment for the pupils.

80 Resources for learning are satisfactory, but there are gaps that affect teaching and learning in some of the foundation subjects. Classroom computers, although usually available, are not used to best effect to support learning on a day-to-day basis. The reference library is well organised and adequately stocked, and reading resources have recently been greatly improved. Taking into account the good progress being made by the pupils, the school is judged to give satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

81 In order to continue to improve the quality of pupils' learning, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

1. Continue to improve standards in English, mathematics and science by:
 - planning and implementing a programme of activities specifically designed to extend the opportunities to develop a wider vocabulary and confidence in speaking in all subjects (paragraphs 6,24,27,31,91,105,106,113);
 - providing time in each lesson for pupils to practise and use language appropriate to the subject to explain their learning (paragraphs 27,106,120,151,156,161);
 - developing pupils' reading and comprehension skills (paragraphs 13,105,153,);
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to write at length, in depth and in a variety of styles across the curriculum (paragraphs 27,109,110,112);
 - extending the pupils' ability in problem solving and investigational skills in mathematics and science (paragraphs 28,97,122,133,137,141);
 - ensuring that all pupils with special educational needs and those at the early stages of using English have their needs identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity (paragraphs 14,29,43,57,62,72,86,110).
2. Improve the quality and accuracy of monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school by:
 - extending the role of the senior management team and subject co-ordinators through their direct involvement in monitoring and evaluation procedures, including in the nursery (paragraphs 59,73);
 - carrying out regular and rigorous evaluations of the quality of planning, teaching and learning using agreed criteria (paragraphs 84,88,115,148,152,158,165,179).

MINOR ISSUES THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD CONSIDER

- The quality of the school accommodation and how this affects the education provided (paragraph 79).
- Ensuring that attendance meets at least the national average by firmly encouraging parents not to take holidays in term time (paragraphs 22,54).
- The requirement that the school should provide a daily act of collective worship (paragraphs 36,45,74).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	5	35	25	2	0	0
Percentage	0	7	52	37	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 more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	14	238
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	60

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	21

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	197

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.5
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	19	19	38

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	11	16
	Girls	14	11	17
	Total	27	22	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	71 (62)	58 (56)	87 (82)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	17	7
	Girls	14	16	3
	Total	24	33	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	63 (59)	87 (77)	26 (44)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	17	12	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	9	13
	Girls	8	8	9
	Total	20	17	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (58)	59 (52)	76 (70)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	11	14
	Girls	8	8	9
	Total	20	19	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (64)	66 (61)	79 (70)
	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	31	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	6	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	49	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	74	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	73	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	14	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22:1
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	284

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65
Number of pupils per FTE adult	5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
	£
Total income	742,209
Total expenditure	695,018
Expenditure per pupil	2,861
Balance brought forward from previous year	34,222
Balance carried forward to next year	81,413

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	146
Number of questionnaires returned	82

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	28	0	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	57	40	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	39	1	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	32	17	0	11
The teaching is good.	62	37	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	29	11	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	22	2	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	17	1	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	60	32	4	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	67	27	0	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	35	0	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	23	9	13	22

The parents are generally very supportive of the school although many of those who responded to the inspection questionnaire do not feel that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. Several do not feel that the use of homework is systematic and some would like more information about how their children are getting on at school.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE (nursery and reception classes)

82 Provision for the children in the foundation stage is satisfactory, with a number of strengths. There is a secure early years curriculum in place. Overall, children make satisfactory progress from a very low starting point. Children attend nursery part time and most join the reception classes. The admission arrangements are very good and ensure children in nursery and reception settle readily. Parents are pleased with how easily their children settle and the efforts made by staff. Parents of nursery children are made to feel very welcome. Reception staff provide time at the beginning and end of the day to talk to parents. There are currently few parent volunteers, however parents make a valuable contribution to the children's learning at home by undertaking reading activities. Information is provided, including a booklet using a number of home languages. Nursery families are provided with lists of key words that children will be using. Parents appreciate the weekly toy and book libraries.

83 The school works hard to create an inclusive atmosphere. For example, a parent and toddler group meets each week in nursery. This helps children get to know the staff and other children before they start. Staff in nursery and reception classes provide a calm and safe learning environment. The nursery accommodation is spacious but has some shortcomings. Resources are improving. However, improvement is needed in the use of resources to provide a stimulating and rich learning environment, particularly in the home area, role-play area and reading areas. The outdoor area is used by both nursery and reception children but the constraints are such that children are not able to use it on a continuous basis, throughout the day to develop their physical or creative play.

84 The nursery assessments show that the children join with extremely low skills. During their time in nursery most make satisfactory progress. The local baseline assessments show that the majority of children start in their reception year with skills that are very low. Good use is made in nursery and reception of ongoing informal assessments that are fed into the children's detailed records. The co-ordinator has put in place detailed medium term plans for each area of learning for nursery and reception. Nursery nurses who are responsible for the nursery discuss the children's needs and the curriculum informally with staff. However there are no arrangements to meet on a weekly basis to discuss the progress of children or the planning for the following week.

85 The small number of children in the reception classes who are identified as having special educational needs make satisfactory progress. However, almost all the children identified have medical rather than learning needs. The co-ordinator liaises with the special needs co-ordinator to monitor possible children for further support.

86 The large proportion of children who have English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. However, arrangements for those who are very early users of English are not as effective as at the time of the previous inspection. Nursery children currently only have access to dual language support at the beginning of the morning and beginning of the afternoon sessions and during social fruit time. They no longer have ongoing access to dual language support throughout the day. Reception children are better supported, as staff are able to offer home language support throughout the day.

87 Teaching overall is satisfactory with some strengths identified, particularly in reception. As a result children make satisfactory progress overall, with some making good

progress with their reading, sounds and number recognition. Teaching in the nursery is satisfactory. However sometimes the pace is too slow. Some children have too much time without focused language intervention. By the end of the year most reception children are unlikely to achieve most of their early learning goals, except in physical development, because they start from such a low level with their communication and numeracy skills. Overall the quality of planning, teaching and learning has dipped in the nursery since the previous inspection of the school.

88 The foundation stage is appropriately led by an experienced early years practitioner. She has introduced a suitable curriculum successfully. However, she is not able to fully support the nursery staff in delivery of the curriculum, as there is no formal meeting held on a weekly basis. Time is provided to organise the admissions and meet with parents. There is no formal programme of monitoring teaching and learning across the foundation stage. This limits the help and guidance she can provide to staff.

Personal, social and emotional development

89 Most children start nursery with extremely immature social skills. Nursery staff help them to settle in quickly. Weekly sessions for parent and toddlers make a real difference in helping those who stay to settle easily. Staff are very caring and flexible to meet children's needs. Children enjoy the range of activities but need regular encouragement to stay with one activity. Well-established routines such as registration, group, fruit and juice time help build the confidence of quieter children. Staff encourage the children to behave appropriately through the use of praise and encouragement.

90 By the time they join reception they have learned some routines and are gaining independence. Reception children work well in small groups and alongside each other. Care is taken to include all children and to make sure none are isolated. There are very good relationships between the staff and children. The staff make sure the children know what behaviour is expected. They use lots of praise, which the children respond to very well. Most children enjoy learning, behave well and work hard. The system of special 'helper for the day', with their photo displayed, helps children feel special and valued. Personal development is well taught in both nursery and reception. As a result most make good progress in developing social skills and in building up their confidence. By the end of the year, the majority of children in reception will have skills that are just below expectations.

Communication, language and literacy

91 Most nursery children start with skills that are extremely low in reading, writing and speaking. A large number of children are early users of English. They get satisfactory support overall. However, some opportunities are missed for children to use their first language and to extend their talking. Children in nursery do not currently have ongoing support throughout the day, although it can be called on. In reception, children have more ongoing bilingual support. However there are no targeted sessions or a specific language programme for the many children who are very early users of English either in the nursery or reception classes. In reception, the introductions to some literacy lessons are too difficult for the very early users of English. They respond better when the class is split into smaller groups and they have the opportunity to lean through play and talk.

92 In nursery, the range of books and the furniture need to be improved so that children's interest is better stimulated. Currently children rarely use the reading areas to browse; they sometimes use them to play in. When they have individual time with the nursery staff they are responsive and eager. Reception staff work hard to develop reading strategies and skills and some children are making good progress with their sight

vocabulary. Most children in reception handle books sensibly because they are taught to look after them. They enjoy sharing books with the staff and some are beginning to develop understanding of sounds and words to help them read. In a good lesson observed in reception, support staff were used well to practise the sight vocabulary of the more able children. The teacher stimulated the children's interest by use of a familiar story *The Bear Hunt*. Most of the session was taught effectively in very small groups. As a result the less able and more able children made good progress with different reading and writing skills, pitched at their level.

93 Handwriting skills are regularly reinforced. Teachers provide many opportunities for children to trace and form letters in different media such as playdough and sand. Some children can write their names without help. Supplies of paper, pencils and crayons are readily available for children to make marks on paper. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching of reading skills in reception. Most children are unlikely to achieve their targets in speaking, writing and reading at the end of reception because most start as very early users of English. Overall, children need more opportunities to extend their speaking skills and share their ideas.

Mathematical development

94 Most nursery children start with skills that are extremely low in mathematical knowledge and understanding and in their ability to use mathematical language. They are satisfactorily taught an appropriate range of matching and counting activities. They have a daily routine of practising their colours, shapes and numbers. Most nursery children find it difficult to use mathematical language. Weekly themes are used to add interest; for example children identified colours while painting rainbows. However, more time needs to be given to developing children's use of mathematical language. For example water and sand activities are not in use every day.

95 In the reception classes, staff use a variety of ways to practise and extend number awareness and the use of mathematical language. For example in a very well-taught lesson, the teacher's use of a teddy bear who made mistakes engaged and excited the children's interest and helped them concentrate. Good use is made of equipment such as dice and the activities are well matched to the children's differing needs. As a result, very good progress is made. In some sessions however, early users of English need more counting apparatus and more focused practice and consolidation to help them with concepts such as *less than* and *smaller than*. Number rhymes and songs are used well to consolidate number awareness. More able children are identified and make good progress in their number awareness. Teaching is good in reception; however, most children are likely to have well below average standards in mathematical development by the end of reception because they start with very limited mathematical language and number skills.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

96 Most nursery children start with skills that are extremely low in knowledge and understanding of the world. They are taught well through a range of weekly topics, together with seasonal activities such as planting bulbs and collecting leaves. In a well taught practical session children derived great pleasure from exploring items in a suitcase and extending their knowledge of holidays. Children have daily opportunities to use large and small construction equipment.

97 Most children join reception with well below the expected levels of understanding for their age. A range of topics, together with regular visits including to Sandwell Valley Farm, Walsall art gallery, the local park and many others widen children's knowledge of the world.

Visitors, including one with a number of wild animals, stimulate children's interest well. Children have regular opportunities to make models. However, opportunities are missed in the nursery and reception classes for children to explore informally, as there are no ongoing investigation areas with a range of equipment for children to handle. The staff successfully build on the children's own knowledge of different cultures through the range of books, music and resources available, for example the use of African and Indian prints in their artwork. Children also learn about a number of festivals including Diwali and Christmas as they arise.

98 The nursery computer is broken. More thought needs to be given to providing them with the opportunities to use computers. Information technology skills are developed well in reception classes. Computers are in use daily with a range of programs to practise language, number and art activities. Girls and boys have positive attitudes to using computers. Teaching is good in nursery and reception. Most children are likely to remain well below expectation because they start with very limited knowledge and have difficulty expressing their ideas.

Physical development

99 Most nursery children start with physical skills that are below expectation. They are taught satisfactorily to develop their skills. They enjoy activities and make good creative efforts at movement. Children enter reception with their skills below that expected for their age. Nursery and reception children have sessions in the school hall for movement and dance. In a good lesson, children concentrated well and put a lot of effort into jogging and skipping and using the hall equipment. They thoroughly enjoyed exercising and behaved well. This is because the teacher and nursery nurse gave clear guidance, maintained a good pace and made the lesson interesting and fun.

100 The outdoor area provides daily opportunities for nursery girls and boys to play with three wheeled bikes and large and small construction equipment. Due to the constraints of the building, reception children do not have daily or continuous access to an outdoor area. Staff try to overcome these difficulties and reception children have a weekly session in the nursery outside area. They really benefit from this opportunity. The staff also provide many opportunities for children to practise their skills in cutting, sticking and painting. Teaching is satisfactory in nursery and reception and children make steady progress. Most are on course to achieve the early learning goals in their physical development. A significant minority are likely to remain below these targets. This is because they have difficulty using tools and manipulating small equipment.

Creative development

101 Most nursery children start with creative skills that are well below average. They are taught satisfactorily to develop their skills and to explore colours when painting rainbows or making sun collages as part of their weather work. They have some opportunities to join in simple rhymes. Children enter reception with skills well below that expected for their age. Staff provide children with an appropriate range of creative experiences. Children are encouraged to experiment freely when mixing paints, printing or using materials. They produce some attractive independent pictures and collages using chalks and pastels. They use equipment sensibly and have been taught to hold paintbrushes appropriately. Most children enjoy their singing activities. Most join in with a number tape that includes simple number and language songs such as *Five Fat Sausages* and some are able to make their own suggestions.

102 The imaginative play areas in both the nursery and reception need more resources so those children can fully extend their use of language and further develop their creativity. Teaching is satisfactory in nursery and reception. Most children are unlikely to achieve the early learning goals by the end of their reception year. This is because, while they have appropriate artistic skills, many children have difficulty expressing their creative ideas, thoughts and feelings.

ENGLISH

103 Current standards in English are well below the national average at the ages of seven and eleven. This is consistent with the school's results in the most recent national tests. In 2002, at the age of seven, around three-quarters of the pupils reached the expected level, but very few reached the higher Level 3 in reading and none did so in writing. Test scores at seven have tended to decline in recent years, reflecting lower attainment on entry, and are below those of similar schools. The picture at the age of eleven is more encouraging. Results have remained well below the national average since 1998, because too many pupils fail to reach the expected Level 4 and very few achieve level 5. However, the 2002 results were better than the average for similar schools. Test scores at eleven have been improving at a faster rate than in other schools, partly because girls have been doing better recently. Although the gap has narrowed, boys still tend to outperform girls in this age group, in contrast to the national picture. This is almost certainly the result of different family expectations. Standards were judged to be broadly average at the time of the last inspection, but this conflicts with the evidence provided by national test results, which suggest that steady improvement has been sustained, especially in the juniors.

104 From a low starting point the pupils make steady progress in English in Years 1 and 2. Despite satisfactory teaching, this is not currently enough to accelerate progress and to start to lift standards by the end of the key stage. The school has implemented the National Literacy Strategy in a satisfactory manner. Despite useful initiatives such as the nationally funded 'ELS' provision, support for the lower attainers and for those with special educational needs is not making enough difference. The support for pupils at an early stage in learning English is also not sufficiently structured. With good teaching, achievement improves and many pupils make better progress through Key Stage 2, although there remains a long 'tail' of lower attainers.

105 The pupils' listening skills are below average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 because of insecure comprehension, and speaking is well below average at the end of both key stages. This is partly because a significant proportion of the pupils either speak little English at home or lack standard English models. Even so, by Year 2, the pupils respond to questions, follow simple instructions and grasp the gist of the stories read to them. Most average and above average pupils give a passable account of the main events in a simple story, but detailed description is often lost on them. For example, having listened to a story read by their teacher, even the higher attaining pupils in Year 2 found it difficult to recall anything much about the two contrasting locations described. This impeded the progress made. Pupils in Year 1 show understanding of the story 'Farmer Duck' because they have an opportunity to see it in an animated version on video. Above average pupils volunteered that the farmer was 'lazy' and 'disgusting' and made an effort to explain why the duck's situation was unfair. One child at an early stage of learning English said, 'Duck are very sad'.

106 In the junior classes, limited vocabulary continues to have an effect on learning. In a mixed Year 3 and Year 4 science lesson for example, some lower attaining pupils could not recall the English names for some common vegetables. A number of higher attaining pupils in Year 5 are not familiar with words such as 'coward', and this affects their understanding of

the action in an extract read to them. When discussing their reading, higher attaining pupils in Year 6 are clear and articulate in expressing themselves; for example one girl gives a cogent account of the differences in style between the 'Harry Potter' books and the work of the author Jacqueline Wilson. This is the exception, though. Average pupils struggled to express their ideas when asked what they liked about a favourite book. Pupils' limited ability and confidence in speaking English is a challenge for teachers throughout the school and affects their learning in all subjects.

107 Standards in reading are well below average at the end of both key stages largely because there is a large group of poor readers in every year-group. Some older pupils have gaps in their phonic knowledge. In Year 1 average and lower attaining pupils find it difficult to cope with both the names of letters and the sounds they make, tending to mix the two, and some have poor recall of common words. Average pupils in Year 2 are making steady progress with their reading, but the texts they read fluently are relatively easy for the age group. They are very much enjoying a new reading scheme, with characters and stories that appeal to them, and this is beginning to contribute to the progress made, especially as teachers have matched the books well to the pupils' level of competence. By seven, a small group of higher attaining pupils are reading competently and independently, although with little expression. Technical skills are good: for example, one child coped with difficult vocabulary from the reading scheme such as 'celebrate' and 'carriages', understanding these words in context.

108 By Year 6 there is a very wide span of reading competence. Higher attaining pupils read carefully and accurately at a level appropriate for the age group, but their reading tends to be dull and expressionless. In general the higher attainers show good understanding of the text and discuss characters and motivation in the stories they are reading. They read a wide range of children's literature and talk about their favourite authors. Most know their way around the school's reference library and use the catalogue. They confidently use an index to locate information. Average pupils are reading competently and have the technical skills they need to attempt unfamiliar words; however, their reading books, although well matched to their level of development, are relatively easy for the age-group. These pupils usually grasp the general meaning, but many have difficulty in understanding idiomatic phrases such as 'he never heard the last of his blunder'. Because the pupils miss nuances in the text, they find it difficult to infer meaning. There is a large group of lower attainers, many of whom are operating at a very low level for Year 6. Some of these pupils have a problem in 'hearing' what they are reading and persist with errors even when they make no sense. New resources are popular with them, however, and are helping to increase their enjoyment of reading and willingness to persist.

109 Standards of writing are well below average at the end of both key stages. The pupils are encouraged to write independently, but only a small number of higher attainers achieve this in Year 1, with high levels of adult support. Average pupils work with sentence makers at this stage in order to give them a start, a strategy that is working well. The pupils have experience of a good range of writing tasks, including book reviews, descriptions, stories, lists and instructions in Years 1 and 2. A small number of higher attaining pupils tackle these tasks competently for their age, writing half a page or more, for example when re-telling a familiar story. The rest of the pupils are still producing very little written work by Year 2.

110 Older pupils are also given broad opportunities for writing in English lessons, including good attention to imaginative writing, including poetry. Steps have been taken to ensure that they have adequate time to write at length, but writing opportunities are not exploited in all areas of the curriculum. Higher attainers in Year 6 are capable of interesting and imaginative writing, and their work includes good examples of atmospheric description.

In one ghost story, for example, the grounds of a haunted house are said to have 'no flowers, but weeds upon weeds'. Even the most capable pupils find it difficult to sustain a consistent style, however, and there are many examples of over-blown writing and anti-climax in their work. Many pupils who speak English as an additional language have trouble in managing tenses, especially the past tense.

111 Spelling is a relative strength, reflecting the systematic teaching of letter sounds and spelling patterns throughout the school. The most capable pupils in Year 2 spell common words without help, making sensible attempts at the spelling of less familiar vocabulary, as in 'noked' (knocked) and 'happend'. By Years 5/6 average pupils are aware of common spelling strings and rules, and understand how prefixes and suffixes can be added to core vocabulary. They make a few mistakes with commonly used words, but on the whole spell accurately. Punctuation is satisfactory, except that pupils throughout the school have difficulties with sentence demarcation.

112 Handwriting is a relative weakness, and is not given close enough attention. In Years 1/2 many pupils form their letters incorrectly, and written work is full of reversals, capital letters in the middle of words and letters with descenders such as g and y 'sitting on the line'. In the juniors there are high expectations that the pupils will present their work to a good standard, and as a result written work is well set out. However, the pupils do not start to join their writing consistently or early enough, which affects the fluency and speed of their writing later on. Almost all work is completed in pencil, right up to Year 6, and the pupils lack experience of working in pen. A handwriting policy is in place, but the lack of a scheme to ensure consistency is a disadvantage.

113 During the inspection teaching and learning were sound in the infants and good in the juniors. In some classes there are high expectations and a good level of challenge as the pupils progress towards the top of the school. With few exceptions, marking and day-to-day assessment are important strengths that are contributing to progress. Most teachers mark pupils' writing meticulously. In Year 1, for example, the context is carefully recorded and next steps are clearly identified. In lessons, many teachers focus effectively on developing vocabulary, but in only one very successful lesson were the pupils expected to articulate their own explanations at any length; providing more such opportunities for purposeful speaking is an area for development. Apart from handwriting, basic skills are effectively taught. The use of children's stories and classic literature to broaden the pupils' horizons and improve their writing is a positive feature. Staff make generally effective use of teaching aids such as overhead projectors and sound use of computer programs to reinforce routine learning.

114 Classroom support staff make an uneven contribution to pupils' learning in English lessons. Whilst some join in enthusiastically, especially helping lower attainers to follow the lesson and encouraging them to participate, others adopt a relatively passive role. Very little mother tongue support is provided for pupils at an early stage of learning English, although people with a thorough knowledge of community languages are available. Some support staff do not have a high enough level of skill when it comes to hearing reading and modelling handwriting, suggesting a need for further training.

115 The English co-ordinator is new to the role, but is an experienced teacher with a good understanding of how to take the subject further. Assessment routines are satisfactory. Some monitoring of classroom practice has taken place alongside a literacy consultant from the local education authority, but this needs to be taken further. The co-ordinator has already pinpointed areas for development such as the need to improve the quality and use of class libraries and the need to look at resources to help the weakest

readers. The school library has recently been improved, although during the inspection was not used to full effect.

MATHEMATICS

116 Inspection findings are not as good as those at the last inspection, when standards were judged to be in line with national expectations at the end of each key stage. However, this was not borne out by subsequent national test results. Currently pupils in Year 2 attain standards which are well below those expected for their age whilst pupils in Year 6 attain standards which are below the national average. The 2002 national test results paint a generally similar picture and show that standards were well below national averages. However, when compared to schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals, attainment was average at the end of both key stages.

117 Standards are improving and since 2000, there has been a steady increase in the number of 11-year-olds reaching the standards expected in national tests. The school exceeded its targets for the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or better at the age of eleven in 2002. Standards are not as high as they could be as a significant number of pupils do not reach the expected standards for eleven-year-olds. In addition, too few pupils reach standards beyond those expected for their age. Teachers do not always expect enough of the pupils. There are no significant differences in the performance of girls and boys but, although the results have fluctuated over the past three years, girls performed better than boys in the 2002 tests at eleven. Pupils for who English is an additional language make the same progress as their classmates.

118 The school analyses its performance in national tests on the basis of gender and ethnicity and sets targets for pupils according to need. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language have specific targets set for mathematics and their achievement is in line with that of their peers. Whilst they make satisfactory progress overall, insufficient practice is given to consolidate basic numeracy skills before moving on to the next stage.

119 By the age of seven, a majority of pupils count to 100 and are beginning to understand number patterns and sequences in multiples of 2 and 10. Most are able to recognise numbers in words and symbols and the numerical value of each digit in a two-digit number. The majority recognise odd and even numbers but some are unable to explain the rules associated with them. More able pupils add and subtract two-digit numbers but without carrying or borrowing strategies. Many pupils still require aids such as counters and number lines to assist them to work out simple sums involving single-digit numbers. Pupils are introduced to common two-dimensional shapes and know their names but are unsure about their features or properties. Pupils' work indicates very limited practice in measuring and estimating length in centimetres. However, pupils are more familiar with recognising coin values and calculating shopping bills. For example, in a good Year 2 lesson, pupils used practical apparatus to help them calculate the sum of three amounts. The tasks made them think hard and, by including £1 coins, challenged the more able pupils. There is however insufficient emphasis in the area of shape, space and measures and consequently pupils' learning and progress is significantly reduced.

120 Pupils' grasp of simple mathematical vocabulary and their ability to compute or work out simple operations mentally is developing slowly in the infants. This was evident in a successful lesson with Year 1 pupils who were challenged to apply their 'counting-on' and 'taking-off' skills to a problem situation without the assistance of counters. However, pupils need more time to practise and consolidate their mental and computational skills before moving on to the next stage. This was evident with Year 2 pupils, some of whom found

difficulty in adding on numbers beyond 20. Pupils need more opportunities to explain their reasoning and explore doing things 'a better way'.

121 By the age of eleven the majority of pupils are able to add and subtract a series of two and three digit numbers mentally, although lower achieving pupils still lack confidence and use fingers to assist their thinking. A few are insecure with their tables and the inverse operation of division is under-emphasised. The proportion of pupils who are able to apply the four operations of number with the expected competence and accuracy is improving but remains below the national average. This was evident when talking to Year 6 pupils, some of whom were unable to calculate 3500 divided by 7, half of 0.16 or give an approximation to 51×49 . More able pupils have a sound understanding of place value to hundred thousands and decimals to three places. They double and halve higher order numbers and decimals with various degrees of accuracy.

122 Throughout the school pupils are more secure at checking their work and making sensible estimations as teachers now encourage this. In addition, pupils' confidence in applying their work to problem-solving situations is improving. For example in a very good lesson with Year 5 and 6 pupils, involving time, the teacher used a variety of open questions to elicit understanding and to extend learning, such as, "Can you suggest a better way of adding 55 minutes to a given time?" The teaching strategies used were very effective in reinforcing the relationship between analogue and digital time systems and the work set was appropriate for each ability group but was sufficiently rigorous and challenging to raise standards. In another successful lesson, Year 3/4 pupils were asked to work out a series of shopping bills and to calculate change from £1. Pupils were encouraged to make sensible estimations first and the value of approximating answers was strongly emphasised.

123 Older pupils identify and learn about higher order polygons and three-dimensional solids. An interesting display in the mathematics room illustrates a variety of designs using cubes of varying sizes. Elsewhere there are good displays illustrating tessellations of regular polygons, nets of prisms and pyramids and colourful patterns with line and rotational symmetry, all clearly linking with work in art and design technology. These displays are effective in supporting learning although in some classrooms there is little evidence of pupils' own work. Generally, however there is little to suggest regular strong links between mathematics and other areas of the curriculum.

124 There is too little emphasis on the concepts of space, shape and measures and in data handling. Written evidence indicates insufficient work is covered in area, capacity, weight, symmetry, co-ordinates and the use, interpretation and creation of histograms and pie charts. As a result, a significant element of mathematics is missing from pupils' learning and this serves to keep standards low.

125 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In Years 1 and 2 teaching is satisfactory overall. In Years 3 to 6, teaching is consistently good. Teachers are invariably secure in their subject knowledge and in the National Numeracy Strategy, which they apply well. The lesson objectives are clearly identified in the planning which is sometimes shared with the pupils. The oral and mental sessions are usually delivered with enthusiasm; pupils learn quickly and develop good mental skills. Teachers use a good range of vocabulary and this encourages pupils to use the correct terminology. In the best lessons, the pupils are given plenty of time to practise, consolidate and extend their skills. Effective questioning is used to establish understanding and take thinking skills further. Expectations are high and relationships are good.

126 In those lessons which are less effective, there is occasionally a mis-match of the work set and pupils' ability. The content of the work sometimes lacks rigour and challenge

particularly for the most able and this inhibits progress. Many of the less able pupils do not understand basic numeracy concepts before being expected to cope with more advanced work and consequently a few pupils enter Years 5/6 without the fundamental building blocks required to help them with work at that level. Lower achieving pupils need more time to consolidate and practise each new mathematical idea and the quality of some worksheets does not give them sufficient experience in these concepts. The introduction of workbooks has done much to alleviate this situation. However, there is a lack of early identification of pupils' needs in the infants, especially for pupils with special educational needs, and a more rigorous analysis of assessment information is needed to accurately determine pupils' future requirements.

127 In all areas of the school, pupils' ability to use ICT to develop their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding is not well developed. During the inspection, computers were rarely used to support mathematics teaching.

128 The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good, particularly in the juniors. Assessment information features in lesson plans and there is the opportunity for teachers to evaluate lessons to highlight those things which have gone well or to record pupils who have had difficulty with a concept.

129 Informal observations and teacher-based tests, together with the analysis of national tests and interim assessments at Year 4, are used to assess pupils' attainment in the juniors. Pupils' rate of progress is reviewed at each stage of development. These results are analysed to highlight areas of strength and weaknesses in the subject and to set appropriate future targets. A cross-section of pupils is tracked for progress across each key stage but this could be extended to all pupils in order to get a more comprehensive and detailed picture about what is required to raise the quality of teaching and learning overall.

130 The co-ordinator has introduced a formal structure of self-assessment for pupils in Years 4 and 6 so that they are able to identify those areas of personal achievement and progress, but this is not yet applied to all year groups. The marking of pupils' work varies greatly in quality and accuracy. Whilst teachers' comments are invariably supportive, they are rarely sufficiently analytical to help pupils to a greater understanding of their work and this inhibits progress. Homework is infrequently used to consolidate and extend learning and thus its value in promoting standards is negligible.

131 The subject is very well managed. Staff have undertaken training in a range of initiatives since the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and there is a constant cycle of feedback, analysis and review. Staff have also received in-service training from the co-ordinator who has conducted sample lessons designed to improve staff teaching skills. The co-ordinator, together with the headteacher, regularly monitors teachers' planning and the quality of teaching which takes place in the classroom. Pupils' written records are regularly reviewed and this provides a comprehensive picture of what is required to raise standards. Specific tests in mathematics will shortly be introduced in the juniors with the aim of enhancing the good systems which the school already employs in order to raise the levels of teaching and learning still further. Since the last inspection much has been achieved particularly in the areas of subject management, assessment and planning and standards continue to rise.

SCIENCE

132 Standards achieved by the end of Year 2 in the teacher assessments for 2002 were low compared with other schools nationally. Currently most pupils make satisfactory progress from a low start. This includes those with special educational needs and pupils

who use English as an additional language. Teaching is satisfactory. The previous inspection indicated that standards were in line with national expectations. However, these findings were not borne out in that or any subsequent year and appear optimistic. Inspection findings are that standards at the age of seven are well below average.

133 Teacher assessments have indicated that at the age of seven pupils attained particularly low results in their investigative skills and understanding of physical processes such as electricity. The school is working hard to address these issues. The curriculum for pupils up to seven now has investigations built into each session. More time has been allocated to work on physical processes. These are having a favorable impact on pupils learning and are expected to have an impact on standards.

134 Standards achieved by the end of Year 6 in national tests in 2002 are also well below average but are average when compared with similar schools. However, currently pupils make good progress, including those with special needs and pupils who use English as an additional language. Standards are improving and inspection findings are that at the age of eleven standards are below average. Over the last three years there has been a steady trend upwards. The school is aware of the differences between the attainment of girls and boys and is developing strategies to support girls when they join booster sessions.

135 There have been a number of improvements since the time of the previous inspection. The school has adopted a new scheme of work in order to promote a more consistent approach to investigations. Resources are better. The quality of teaching of older pupils has improved. Weaknesses identified in the science results and tests have been analysed and are being addressed. Good assessment systems are now in place to help teachers identify gaps in pupils learning and teaching is good.

136 Pupils in Years 1/2 enjoy their science activities because teachers make sure the activities are practical and fun. They have very positive attitudes. Most work hard and behave well. They build on from the first hand experiences they received in the reception and nursery classes. Scrutiny of work confirms that the teaching is appropriately based upon the planned curriculum. There is an emphasis on simple clear investigations in both classes and a focus on the weaker area of physical forces through work on *light and dark* in Year 1 and *electricity* in Year 2. Standardised recording formats are helping pupils record their findings. In a successful lesson in Year 2, a whole range of activities based on materials and changes of state, really fired the children's interest and enthusiasm. Good use is made of learning support assistants to work in small groups.

137 Pupils in Years 3 to 6 enjoy science and work hard during lessons. They show interest, are enthusiastic and respond well to the teaching they receive. Their good behaviour and very positive attitudes mean that they work well together and handle equipment safely and sensibly. Scrutiny confirms that the planned curriculum is taught. Years 3/4 do not record work in as much depth as the older classes or systematically use standardised recording formats during investigations. There is a good body of work for the mixed Year 5/6 classes. There are opportunities provided to plan, investigate, predict, and use an increasing range of variables.

138 While the teaching is good, particularly for the older pupils, the current practice of teaching groups of mixed Year 5/6 pupils means that there is a very wide range of age and ability. This presents challenges for the teachers and the pupils to overcome. Pupils receive a solid and thorough grounding of interesting work but given the ability span, teachers do not always plan work that is sufficiently matched to the very different needs of the various groups. This means that some pupils miss out on further challenges and others struggle both with the concepts and skills and with recording their work. The school has plans to

address this issue through the introduction of single age classes after half term and targeted 'catch up' booster sessions. Good teaching was seen in a mixed Year 5/6 class, where pupils carried out a range of investigations involving friction. These included more challenging activities for a more able group, who used their mathematical skills well to record their findings.

139 While the marking of pupils work is always positive, some teachers provide more detailed comments. For example, the quality of marking for pupils in Years 5/6 is impressive. It refers specifically to any scientific misunderstandings and points pupils clearly in the right direction. Scrutiny shows that work has been modified and adapted well to support pupils with disability. This is effective as it ensures full inclusion in lessons. Appropriate use is made of literacy and numeracy skills. However, while most teachers ask questions and generally use scientific terms, there is not always enough time planned for pupils to learn, practise and consolidate their use of scientific language in lessons. Pupils generally listen well, but do not always have enough opportunity to express their thinking or explain their findings.

140 The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social and health education through their work on the body and through the many opportunities for pupils to collaborate and share resources. Use of the school grounds and visitors such as the recent visitor with a range of animals, enhance the work in Years 3 /4 on plants, habitats and living organisms. Across the school pupils particularly enjoy the use of digital cameras to record their learning instantly. ICT is used to support learning, although there is room to extend such links further. Attractive class displays also help children to remember what they are learning.

141 Leadership and management of the subject are good, with a useful system in place for additional support. Appropriate monitoring practices are established. The co-ordinator checks planning, and has undertaken a book trawl and observed some classes throughout the school. Strengths and weaknesses identified have been fed back to the staff. In order to improve the pupils' skills in investigations, a science portfolio has been set up with samples based only on investigations. There remains a need to focus closely on the strategies put in place and their impact on raising attainment, particularly for girls.

ART AND DESIGN

142 Attainment is average at the age of seven, but standards are currently below average by the age of eleven. This is below the standard reported at the time of the last inspection, so improvement has not been satisfactory. With the appointment of a new co-ordinator, however, this position is now improving. All groups of pupils are making satisfactory progress in Years 1/2, but achievement is uneven in the junior years and unsatisfactory overall. This is largely because not enough time has been given to art and design in the recent past, especially in Years 3/4; this is now being redressed in Years 5/6. Another factor is that a national scheme of work, which provides a systematic framework for developing pupils' skills, has been introduced and is still bedding in.

143 In Years 1 and 2 pupils' work on display and in sketchbooks shows that steady progress is being made. There is a reasonable range of work, including work with collage and fabrics, and the pupils have regular opportunities for observational drawing, free painting and work with computer graphics programs. The results are of an average standard for five to seven-year-olds. The pupils recently looked at portraits by well-known artists before completing their own self-portraits. As part of this activity, they chose from a selection of flesh-coloured tints and tested until they found a match with their own skin colour. The resulting paintings are confidently executed and show good control of paint and brushes.

Vocabulary such as 'line', 'tone' and 'texture' is being actively promoted and is displayed in the classroom.

144 In Years 3 and 4 pupils look at an Australian Aboriginal depiction of a symbolic journey, which they discuss and interpret before attempting their own designs on a similar theme. The pupils are interested in the reproduction and observe it carefully, first debating which way up it should go. There are some imaginative suggestions about what is being illustrated. The pupils' own efforts were, with a few exceptions, immature for the age group. Teaching was sound and showed secure subject knowledge.

145 Sketchbooks and classroom displays show very limited work in the early junior years, but a wider range of art and design in Years 5 and 6. Some older pupils have had recent opportunities to work on printing and have made some highly decorative masks and fabric collages. The quality of some of this work is average for the age group. However standards of drawing are below average, as seen, for example, in recent sketches of 'people in action', and the pupils have little knowledge of the work of well-known artists and designers.

146 Art and design is to some extent contributing to the pupils' cultural development, especially where classroom surroundings create an aesthetically pleasing environment. There are a few examples of art supporting the wider curriculum, as when the pupils sketched what they observed on a field trip. Work in English was very effectively reinforced in one class when the pupils modelled imaginary creatures from plasticene and 'brain stormed' descriptive phrases. Computers are used to support learning although there is room to extend such links further. The art co-ordinator has taken over the role recently, and has not yet had time or opportunity to make an impression. However, she has good ideas for future development and is setting high standards in the quality of her own work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY (DT)

147 Standards in the subject are average at the end of each key stage, which generally mirrors the findings of the previous inspection. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. There is no difference in the attainment of pupils from different ethnic groups or between that of boys or girls. Pupils enjoy design and technology activities although in discussions some contribute little.

148 There has been broadly satisfactory improvement in the subject over time and standards are similar to the last inspection. However, the subject has not been a priority area in school development and there are areas for further improvement. The sample of recent work, whilst satisfactory overall, shows a lesser amount of work produced than might have been expected over more than one term. Due to the long term absence of the subject co-ordinator there has been only limited monitoring and evaluation in the subject recently, which has not helped to ensure that the full range of design technology activities are undertaken on a regular basis.

149 By the end of Year 2, pupils have designed and made a fruit salad with generally average levels of skill for their age. They have identified what they used, what they did, what it looked like, how they thought it tasted and what they would do next time to improve the product. Pupils have also made satisfactory progress when making a hand puppet such as Little Red Riding Hood. In order to do this they have investigated materials to identify which would be most suitable for the task and they have made a 'mock up' of their hand puppet.

150 By the end of Year 6 pupils have designed a percussion instrument to an average level. In this work they have identified the materials they needed and why they made the choices that they did. Good use has been made of digital cameras to record what they did

which helps pupils evaluate the quality of their work. Pupils have also found out about bread and identified the hygiene issues relating to food production. They designed their bread with reference to use of such items as sesame seeds and recorded the methods they used in bread making. Pupils in Years 3/4 have also produced average quality work when designing and making money holders using a range of simple joining techniques including sewing.

151 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and this enables pupils to make satisfactory gains in their learning. Teachers plan a reasonable range of activities that link to both the designing, making and evaluating strands of the curriculum. Teachers of the younger pupils make good use of support staff to work with small groups of pupils using a range of weaving techniques. This gives pupils good opportunities to learn to weave different patterns and with different materials. The structure of lessons is sound although occasionally, as in Years 3/4, teachers spend too long talking about part of the task rather than developing pupils' understanding of pop-up mechanisms which was the aim of the lesson. Staff miss opportunities to focus upon a sufficiently wide range of appropriate mechanisms or in examining or de-constructing examples to see how they work. As in many other subjects staff miss opportunities to encourage pupils to develop their speaking skills in planning and evaluating activities. Staff also miss opportunities in design and technology activities to develop mathematics and ICT skills.

152 Leadership and management of the subject are broadly satisfactory. During the long-term absence of the subject co-ordinator, the headteacher maintains a 'watching brief' over the subject and through his management role monitors the overall quality of planning. However, there has been only limited assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning recently and this has not helped to ensure that the subject has had a high priority across the school. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to supporting pupils' social development when for instance working within a group to consider the merits of a simple range of pop-up books. Resources are generally satisfactory although not enough use is made of computers to support the design element of the curriculum.

GEOGRAPHY

153 Standards are satisfactory at the end of Years 2 and 6 despite a low starting point in language and comprehension. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and pupils' progress is good. In Years 1/2 pupils explore the school environment and begin to learn mapping skills in a real situation. They locate home and school on a map and a model, measuring the distance between them with string. They then make deductions from the information, comparing the strings and working out who has the longest or shortest distance to travel.

154 Pupils in Year 2 learn about employment in the locality. They interview people at work on the school premises, using a hand-held tape recorder and digital camera with support from the classroom assistant or the teacher. By the end of the year pupils have studied weather patterns and the local area, visited the seaside, followed the travels of Barnaby Bear and begun to learn geographical vocabulary.

155 In Years 3/4 pupils study the features and buildings of Darlaston. They compare it with a village environment. India is studied and mapwork continues, pupils using co-ordinates and planning routes to nearby towns. Older pupils study rivers and mountains in some detail and their study of Darlaston is linked with reasons for settlement and with their local history. They have knowledge and understanding of environmental issues. In Year 6 pupils use their geographical skills, making detailed investigations and comparisons of places using different sources of information.

156 Pupils' attitudes to geography are good. They behave well and work hard to succeed though the co-ordinator senses that they sometimes find the concepts difficult and the vocabulary challenging. Some need very clear, focused questions and lots of encouragement to take full part in oral work. Pride is taken in written work and some pupils enjoy using ICT to gather or interrogate data.

157 Teaching of geography throughout the school is satisfactory in the infants and good in the junior classes. In the lessons observed there were several good features. There were interesting learning activities, carefully planned and resourced to challenge all groups of pupils, including one teacher's use of the overhead projector. The teachers' high expectations were made clear and pupils were managed in a calm and positive way. In one of the lessons there was a planned activity to extend the more able pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and positively; only occasionally do the teachers' written comments seem to be beyond the reading and comprehension skills of the child. But high quality marking is a characteristic feature of the best teaching. In Year 5/6 books teachers' comments are related to the learning objectives; they give credit for a range of successes other than presentation and offer realistic next steps to improve.

158 Geography is managed well. The co-ordinator took on responsibility last year and began by reviewing the scheme of work, based on national guidance. Some emphasis was moved from broad factual content to the specific skills of geography, including vocabulary. There is evidence of this in attractive classroom displays in Years 5/6 and Years 1/2. The co-ordinator is considering adding an opportunity for pupils to carry out individual projects on an aspect of their choice and has an exemplar. This is well considered: making a book, magazine, radio or TV broadcast, e-mailing a pen-friend in another town, organising a geography notice-board or fun-based competition is intended to raise interest and develop responsibility for personal study. The co-ordinator checks teachers' planning and supports staff. She looks at pupils' work and has begun a portfolio, not yet moderated by staff. Her development plan for the subject includes improvement of assessment, monitoring of pupils' work and staff training, perhaps a 'Geography Day'. The monitoring of teaching and the involvement of all staff in the subject's development are other priorities to consider.

159 Geography is enriched and supported by the programme of visits, a strength of the subject. Some visits are cross curricular. Pupils in Year 6 learn orienteering from the forest rangers. Geography contributes well to pupils' personal development. Parents appreciate the programme of visits and often accompany the children. Resources are well organised and adequate. There are topic boxes, up-to-date atlases, photographs, books, videos and maps, all stored centrally and in good condition.

HISTORY

160 Satisfactory standards in history have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils make good progress and by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 their attainment is in line with national expectations. In Years 1/2 pupils begin to understand chronology through their own experiences, recording what they do now and what they used to do. They learn about Florence Nightingale and Guy Fawkes, and why Fireworks Night and Remembrance Day are special.

161 In Year 1 and 2, pupils look at different dolls and pictures of other toys from the past. They make simple comparisons and see some differences. They are beginning to learn the subject vocabulary, which can be a challenge. In one lesson observed, some pupils understood 'old' to mean shabby or worn out rather than to mean from another age. After explanation they were able to order their observations to make a time-line with support from their teacher. At the end of Year 2, pupils understand the nature of change in their area and

in their family. They are motivated by practical experiences and have used different types of evidence to learn about significant people and events.

162 In Years 3/4, pupils study the key features of ancient Egyptian society and explore what life was like in Tudor times, understanding more of chronology and using a wider range of sources. They use the Internet for research, and handle and discuss Tudor artefacts. Older pupils make an extensive study of the Victorians and of the locality. Progress accelerates in these classes and pupils use ways other than worksheets to communicate their knowledge and understanding. In Year 6 pupils used three sets of census returns, noting the changing employment profile as well as other information. From this they began to understand how Darlaston developed into an industrial town from its rural roots. When they leave Year 6, pupils' good progress has prepared them well for the transfer to secondary education.

163 Pupils' attitudes to history are good. They behave well in lessons and work co-operatively in pairs and groups. Some do not readily answer questions but enjoy listening and take pride in their work even when it is an undemanding worksheet. Tasks related to interesting pictures, videos or a visit are carried out with increased enthusiasm.

164 Teaching in history is satisfactory and some is good. There are strengths in the teaching of history, demonstrated in the lessons observed and also in teachers' planning and lesson preparations, some of which show that teachers plan well to meet the different needs of pupils in their class. The use of ICT is satisfactory. Each classroom has word-processing and CD-ROM's for research. There are good cross-curricular links with geography, ICT, English, art and design and technology and pupils are well managed and cared for. However, there are no group or individual projects which help pupils develop independence and their own interest. A weakness in teaching remains from the previous inspection. Activities are too dependent on worksheets. Many of these do not consolidate historical skills or challenge and reveal what learning has taken place. The colouring and drawing mentioned then is still evident.

165 Leadership and management of the subject are predominantly good. History is managed by a specialist co-ordinator who has recently resumed the responsibility. The planning is based on national guidance, and the co-ordinator has made some modifications within the programme of study, in response to the needs of pupils who have English as an additional language and little traditional knowledge of British history. She recognises the importance of practical activities and has added resources to encourage them. The co-ordinator supports her colleagues and has a clear view of the subject's future direction. However, without implementation of the monitoring and assessment procedures set out in her development plan, the subject cannot move forward.

166 A strength of the history curriculum is the programme of visits, which enrich pupils' experiences. These are often cross-curricular and each one really engages pupils' interest. All pupils' learning is enhanced by these experiences and history contributes well to pupils' personal development. Resources for history are adequate and improving.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

167 The standards attained by pupils at the age of seven are slightly below the national averages but those attained by pupils aged eleven are in line with what is expected of pupils of that age. These judgements indicate there has been good improvement in standards and the organisation of the subject since the previous inspection when attainment was low and progress was unsatisfactory. The development of the subject was the primary key issue for improvement and since that time the school has acted well to address the issues identified.

There is now a dedicated computer suite, which is suitably resourced. The progress pupils make throughout the school is now good. From a low start, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. There is no difference in the attainment of pupils from different ethnic groups or between that of boys or girls, although some boys are more confident in their general approach.

168 Standards have risen considerably in the subject because the school has improved resources and implemented good procedures whereby the subject co-ordinator has had release time to work alongside colleagues for half the week. This has given the pupils' attainment a significant boost as they are now taught the skills necessary to use a range of software in a well structured programme. Staff make good use of digital cameras to support learning. However, throughout the school staff miss the opportunities for pupils to extend their skills in ICT by not making enough use of classroom computers during lessons to improve learning.

169 In the infants, pupils produce a good range of work but many are very dependent upon the teacher to lead them through the necessary steps to produce their work. Their overall level of skill and understanding, whilst rapidly improving, remains below average. By the end of Year 2, pupils have reasonable understanding of how to load programs, save their work and retrieve it at a later date. Pupils are able, with support, to represent information graphically when using a series of weather pictures. They can import a photograph into their word processing with help from their teachers. Some higher attaining pupils achieve the expected standard, creating pictures and patterns when using an art program. Most make good progress when using a word bank to make simple sentences of what they like. They also learn how to make a shopping list from a string of items by using the 'return' and 'enter' keys. Lower attaining pupils make sound progress when collecting and recording data about the types of houses they live in and using this to construct a very simple database.

170 In the juniors, the rate of progress improves particularly when pupils are taught in lessons with both the subject co-ordinator and their class teacher. This good level of knowledgeable adult support promotes learning well. By Year 6, pupils produce effective poems entitled 'A sense of place' with an imported photograph. They produce effective accounts of their visit to Ironbridge Museum. They use programs to solve mathematical word problems and to draw up a spreadsheet of their shopping preferences. With support they are able to access information from CD-ROM's and the Internet especially in their history work. In Years 3/4 pupils make good progress in word processing when using the 'find' and 'replace' keys to amend the text. Most are reasonably confident in using the 'cut and paste' tools, the 'spell checker' and in changing the font size.

171 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 with some good features. Teaching in Key Stage 2 is good with some very good features. All staff praise pupils well for their efforts and have sufficient knowledge and understanding of computers and the software they use to move the pupils' learning forward. Staff make effective use of a good range of software to ensure that, whilst pupils practise the range of skills, they do this in a meaningful way with tasks well matched to their work in other subjects. This is seen when pupils in Year 2 extend their knowledge of homes by identifying whether their home is detached, semi-detached, terraced or a flat and which materials their home is made of. However, in lessons, as in several other subjects, staff do not always make enough use of directed questions to involve the quietest pupils in discussions about what they are doing or what they have found out.

172 Leadership and management of the subject are good. Because the co-ordinator has release time to work alongside colleagues she has good knowledge and understanding of

standards and the areas for improvement within the subject. This supports assessment and monitoring and evaluation procedures in the subject well. This has also been effective in raising the general levels of staff expertise. However, there has been limited opportunity on a day-to-day basis to monitor the use of classroom computers and this is an area for further development. The co-ordinator has identified that the use of an interactive whiteboard would move skills even further along and keep pace with developments in the subject but resources overall are good.

MUSIC

173 Standards in music are broadly in line with what can be expected of pupils at the ages of seven and eleven. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. The previous inspection identified that at that stage attainment in music was good. Since then standards have dipped and there has been unsatisfactory improvement largely due to changes in staffing.

174 In Year 2, the pupils learn to clap steadily to a beat and know musical terms such as 'tempo'. They identify a faster or slower melody. They sing quite tunefully and rhythmically to taped accompaniments and are able to listen as different groups perform. In Year 3, the pupils name a range of percussion instruments and play them correctly. They use these to add rhythmic accompaniment to the class singing. Pupils in Year 3 also use a computer program to create a 'sound walk' and to research into orchestral instruments. In Years 5/6 teachers continue to use the new scheme of work and give the pupils varied music styles to listen to. At the end of the key stage, their musical experiences have included the minimum requirements of the programme of study.

175 Pupils' attitudes to music continue to be good. They behave well. There was evident pleasure and total enthusiasm for 'Woman in a churchyard sat', and even when the words challenged their level of English, pupils in Year 3 persevered, learning as they sang and played along to familiar repetitive songs.

176 Teaching over a period of time is satisfactory but this has not always been sufficiently strong to enable the pupils to make enough progress in all areas of the curriculum. Teaching lacks commitment and confidence which ensures success in aspects such as composing or appraisal. In some lessons teaching is good. There is suitable pace to the lessons and all pupils are encouraged to take part. By use of the tape recorder where needed, activities are repeated to improve performance and specific musical terminology is used. Teachers have good skills of organisation and positive pupil management. They work conscientiously but subject knowledge is unsatisfactory, particularly in the junior classes where there was formerly specialist teaching. The scheme of work is used to support music each week, sometimes planning two shorter sessions as in Year 2. There is a cross-curricular link to design and technology when pupils make a percussion instrument.

177 Music contributes satisfactorily to pupils' personal and social development. A 'Fusion' percussion group visited school last term and the subject is still enhanced by some instrumental teaching. Specialists from the local authority offer a weekly fifty minutes of woodwind, brass and percussion teaching and last term the brass group performed for the pupils. A part-time teacher offers recorder and keyboard tuition one afternoon each week. Last term the recorder players performed during the celebration assembly which parents attended and enjoyed. Teachers monitor the inclusion of pupils in the range of activities by trying to minimise the adverse effect of missed lesson time. Some children find this hard to manage when they return to their class. There are no extra-curricular activities.

178 The profile of music in and across the school is not high enough. Management of the subject and its assessment is unsatisfactory. The acting co-ordinator acknowledges this and he sees the opportunity to create a new and fully inclusive curriculum. A newly introduced scheme of work provides a starting point and ensures that pupils receive their entitlement to a music curriculum. There is a well-appointed music room and a good stock of percussion instruments. A clear action plan should now be implemented so that all pupils can achieve their potential through challenging, vibrant, multi-cultural music education. Computers are rarely used to support learning and there is room to extend such links further.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

179 Standards in physical education at the ages of seven and eleven are below national expectations. This differs from the findings of the last inspection where standards were judged to be above national expectations at the end of both key stages. Pupils' progress is unsatisfactory overall. No difference in standards between boys and girls was observed. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve the same standards as their classmates. The school is fully inclusive and all pupils have equal access to the PE curriculum. There are no current systems in place for monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress. Consequently, there has been limited improvement in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, particularly in gymnastics and dance. Pupils are rarely encouraged to make self-assessments or to set their own targets and this has a negative impact on standards.

180 Most pupils exhibit a positive interest in physical education activities. They are keen and eager to participate and in most lessons they sustain good levels of concentration and effort. Where teaching is satisfactory or better, there is an appropriate pace to the lessons and the pupils take part in reasonably energetic activity over a period of time. An example of this was seen with a Year 1/2 class who were introduced to indoor rounders. Pupils learned effectively, were physically active throughout the lesson and made valuable progress.

181 Teaching is unsatisfactory overall. In some lessons the time taken to put out equipment, together with a slow start and periods of inactivity, leads to a number of pupils becoming bored and fidgety and behaving in a disruptive manner. The objective of the lesson is not always made clear and pupils are not clear about their own learning and whether or not they have acquired new skills or improved old ones. A weakness in teaching is that insufficient guidance is given to help pupils refine and extend their gymnastic or dance skills. The pupils find themselves repeating the same movements for long periods, unable to select appropriate techniques in order to create compositional movements in progressively more demanding situations. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory because it does not challenge pupils and optimum time is not always spent on physical activity.

182 Occasionally, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are inappropriate. Whilst they are enthusiastic about their lessons, where the extent of the physical activity is limited and only a proportion of pupils are involved, they struggle to concentrate and behave appropriately. From Year 3 onwards pupils are expected to work independently, with a partner or in groups. Here, some concentrate well and use the lesson time to the full, honing and refining their gymnastic skills at each stage.

183 Where teachers' planning and organisation are effective and there is a good pace to the lesson, a variety of challenging activities are apparent; this promotes achievement and progress effectively. Only occasionally, however, do teachers give pupils enough time to reflect and offer views on their own performance and that of others. Demonstration is rarely used to good effect. Consequently pupils' gymnastic and dance skills are rarely enhanced

and they do not reach their potential in these areas. Whilst older pupils are able to move with greater levels of control and balance, a lack of creative instruction and guidance inhibits performance and reduces standards. Occasionally lessons for the oldest pupils involve needless repetition of established skills such as jumping and landing, whilst other skills such as forward rolls are poorly executed. In addition, lack of hall space for large groups of older pupils prevents them from working in a 'team' situation and this restricts opportunities for learning.

184 Pupils throughout Key Stage 2 attend the local swimming pool and are taught by school staff, two of whom have undergone training in life-saving skills, but who are not specialists in teaching pupils to swim. Risk assessment procedures are satisfactory and pupils are clearly reminded of health and safety requirements. Despite this, no trained pool life-guard or supervisor was at the pool side during the lesson observed, nor was there any professional support for staff and this is an issue for the school to address for the long term benefit of the pupils and teaching staff. Year 5 pupils indicate they have had few swimming experiences. The majority are unable to swim. This indicates that the majority of pupils have made insufficient progress in this area and few are able to swim 25m by the time they leave Year 6.

185 During the previous inspection a range of extra-curricular activities took place after school. This no longer the situation. No clubs exist for pupils at the end of the school day. However, the school is considering the possible restructuring of the school day in order to restore this provision. Nevertheless, clubs are not currently organised for lunchtimes or at weekends and the pupils do not compete in sporting activities with other schools. This limits opportunities for pupils to hone, refine and extend any talents they may possess in games activities. There is no residential activity programme and consequently pupils are unable to experience physical activities which require the acquisition of skills in team leadership and organisation.

186 Resources for the subject are satisfactory overall and are generally accessible for both pupils and teachers. The school has a hall and gymnasium which can be used for dance, gymnastics and indoor games, although space is limited. There is access to a good-sized field for games and athletics. At present the subject is not well managed. The co-ordinator, who is not a specialist, has received no training in any strand of physical education and is therefore able to offer only limited expertise or guidance to other teachers. There has been no other in-service provision or demonstration of lessons. No checks have been carried out to ensure that the scheme of work is being correctly followed and properly executed. Planning is not well monitored and the co-ordinator has not had the opportunity to observe teaching taking place. The subject is not part of the school's priorities for development and does not feature in its development plan. As a result the school has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection, standards have fallen and the quality of teaching and learning is not as effective as previously.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)

187 Standards are average by the age of seven and eleven. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. In the infants, all pupils, including those who use English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Teaching is satisfactory. In the juniors pupils make good progress. Teaching is good and the curriculum is appropriate. Because many pupils have difficulties with writing, much of the RE curriculum is taught orally in Years 1/2, as well as through written work.

188 Scrutiny of pupils' books in Years 1/2 shows that the planned curriculum based on the Walsall Agreed Syllabus is taught. By the end of Year 2, pupils have satisfactory understanding of aspects of three religions, Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. Year 1 pupils learn about religion through different festivals and topics such as 'People who help us and Families'. Many of these pupils have difficulty recording their work.

189 Discussions with Year 2 pupils show that most have appropriate religious knowledge. They understand they are learning about different religions. They know that Jesus is important to Christians. They talk about the different places of worship including mosques and churches. They name two holy books, the Qur'an and the Bible. Many understand that different religions have festivals and that the school has celebrated Diwali and Christmas. A number of children have difficulty explaining their ideas, although they are interested in each other and want to talk about their own religions.

190 Year 6 pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of what it means to belong to a religious community and understand the significance of symbolism to various religions. For example they explain the significance of the five K's in Skim and the importance of specific clothing. In a particularly successful lesson, led by the co-ordinator, the lesson came to life because of the use of artefacts and role-play to act out aspects of a story by Guru Nanak.

191 Strength of the curriculum is the way it draws from and builds on the pupils' own knowledge of their religious traditions. They are regarded as and referred to as 'pupil experts' which enhances their self-esteem. The children respond well to this and many bring items from home and work from the Internet to support school topics. Attractive displays in classes also demonstrate to pupils that staff value and are interested in each religion.

192 Pupils learn from religion as well as about religion through themes such as responsibility, commitment and trust. They are given the opportunity to express their ideas, as various pupils wrote: - 'I believe I am living in a kind and generous world', 'when Hindus die their souls are reborn again and again', 'I am a Sikh girl and I came from God. He created the universe and me'.

193 Parents are pleased with the way RE is approached. As a parent commented 'religious tolerance seems to prevail'. Care is taken to make suitable arrangements for Jehovah Witness families who chose to send their children to the school because of its religious tolerance. RE makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. The atmosphere within the school enables pupils to feel comfortable discussing their own religion and expressing their own views about concepts such as death, God, prayer and holy people. For example in a lesson a boy felt comfortable enough to comment, 'You take nothing into heaven but you can take your happiness at having been kind to others'. This was noted by the teacher and other pupils and furthered the discussion. Older pupils visit places of worship, such as a church, a Hindu temple and a Gurdwara.

194 The subject is lead very well by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator. She has a real impact on the curriculum as she plans the entire curriculum for the older pupils and teaches part of it. She monitors the planning and gives regular informal advice to colleagues. Her action plan has identified the need to extend the use of ICT. However, she has limited opportunity to monitor teaching and learning. This restricts the help and guidance she can give to all staff.