

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ROOKERY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Handsworth, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 132138

Headteacher: Mrs Tracy Stone

Reporting inspector: Mr David Carrington  
15414

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2003

Inspection number: 248907

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Junior and infant

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 – 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Rookery Road  
Handsworth  
Birmingham

Postcode: B21 9PY

Telephone number: 0121 464 4221

Fax number: 0121 464 4095

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Geoff Rees

Date of previous inspection: There has been no previous inspection

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15414	Mr David Carrington	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well pupils are taught How well the school is led and managed
9479	Mrs Chris Field	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils The partnership with parents and carers
26405	Mrs Carole Bond	Team inspector	Science Geography Educational inclusion Special educational needs	
25384	Mr Rob Bonner	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology	The curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
3751	Mrs Trudy Cotton	Team inspector		
2220	Mr Ian Nelson	Team inspector	Physical education Religious education	
19765	Mrs Pauleen Shannon	Team inspector	Art and design Music Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage	
2818	Mr Graham Warner	Team inspector	English History English as an additional language	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Rookery Primary School is located in Handsworth, about four miles north of Birmingham city centre. The school is a new one, which opened in January 2001 in existing buildings that housed the former infant and junior schools on the site. There are 205 boys and 196 girls in school with another 60 children who attend the nursery full time. There is a rich mix of ethnicity in school with almost a half the pupils from Indian backgrounds and about a sixth each from Pakistani and British-Caribbean families. There are also pupils from many other nationalities in school. A significant proportion of pupils comes from Somali refugee families. A considerable number of pupils have not been long in the country and many pupils spend only a part of their primary education at the school. In all, the amount of pupil turnover is well above average. There is a very high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language, with just under a tenth of all pupils at an early stage of English language acquisition. There is a below average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, but an average proportion of pupils with statements of special needs. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. When children start in the nursery they have well below average levels of skill and knowledge.

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

Rookery Primary School has made a good start since it opened in January 2001 and is providing a satisfactory education for its pupils. This is due to the determination, commitment and hard work of the headteacher. She has built a good staff team who are united in their work to help pupils succeed in their studies. Standards are rising, particularly in English, teaching and learning are good overall and the personal development of pupils is effective. There are more strengths than aspects for improvement, though standards in some subjects, assessment and monitoring and evaluation systems require continued improvement. There is very good shared commitment to improvement and the future of the school is assured. It gives satisfactory value for the above average amount spent on each pupil's education.

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

- Pupils have good attitudes to school, they are interested in their work and relationships are good. There is good racial harmony in school.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.
- There is a good curriculum of considerable richness.
- Pupils' personal, moral, social and cultural education is good.
- Children receive a good start to their education in nursery and reception classes.
- Arrangements for improving attendance are very good.
- The school is well led and managed and has a bright future because of the very good shared commitment to improvement.

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

- Standards are not high enough in mathematics, science, geography and religious education.
- Systems to check and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning are not rigorous enough.
- The information produced by assessment is not used well enough to plan future learning or keep track of pupils' progress.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

As the school is a new one, this is its first inspection. The findings from this inspection show clearly the school's good capacity for improvement in the future.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by eleven year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests (known as SATs by parents).

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

**Key**

very high A\*

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

very low E\*

*Similar schools are those schools with between 35 per cent and 50 per cent of the pupils entitled to free school meals.*

The above table shows that standards were well below the national average in English and science and amongst the lowest five per cent of schools nationally in mathematics in the Year 6 SATs last year. In comparison with schools with similar levels of entitlement to free school meals, standards were below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. These results were affected by the significant mobility amongst the pupils; almost two thirds of this class left or joined the school part way through their primary education. Standards were well below average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing and science in the Year 2 SATs last year. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 5 in Year 6 was well below average in English, mathematics and science. There was no clear trend in differences in the attainment of boys and girls last year. Pakistani boys make slower progress than other pupils, though pupils from Indian backgrounds progress well.

Inspectors judge that standards have risen after the dip in results last year. By the age of eleven, standards in English are average and they are below average (rather than well below average) in mathematics, science, geography and religious education. In other subjects, including information and communication technology (ICT), standards are average. Standards in infant classes are below average in English, mathematics, science and geography but average in other subjects. Progress for infant pupils is satisfactory but could be improved.

Children in the reception and nursery classes and pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress across the school. Progress is satisfactory for those with special educational needs. The school provides well for gifted and talented pupils and there is an impressive record of pupils gaining high grades in GCSE mathematics examinations by the age of eleven. The school is on track to meet the appropriate targets for attainment in the Year 6 SATs this year.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are good. They like school and are interested in their studies. They work productively.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory overall, though there is occasional fussy behaviour that slows learning in some classes. There were two exclusions in the last full school year; both for fully justified reasons. The level of exclusions is falling.
Personal development and	Pupils enjoy positive relationships with adults and other pupils and there



relationships	is good racial harmony. Pupils' personal development is generally good.
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Attendance	The level of attendance is well below the national average. Many pupils take extended holidays in term time and they miss much important work.
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## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	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 is good overall. There was a little unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection, mainly in infant classes, which was due to weaknesses in the management of pupils and the organisation of teaching and learning. However, teachers' subject knowledge, the teaching of basic skills, expectations and teaching methods are generally good. Visiting specialist teachers for physical education, drama and art and design teach very effectively. The basic skills of English and mathematics are taught well.

Learning follows a similar pattern to teaching. It is good overall. Pupils build skills and knowledge well. They are productive, hard-working pupils and are interested in their tasks. Some are too dependent on staff when working in lessons. Children in nursery and reception classes learn well and make good progress from their well below average starting levels of skill and knowledge. Generally, the school meets the individual needs of the pupils.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is a good curriculum overall. It is broad, relevant and of some richness. Refinement is needed in science, geography and religious education. There is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities and the school uses its very good links with the community and other schools well in the development of the curriculum. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills are good and are having a positive impact on standards. Many pupils are withdrawn from lessons for basic skills support or specialist teaching in the creative arts and the school does not monitor this process closely enough to ensure that they do not miss out on work in the classroom.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are supported soundly and they make satisfactory progress. Progress is accelerated when the work is more closely matched to their needs, especially in English. The school needs to ensure that pupils receive consistent support from the special educational needs co-ordinator and support staff.
Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language	Pupils who speak English as an additional language are taught well and they make good progress. There is good use made of the bilingual skills of support staff in the nursery and reception classes. Support staff for older pupils also work well. Pupils' skills with English improve well, though they still have some problems understanding the different meanings of English words by the time they are eleven years old.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, though they do not have enough opportunities to reflect on the rich experiences they meet. Their moral and social development is good and there are strengths in their cultural education, which is enhanced by the many visitors to school.

How well the school cares for its pupils	In general, the school provides good personal support and guidance for pupils and their health, safety and welfare are promoted properly. Systems of assessment are satisfactory but are not yet used enough to assist planning or target setting processes.
The partnership with parents and carers	Parents have good views of the school. Effective links have been built with parents and they are playing an increasingly successful role 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	The headteacher and deputy headteacher have led and managed the process of merging the infant and junior schools very capably. They have built a strong partnership with senior managers and the school is moving ahead with confidence.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well informed about the school's performance and they play an influential role in its development. They represent the community well and are very proud of the school. Some required policies are not in place.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Other staff are not so well informed, though there is very good, shared commitment to make things better for the pupils. The school applies the principles of best value soundly when making comparisons to ensure teaching, learning and standards are as good as possible.
The strategic use of resources	The school is well staffed and the accommodation is good. There are no major shortages of resources. The school manages its budget well and additional grants are used effectively, for example for pupils who speak English as an additional language and the gifted and talented.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Expectations are good.</li> <li>• Teaching is effective and pupils make good progress.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levels of homework are inconsistent.</li> <li>• The information provided about their children's progress is not detailed enough.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school but judge that behaviour is satisfactory rather than good. It is improving, however. The information on progress given to parents is satisfactory and levels of homework are about right.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In the first year that the school was open it gained a government award for standards that had been improved well. The following year, 2002, results in the Year 6 SATs<sup>1</sup> were not as high. They were well below the national average in English and science and were amongst the lowest five per cent of schools nationally in mathematics. When compared with schools with a similar level of entitlement to free school meals, results were below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. Standards were also well below average in reading and mathematics in the Year 2 SATs in 2002. They were below average in writing and science. Against similar schools they were above average in reading and writing but well below average in mathematics.

2. Inspectors judge that standards have risen after the dip in results last year. By the age of eleven, standards in English, art and design, design and technology, history, information and communication technology (ICT), music and physical education are now average. Standards are below average in mathematics, science, geography and religious education. In the case of mathematics, standards are clearly improving because of changes to the curriculum and teaching and learning. In science, geography and religious education standards are not high enough because the school does not develop the planned curriculum fully enough in these subjects. In the case of geography and religious education pupils do not learn enough about some aspects of the curriculum and, since assessment is unsatisfactory in these subjects, staff do not have enough information to judge whether pupils are making appropriate progress. Standards in infant classes this year are below average in English, mathematics, science and geography but average in other subjects. Progress for infant pupils is satisfactory but could be improved. It is good in junior classes.

3. Children in reception and nursery classes make good progress. The curriculum has been altered substantially in these classes. Since September 2002 nursery and reception staff have planned together and, where appropriate, children from the two age groups are taught together. This is having good impact on progress as each individual child is working from a curriculum that is planned carefully to meet his or her needs. By the end of the reception year, the children are likely to meet their early learning targets in personal, social and emotional development and physical development but will not get that far in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and much of their creative development.

4. Last year, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 5 in Year 6 was well below average in English, mathematics and science. However, two pupils achieved level 6 in mathematics. In Year 2 the proportions achieving level 3 last year were well below average in reading and mathematics, below average in science and average in writing. During the inspection, however, higher attaining pupils in both infant and junior classes attained well. The school has been successful in planning work for higher attaining pupils and these pupils are now making good progress.

5. The school provides well for gifted and talented pupils and there is an impressive record of pupils gaining high grades in GCSE mathematics examinations by the age of eleven. Whilst the proportions of pupils attaining the higher levels in the SATs has not been as high as in most other schools, managers have clearly established the need to promote

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<sup>1</sup> National tests in English, mathematics and science for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils held in May each year.

high standards amongst the top attaining pupils as a means to raise overall standards in the school. Likewise, they are moving provision in school to focus on the needs of individual pupils at every stage in their work, rather than relying on late boosts to raise standards, which has been the case in the past.

6. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. In English, progress is good with some good support provided through intensive teaching by the co-ordinator, and specific help in classrooms from teachers and learning support assistants. Overall, the school makes sound provision, enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress in other areas of the curriculum.

7. As the pupils who speak English as an additional language make up such a significant number of the school roll, they have an important role to play in the school's results. These pupils make good progress as a result of the good provision made to meet their needs. They are initially informally assessed at the same time that the teacher supporting pupils who speak English as an additional language interviews parents or carers. A more formal assessment is completed once the pupils are in school on the school roll. Provision is made to meet needs either through withdrawal or in class support. This mixture of different forms of support is finely balanced. As the pupils make good levels of progress they support the school's results and achievements appropriately.

8. Another key factor in the pattern of progress and attainment concerns the proportion of pupils who do not complete their education in the school. Many pupils spend a relatively short period in school and some return after a period when they attended other schools. During the inspection, some pupils had been in school for less than a month and some had been in school for just a few days. The school does a good job to ensure that newcomers of all ages settle quickly in school, are provided with appropriate work from the start and respond well to their tasks.

9. About eight per cent of the pupils are from Somali asylum-seeking families. Many of these pupils speak three or four languages. Several are more fluent in French than English and others speak German with confidence. The pupils from Somali backgrounds represent pupils in all attainment groups and the school is successful in integrating them into school so that they can make good progress.

10. There was no clear trend in differences in the attainment of boys and girls in the SATs last year. In 2002, Year 6 girls under-achieved in mathematics and, to a lesser degree, in English. This is different from the national trend in English but similar in mathematics. However, in Year 2, boys under-achieved in reading and mathematics and girls did so in writing. This is against the national trends in writing and mathematics but the same as in reading. During most of the lessons observed by inspectors and in most books examined, boys and girls showed similar levels of motivation and effort and their progress was alike. However, in some lessons, boys in particular did not concentrate as effectively as the girls did, particularly towards the end of the lesson. In these cases, a few boys became distracted and their progress slowed. When the same boys were given practical, hands-on work, their motivation, concentration and progress were much steadier than when they had to listen for long periods. There is a message here for the school as it continues to work to improve learning.

11. In general, school records and the evidence from the inspection show that Pakistani boys make slower progress than other pupils do. The school's analysis of progress by different ethnic groups shows that white pupils from British family backgrounds and Black African pupils also achieved less well in the 2002 SATs than other ethnic groups. In direct contrast, pupils from Korean, Indian, Bangladeshi and mixed race Asian backgrounds make

better progress than other pupils do. The school keeps a careful focus on the progress made by pupils of different ethnic backgrounds and is working soundly to set targets for individual pupils to ensure they make appropriate progress regardless of ethnicity.

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

12. The school provides a warm and welcoming environment for pupils from many different backgrounds. Relationships are respectful and tolerant, and the school is a racially harmonious community. Pupils show good attitudes to the school. Behaviour is satisfactory overall and pupils' personal development is good. A significant proportion of pupils have irregular attendance and many of them are frequently late. Attendance continues to be a high priority for the school to improve but it is meeting with success due to its highly effective approaches.

13. Children in the nursery and reception classes are happy and settled young learners overall. When some start as three year olds they have very immature behaviour but due to the school's good approach they move forward in developing confidence and independence. Some work with good application on the tasks set for them but a small band flit between activities and have not yet reached the level of personal and social skill development expected for their age. Some lovely co-operative play was observed in one lesson where the 'travel agent' was stamping passports for passengers to gain entry to India for their holidays, but equally evident was the significant number of children who were playing with other activities on their own, without engaging with one another. The school puts great store in promoting personal and social skills and is meeting with good success in helping the children to take full advantage of the exciting opportunities being provided.

14. Pupils are keen to come to school and show good levels of interest in all aspects of school life, and in the wide range of external and enriching activities that are offered. Year 6 pupils told inspectors they like coming to school because "lessons are interesting and we all get on well together." They also said they feel safe and there is little bullying or racism. They feel confident that when instances arise they are sorted out quickly. Pupils know and respect the boundaries set for appropriate behaviour and as a result there is a positive atmosphere in the school.

15. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and in and around the school. They enter the hall for assemblies quietly and are attentive to the contributions of others. In the dining hall, although noise levels are high, the standard of behaviour is very good. The pupils are polite and well mannered and very conscientious in tidying away when they have finished eating. Behaviour at playtime is exuberant and lively. The many and varied resources available in the playground are a positive feature in enabling constructive playtimes. There is good enthusiasm for lessons and sustained interest on most occasions. In the most effective lessons, pupils listen carefully to instructions and respond well to the school's management systems. Very positive self-discipline was observed in a Year 5 drama lesson for example. The teaching here was inspirational and challenging and resulted in highly motivated pupils who worked flexibly and in collaboration to develop a role-play scenario based on work they had been doing to support their current geography topic. By contrast, sometimes the pupils' behaviour becomes fussy and fidgety, especially when they are required to sit for too long listening to instructions. The standard of behaviour in the afternoons is not as good as in the mornings in some classes. On a few occasions, the pupils' behaviour deteriorates to an unacceptable standard because they are not engaged in productive learning experiences and because of shortcomings in class management strategies. The newly introduced 'It's up to me' programme, that has been designed to help build self-esteem as part of the school's thrust to raise attainment, is proving to be a positive feature in encouraging pupils' self-determination. It has the potential to help make behaviour more consistent. The very small

number of exclusions last year were for unacceptable behaviour, and were fully warranted. The rate of exclusions is falling overall and this is testament to the school's improving standards and the strong commitment to educational inclusion.

16. Pupils show empathy and understanding to others and respect the many, varied differences in cultures and beliefs. They show significant understanding of social and cultural diversity and talk sensibly about a wide range of issues during personal and social education lessons. Pupils benefit from the team points system that helps to promote collaborative learning styles. They respond well to opportunities to have their efforts recognised, for example the 'Pupil of the Week' award that encourages them to try hard and do their best in all things. Pupils in the school develop a good understanding of citizenship, for example through the tutoring programme that involves Year 5 pupils working with Year 1 pupils, and through the election of representatives for the school council. The body has a significant part to play in the daily life of the school, influencing decision making. For example, members of the school council have looked at the school rules and made changes where necessary. Pupils in each class take on many simple responsibilities in a sensible way. They help to organise the hall for assemblies and physical education, help to give out and collect resources and are responsible for keeping their classrooms tidy. A high number of pupils have more specific jobs, for example as the school bank manager or office receptionist; such opportunities are helping build very responsible young adults.

17. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make up a significant proportion of pupils on the school roll. They show good attitudes to their learning and have formed good relationships with one another, their teachers and support staff. They form a harmonious community. Consequently they are well prepared to consider the values that are an important part of the school's life. Through the school council they can make their views clear and by thoughtful presentation of them they find them being given careful consideration. The rewards systems in the school help to develop pupils' values as well as their personal development effectively. Pupils who have special educational needs also have good attitudes to school. They work hard and enjoy each other's company. Their behaviour is generally good, though a few pupils with emotional and behavioural needs do not always maintain a positive enough approach to their work in afternoon sessions. Teachers know their pupils well and ensure that personal development needs are considered through a wide range of visits being made to increase their knowledge and understanding of the world.

18. Attendance levels are well below average but are rising. The school is very thorough in following up all absences and in charting the impact that this has on the pupils' achievement. The reward system in place is proving to be motivational and the very high profile given to improving attendance so evident around the school is attracting better parental support. A small but significant number of pupils are regularly late and there is less attention given to charting the impact that this is having on achievement and this is one aspect for improvement as part of the otherwise highly effective action being taken.

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

19. The quality of teaching in school is good overall. It is good in nursery and reception classes and in the juniors. It is satisfactory in infant classes. The school has focused on the improvement of teaching during the two years that it has been open and these initiatives are paying dividends, especially in English and mathematics, where standards are rising and progress is good. There is now a need to ensure that the strengths of teaching in these two subjects are spread to all others, particularly science, geography and religious education where standards are not yet at the level found in other subjects.

20. There was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection. This was mostly in infant classes, though there was some also in the upper juniors. In the main, this was due to weaknesses in the management of pupils, which meant that learning was interrupted and progress was not good enough. In about half of the unsatisfactory lessons, the organisation of teaching and learning was not as successful as elsewhere and the pupils did not work hard enough.

21. There are several strengths in teaching. In general, the following aspects of teaching are good in nursery, reception and junior classes and satisfactory in the infants. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is good. The programme of staff training in subjects such as ICT has been successful in giving teachers greater confidence to teach the necessary skills and knowledge. In subjects such as English, mathematics and ICT basic skills are taught well and this is having good impact on the standards attained. In English and ICT, for example, standards are now average by the age of eleven. In mathematics they are rising, but there is still work to be done to lift them to an average standard. The next focus in the teaching of skills and knowledge has to be in science. School managers identify this need clearly and are ready to focus on science, geography and religious education to bring the level of expertise up to that shown in English and mathematics.

22. Teachers' expectations are good overall. This is clearly the case for higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils. These groups are taught well and they enjoy considerable success in school. Good methods are used to move learning on. Teachers' questioning is particularly successful in helping pupils learn skills and knowledge effectively and develop improved understanding of the topics studied. The management of pupils is sound. There are times when some pupils, especially older boys, lose interest when they have to listen for lengthy periods. In the main this is dealt with satisfactorily. School managers are working well to promote better learning amongst all pupils and have adopted the 'Core Skills' project to help staff plan a more effective focus in planning on exactly *what* is to be learned and *how*, rather than on what will be taught. Some teachers are already well focused on learning when planning and teaching, though this is not consistent across the school.

23. The support staff give good assistance to their pupils in the main. This is especially the case for pupils with English as an additional language and those who are newly arrived in school. Class teachers mainly teach pupils with additional language needs although there is some withdrawal as well as in-class support being given. Within classes most teachers pay attention to meeting needs adequately through planning relevant tasks. There is good support being given in nursery and reception classes by bilingual support staff that helps to hasten language acquisition skills. In infant and junior classes there is some additional support given both in classes and through withdrawal by the teacher responsible for provision for additional language learners. Withdrawal is mainly targeted at the significant number of new arrivals who continually arrive in the school. These pupils are at an early stage of acquisition of English and have carefully targeted programmes worked out to support them. The language teacher is resourceful in the variety of her presentation of how pupils need to develop their skills. She carefully structures their work and uses visual and aural resources skilfully. This helps to make the learning more meaningful for the pupils. This good level of teaching is also possible when she works in a supporting role in the classroom. The teacher recognises the need to transfer the skills more widely to other teachers if the pupils are to benefit more fully from the systems that she has in place.

24. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Although the work is generally matched to needs, progress is accelerated when it is more finely tuned to the development of specific skills and knowledge, especially in English. The learning support assistants work hard to ensure their pupils make the necessary progress. In a few lessons they are not as actively involved in the learning at the start of the lesson, though they are well



involved later in the session. The next priority for the school is to ensure that pupils receive consistent support from the special educational needs co-ordinator and support staff.

25. The school invites a number of visiting specialist teachers and instructors into school to share their expertise with the pupils and with staff. For example, most of the physical education taught during the inspection was by teachers or instructors from outside the school. The quality of such teaching is clearly effective in moving skills on and in some lessons is very good or excellent. This was the case in a Year 1 games lesson where a Football Association soccer ability coach focused squarely on the skills of passing and intercepting the football and helped all pupils to attain standards that were well above average. In this lesson, the pupils were delighted by the work and they worked very energetically throughout the session. The degree of perseverance was unusual for such a young age group and behaviour was excellent. Because the coach had such high expectations, the pupils responded really well and ball control improved dramatically during the lesson. This was in part due to the detailed but succinct feedback given to the pupils about how well they were performing and what was next for improvement. Not a moment was wasted in the lesson and the rapport between pupils and the coach was outstanding. Some very good quality teaching was also observed from the specialist drama and art and design teachers during the inspection.

26. Learning is good overall and follows the same pattern as teaching in that it is satisfactory in infant classes and good elsewhere. Pupils build skills and knowledge well. As discussed above, this is especially the case in English and mathematics. Pupils work productively, because they put in good effort. Most pupils show good interest in their work and concentrate well, though some older pupils, boys especially, do not hold their attention consistently through lessons. They are more effective learners when actively involved in practical work and find listening for long periods too taxing.

27. School managers have identified the need to improve the levels of independence and responsibility in learning. The outcome of the inspection supports this priority. Some good examples were seen where pupils had opportunities to research, investigate or solve problems. In a Year 4/5 lesson, for example, pupils had to identify the best method to tackle a given arithmetic problem. In this lesson there was good focus on reasoning and the development of doubling as a means to solve problems involving percentages. The teacher drew on pupils' past experiences well and gave pupils ample opportunities to talk about their findings and how they had tackled the task. By the end of the lesson, the pupils were able to identify the information required to solve the problem and were using a range of methods to find the answer. Standards were above average in this lesson and progress was good.

28. Children in nursery and reception classes learn well and make good progress from their well below average starting levels of skill and knowledge. The work is well matched to their needs and holds their concentration and motivation well. The children work hard, enjoy their tasks and are given good opportunities to talk with staff about their learning. Sometimes the children cannot talk in lengthy sentences, preferring to give single word answers, but staff work well to promote the children's competence with basic skills of communication, language and literacy and mathematics.

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

29. The quality of learning opportunities provided throughout the school is good overall and there are several areas of particular strength. The curriculum provided for the children in the nursery and reception classes is good. It is well planned and managed and provides effective transition from the Foundation Stage to the National Curriculum. The school

provides a suitably broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils in Years 1 to 6. It meets statutory requirements. Overall, there is good guidance for the teaching of all subjects including religious education. Planning is generally good and ensures that pupils' learning is progressive and avoids unnecessary repetition of topics. However, there are weaknesses in the provision the school makes for the teaching of science, as the curriculum does not have the necessary continuity. In some cases, too much time passes between the first introduction pupils have to a topic and when they revisit it. Thus, pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in science are not developed as effectively as they could be. The school makes particularly good provision for the teaching of ICT skills. There are computer suites in each phase of the school and classes are timetabled for a minimum of one hour per week. This regular experience with computers is doing much to improve the standards in the subject.

30. The school's strategies for literacy and numeracy are effective. The school uses well the National Numeracy Strategy to plan the mathematics curriculum, with good emphasis on mental skills, the development of mathematical vocabulary and developing problem solving skills. The school also makes particularly good provision for pupils who are gifted and talented in mathematics and as a result these pupils often make very good progress in their learning. The literacy strategy is bringing increased focus on the development of skills and knowledge and is contributing well to raised standards in English. The school sets targets for individual pupils and is tracking their progress carefully to ensure learning is effective. At present, targets for literacy and numeracy are in place, which are reviewed on a regular basis. As a result of these reviews pupils are moved to a higher or lower level of support.

31. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in the classroom and in individual sessions, so that they are encouraged to enjoy a full curriculum alongside their peers, with regular discussions to check progress and improvement. Individual education plans are generally appropriately targeted to ensure that support is given where it is most needed to aid learning, focusing more specifically on literacy skills. References to behaviour needs are not so clearly identified for some pupils. Pupils are often taken out of lessons for additional help. School managers accept that this is necessary and are working on the means to check that when pupils are withdrawn from lessons they benefit from the process and do not miss important work in other subjects.

32. Pupils who speak English as an additional language have access to the full curriculum and are well supported in class. The school responds sensitively to the needs of pupils from different backgrounds and faiths and respects all minority cultural traditions.

33. The provision the school makes for activities outside lessons is very good. Visiting music teachers provide tuition in drums, violins, viola and recorders. The school choir performed at the Symphony Hall and the National Indoor Arena. Pupils in Year 6 participated in a music-making project using professional facilities that culminated in the production of a compact disc. Professional artists work in the school. For example, pupils in Year 4 participated in an African dance project with Ace Dance Company that resulted in a performance at The Drum Theatre in Aston. Members of the Birmingham Ballet Company have worked with pupils in Year 3 and an Asian dance company has worked with pupils in Year 5. Jazz dance is provided for pupils in Years 1 to 6 – each having six sessions. The school also provides a range of school clubs including Young Scientist, Bhangra dancing, newspaper production, football, netball, cricket, badminton and karate. Professional football coaching is provided for pupils in Years 1, 3, 4 and 5. The school competes against other local schools in football, netball and athletics. Pupils participate in educational visits to support their learning. Many of these relate to history and geography but others have included visits to the theatre to see, for example, *James and the Giant Peach* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 participate in residential visits; for example Year 6 visited

'The Earth Centre' environmental centre in North Yorkshire and a number of pupils in Year 5 had a weekend away.

34. The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. Time is scheduled each week for each class; sometimes the session is combined with religious education to provide more time for discussion. This time is carefully used as part of a detailed approach to pupils' development that touches on a wide range of areas including citizenship. There is an appropriate policy for teaching sex education and drugs awareness. There are good opportunities for pupils to discuss important issues. These sessions are used effectively to develop self-esteem and to encourage greater personal responsibility. There is a good focus in the school on developing healthy lifestyles. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and to participate in sports and dance. The school provides pupils in Years 1 and 2 with a piece of fruit each day and is seeking the status of health-promoting school. Citizenship is promoted well; pupils from Years 5 and 6 are active members of Handsworth Young People's Parliament. Pupils from Year 6 attend a debate at Birmingham Council House during Citizenship Week and make a donation to the Lord Mayor's Charity Appeal. The pupils benefit from drama sessions provided by a specialist teacher who focuses on raising pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

35. The local community makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Police officers come into school to talk to pupils about the dangers of drugs, and pupils in Year 6 worked on a project at the local fire station. Pupils have performed in musical and drama events at many of the local theatres and events venues. Pupils visit local places of worship, museums and art galleries to support their learning in school. The school works in partnership with the National Primary Trust to provide GCSE mathematics tuition for gifted and talented pupils at a local university. These pupils have attained excellent results in their GCSE mathematics papers. A local high street bank has been closely involved in the school setting up a bank of its own. The school participated in a Road Safety Week that was run with the support of the Birmingham Road Safety Team with the aim of raising awareness of road safety issues for pupils and parents. The school also has very good links with a local football club and Warwickshire Cricket Club.

36. Relationships with partner institutions are very good. The school has very good links with local high schools and colleges that provide pupils with a range of opportunities to participate in art and design and sporting events. The school took part in a joint art project with a local high school for example, seeking to improve attendance and raise pupils' self-esteem. A resident artist worked with pupils from the high school and pupils in Year 5 to produce pieces of ceramics. Specialist teachers come into the school to coach pupils in different sports, for example gymnastics, hockey and football. Pupils in Year 5 also undertake food technology work at a local college. They are transported to and from the college, provided with ingredients and given first rate technology support. The school has very good links with other local primary schools. For example, pupils who are talented in dance, art, writing, music and drama took part in a project with seven other local schools. The school also acts as host to the local primary schools stringed orchestra.

37. The school provides well for the rich cultural diversity represented there, in a harmonious ethos that encourages all pupils to think well of themselves. It takes good account of pupils' different religious and cultural views, and enables most pupils to participate fully in all subjects. The provision of additional learning opportunities to enhance progress in English and creative activities has many benefits for the groups of pupils who participate, but these activities are generally held during school time. The impact on learning in the missed subjects is not monitored at present. Boys and girls have equal opportunities to take part in the same curriculum, enjoying a range of appropriate activities that takes account of their interests and concerns.

38. All pupils are fully involved in all of the school's activities. No pupils are disapplied from taking the SATs, although this can have a significant effect upon the school's results. This is because the school has a fully inclusive ethos that treats all pupils with equal respect for their talents. Their language skills are nurtured with care. Many role-play situations are set up in nursery, reception and infant classes that beneficially support the confidence of the children to communicate appropriately. The majority quickly become confident enough to talk in front of other pupils and adults. This is developed through drama lessons that are taught by a skilful specialist teacher in the junior classes with successful outcomes being shown in the debating skills demonstrated in the Year 6 classes. Outside agency support is also employed by the school to develop the sporting skills of pupils together with most teachers giving their own time freely to run a large number of after-school clubs. Residential and day visits further enhance the learning opportunities being offered to the pupils.

39. Overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Although there is little evidence of opportunities being planned to include spiritual development in lessons, there are times of reflection and occasions when pupils' spirits are raised. For example, there was delight on the faces of pupils in a Year 1 games lesson as they felt good about their ability to run up and down and control a ball with their feet, and when nursery children made chapattis. A good example of reflection being planned was seen in Year 6 when pupils looked at pictures of older people and considered what the pictures conveyed. They 'read' into the expressions things like love, happiness and sadness and went on to consider how older people might view life differently from children. They then read and reflected upon a poem by Charles Causely about looking back on the good things in life. Assemblies provide plenty of opportunities to reflect upon achievements and to consider moral and social issues but do not always include an act of collective worship, which means that they do not meet requirements in full. The creation of a reflective and meditative atmosphere is something that school managers acknowledge is ready for improvement.

40. Provision for moral education is good. Pupils clearly know right from wrong and this is generally well reinforced by all staff. They are given opportunities to discuss moral issues through lessons in personal and social education. Teachers encourage them to care for each other and in the best lessons pupils are expected to help others who are struggling with their work. There is an expectation that pupils will treat each other with courtesy and respect and in the main they do. At lunchtimes the supervisors oversee pupils eating in the dining hall with a minimum of fuss and carry out their duties in a calm and quiet way that encourages pupils to respect them. However, in some lessons, especially in the afternoons, there is an undercurrent of chatter that does not reinforce the expectation of excellence in behaviour and social interaction at all times.

41. Provision for social development is good. The school places a strong emphasis on the personal development of pupils and devotes a lot of time to this. There are regular opportunities for pupils to discuss issues of importance to themselves in a structured way through timetabled lessons on personal and social development. The introduction of the 'Investment in Excellence' programme epitomises the strong focus the school has on personal development. Through the programme the school aims to raise the self-esteem of pupils, to increase their confidence and to encourage personal responsibility. Lessons in citizenship encourage pupils to discuss significant issues and to consider the wider implications and other perspectives. For example, pupils in Year 6 debate issues in a formal way, growing in confidence as they prepare and deliver speeches, listen to others' points of view and respond to the points being made rather than to the personalities making them. As a consequence most of the time pupils act in a mature and responsible manner. This was very well illustrated in their discussions with inspectors. Pupils are pleased that they have a

school council and have the opportunity to make their views known through this formal channel. For example, they voiced criticisms and concerns about some of the playground features for staff to consider. Older pupils have benefited from involvement in initiatives like young people's parliaments where they learn the art of debating and begin to understand more about democracy and how local and national government works.

42. Provision for cultural development is good. Displays around the school show a commitment to celebrating the range of cultures represented within the school. There are very good opportunities for pupils to become involved in cultural activities like music and dance through after-school clubs and activities. The school arranges outings to places and events of cultural interest. In art and design lessons, pupils look at and emulate the work of great artists and try to reproduce their styles. In English they are introduced to good literature and poetry and in history they learn about the cultural heritage of Britain. They have visited Stratford and worked on a production of *Romeo and Juliet*. They worked with other schools to produce a musical based on their locality. Displays around the school show that they are also introduced to the culture of other nations, as in the work on Benin, for example.

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

43. There are good features in the way that pupils' well-being and general care are promoted. All staff are proactive in ensuring pupils are listened to and well cared for and they work together to enable all pupils in the school to progress and achieve. There are effective procedures for promoting pupils' personal development, encouraging good behaviour and very good procedures for improving attendance. There are, however, shortcomings in the lack of a systematic and rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating other aspects of provision, for example pupils' academic progress. There is unsatisfactory use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning in subjects other than English and mathematics.

44. The youngest children in school are well cared for by the team of staff who are highly responsive to personal needs. Circle times are a regular feature in the timetable where the children come together to build relationships, take turns, listen to others and take on board the school's rules and agreed code of conduct. There is good support and guidance given to older pupils too. A new programme for promoting personal, social and health education is a useful tool for co-ordinating overall provision. Pupils enjoy fruit during mid-morning break and they are taught simple rules to follow for keeping healthy and safe. The subject leader for personal, social and health education is fully aware that the next step is to monitor more closely the delivery of the health education programme, which is still fairly new in the school. She is seeking to gain health-promoting school accreditation over the next twelve months.

45. The school promotes inclusion very successfully. It is a welcoming place in which many successful opportunities are given to pupils to promote their social skills and to raise racial awareness. For example, Year 4 pupils consider the similarities and differences between a day in Benin City in Nigeria compared to one in Handsworth, Birmingham. Year 6 pupils have written letters about the atrocities at Sharpeville in which some support Nelson Mandela's viewpoint and others provide a balanced argument in favour of apartheid. The school upholds its race equality policy. The school, though effective in providing the rich opportunities for pupils to make progress in these important areas, does not consistently monitor the achievements being made. Neither are there adequate systems in place to enable the school to assess, track and target pupils' academic progress across the subjects pupils learn. These are important areas for development as part of the school's declared aim to develop fully a learning culture.

46. A very comprehensive policy setting out the expectations for assessment, reporting and recording has just been completed but has yet to be fully implemented. The nursery and

reception classes use information gained from initial assessments effectively to track progress and thus provide an interesting range of purposeful activities. Procedures for assessing and monitoring infant and junior pupils' attainment are in place in mathematics and English. In other subjects the procedures are less well developed though the school has identified that improvement in assessment in other subjects as a priority. Senior managers are working to bring a sharper emphasis in planning on the particular knowledge, skills and understanding to be learned. Greater consistency in this will go a long way to ensure that progress is systematic and helps all pupils move ahead in their learning. The headteacher has responsibility for keeping an overview of standards and progress. A tracking tool to chart year group and individual performance in English and mathematics is currently being developed. Phase leaders also maintain records that show the predicted standards in these subjects. A useful start has been made in setting up assessment files in each class. The recording of pupils' performance scores in SATs and other tests in English, mathematics and science is done effectively and from these results projections of future performance are made. The school is now ready to move forward in making more effective use of information to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning so that more accurate targets can be set and standards can be improved. The school is also ready to move forward in the area of teachers' self-assessment of their lessons from the stage of recording to that of analysis. Questions relating to what pupils have or have not mastered and what needs to be done to deal with shortcomings or move them on more quickly are not fully addressed. There is a need to develop assessment systems in science and non-core subjects.

47. The school pays careful attention to the needs of the pupils who speak English as an additional language. The significant number of bilingual support staff in the foundation stage classes is a positive response made by the school to giving effective support at the earliest stage of the pupils' learning. There is then a well-structured programme of further support given by the language needs teacher and learning support assistant. This support is more thinly spread and the specialist teacher of English as an additional language recognises the need to ensure the class teachers are also able to offer confident and realistic support to the pupils when she and the learning support assistant are not available. There is a systematic approach made to giving pastoral support to pupils and their families in order to increase the pupils' learning capacities.

48. There are satisfactory systems in place to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs are cared for properly. The assessment of pupils' special educational needs is effective. There is a process of regular review of progress, and pupils are encouraged to give their views on both the support and its effects. There is appropriate targeting of individual education plans to provide the necessary support, both within class and when pupils are withdrawn. However, the process of withdrawing pupils from class is not monitored to ensure that the pupils receive a net gain from this process.

49. Child protection procedures are appropriately in place but there is room for improvement. The deputy headteacher, as named person, insists that all concerns are reported to her; she is meticulous in recording all matters brought to her attention. However, it is not clear what happens when she is away from school. There is training on child protection booked for later this term and the deputy headteacher has planned to update staff following this and to ensure that a revised guidance and policy are established. The headteacher keeps a log of behaviour incidents that are of a serious nature. This shows some challenging behaviour that the school tries hard to help pupils improve. A system of yellow cards is proving effective in targeting better behaviour and enabling pupils to strive for success. The work of the learning mentor is beneficial in supporting some pupils who are prone to violent physical or verbal outbursts. The school gives good attention to health and safety matters in its practice but is not assessing risks on a formal basis. Managers are aware of the need to tighten up on recording potential risks.

50. There are very good procedures in place for improving attendance that are meeting with success, though it is slow going. There is strong emphasis on celebrating good and improved attendance, through the award of certificates for example. Last term 58 pupils received certificates for full attendance and the proportion is rising. The home-school link worker follows up all absences daily, including home visits when necessary. There are fortnightly meetings with the educational social welfare service that supports the school, parents and pupils with improvement. The main factors affecting good attendance are: the high incidence of extended holidays; the mobility of families that results in absences being recorded until the re-location is known; genuine illness such as a recent chicken pox outbreak. Nevertheless, over 120 pupils have attendance below 90 per cent and parents have yet to give the school their full support. The school is currently placing emphasis on encouraging better attendance from the youngest pupils in school. Most pupils are punctual but around 20 pupils are regularly late, some missing 20 minutes of lesson time daily. The inspection has indicated the need for the school to continue its very good work in this area as an area that requires ongoing attention in the post-inspection action plan.

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

51. The school foyer walls are alive with signs that greet parents in many different languages. A display of photographs of the smiling staff members helps parents and visitors to match faces and names. These aspects show well the school's desire to make everyone feel welcome. Every morning many staff are outside greeting parents and their children as they arrive. The headteacher has an open-door policy and a very high profile around and about the school.

52. The school's links with parents are good. Parents told inspectors that they feel welcome to approach the school and are very positive about the quality of education being provided. There are many initiatives being promoted by the school to bring parents on board as partners in education. A 'stay and play morning' runs every week for rising nursery children and their parents and carers. Inspectors observed children, mums, dads, grandmas, sisters and brothers from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds all enjoying working together as they painted, coloured pictures, made clay models or simply shared reading books. The 'INSPIRE' project has been very successful in encouraging families to become involved in pupils' learning from Year 1 to Year 6. During the week of inspection some 20 parents of Year 6 pupils came into school for a morning of activities aimed at helping their children prepare for SATs, and a similar number of Year 1 parents enjoyed immensely making board games geared towards helping literacy skills. The home-school link worker is pivotal in making such initiatives successful. She has just been successful in securing funding for an after-school club, which is due to open in September. There are also many adult education courses run in conjunction with a local college that are available to parents in school. These have a knock-on impact in supporting children's education. For example, inspectors popped in to see the buzz of activity in the course run for teaching assistants at which 25 parents were present.

53. The information that parents and carers receive has many good features. Notice boards about the school display useful information and are well located for parents to peruse whilst waiting to pick up their children. The prospectus is a helpful publication. The governors' annual report to parents is very full with information on each curriculum area. It is, however, very wordy with no pictures or illustrations that show off the school's rich curriculum that would make it a more appealing read. Parents' and carers' views of the school are very positive about the quality of information in general, though a small number would like more information about how well their children are doing at school. The pupils' written reports cover all the required aspects and include targets that parents can support their child in reaching. Inspectors judge that the information provided about individual achievements is adequate.

There is scope for this to become even better as the school's assessment, recording and reporting policy is implemented and pupils' individual targets are more widely discussed.

54. Overall the impact of parental involvement on the work of the school is satisfactory. The annual parents' meeting is very well attended and all parents of pupils with special educational needs attend reviews. There are full houses for concerts and good support for the coffee morning held on a regular basis. There are, however, still many families who, for whatever reason, are not involved in the life of the school. Home-school reading diaries are not well maintained for example. A small minority of parents, from all ethnic groups, are not giving the school their full support in ensuring that, when in this country, their children get the most out of school life.

55. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are welcomed into the school. These parents are recognised as having a vital role to play in supporting their children appropriately. Parents are effectively included in the review process of pupils' special educational needs. Most of these parents are supportive of the school and are keen that their children do well. The language teacher interviews parents of pupils who speak English as an additional language together with their children when the pupils first enter the school. This helps the teacher to assess needs and how far support from parents can be expected. Often the support can be limited because of parents' own grasp of English. Nevertheless they are as closely involved as possible. Communication is mainly verbal and visual. There is little written information given to them which is an area for development by the school.

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

56. Since the school opened in January 2001, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have led and managed the process of creating a unified school very capably. The headteacher had begun the process of building a strong staff team when she took up the post of headteacher of the former junior school. This work continued after the merger and the headteacher and deputy headteacher have formed a strong partnership to continue the advance. To some degree, improvement has been greater in the junior classes than in the infants because the headteacher has had longer to focus on the older age band. Nonetheless, the school is united and staff are committed in their work to sustain improvement.

57. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked successfully to create an effective senior management team. The senior managers have growing awareness of the strengths and areas for improvement in school, though the headteacher and deputy headteacher have a more complete understanding. However, senior managers show good determination to broaden their appreciation of school performance and are ready for the continuing challenge of developing rigorous procedures to check and evaluate what is happening in school. Because leadership and management are good overall, the prospects for the future are assured.

58. The school has an additional tier of management whereby subjects are grouped into appropriate clusters and managed by curriculum team leaders. These team leaders are members of the senior management team. This additional tier has been put in place to ensure that each subject is managed and led effectively. The team leaders are working well to develop the role of the subject leaders for the constituent subjects in their cluster. Many of the specific subject leaders have had very little experience of leading and managing their subjects. Some are more effective than others are, though again, the determination to improve is very good and staff are conscientious in their duties. Every teacher is committed to make a difference for the pupils and school managers have developed very good



confidence amongst the staff to take on additional responsibilities and fulfil their existing ones with increasing success.

59. Governors are well informed about the school's performance and are confident when discussing the evolution and improvement of the school. Governors play a successful role in school improvement because they are increasingly asking the questions that matter in order to check that pupils are enjoying good learning and making good progress. The governing body is now much more complete than it was just two years ago and they represent their community well. Governors are very proud of the school, they are well involved and they carry out most of their duties well. However, some statutory requirements are not met because the school is without some of the policies that are required. In other cases it is currently developing new policies or updating those inherited from the former junior school, for example incorporating guidelines for behaviour and discipline into a new pastoral policy. These were shared with school managers during the inspection and there is good heart amongst governors to ensure that they fully uphold their responsibilities.

60. As discussed above, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior managers have a good overall level of understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Other staff are not yet so well informed because the systems to check and evaluate school performance are not rigorous enough and do not involve all staff in finding out how well the school is doing. The focus over the last two years has been to create a strong staff team. This has been very successful. It is now time for the school to develop rigorous and consistent systems that involve all teachers in the appraisal of school performance. The school improvement plan includes priorities for such development of monitoring and evaluation and school managers accept that now is the time to redouble efforts to bring this priority to fruition. As part of this task, they are working to strengthen the system of performance management in school. This includes personal targets for each teacher based on those in the school improvement plan. In general, teachers welcome the focus that performance management gives to their work and they try hard to work for success.

61. Overall, the school applies the principles of best value soundly when making comparisons to ensure teaching, learning and standards are improving well. The system to set targets and to check that pupils are on track to meet them is developing well. There are good procedures to keep staff informed about learning and progress in English and mathematics, with very comprehensive analysis of writing standards through the school. Targets are set annually for each pupil in English and mathematics and the progress made is assessed regularly to ensure pupils are not under-achieving. In other subjects, assessment is less well developed and there are clear priorities for improvement as discussed in the section above on 'How well does the school care for its pupils?' Improvement in assessment in other subjects and the resulting closer focus in planning on the exact skills and knowledge to be learned will go a long way to ensure that progress is similarly good in all classes in all subjects. In other respects, the school has set appropriate targets for overall standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Although it was not as successful in meeting these last year as hoped, it is showing the necessary improvement to standards in these two subjects to meet its future targets.

62. The school is well staffed and the accommodation is good. There are no major shortages of resources. The headteacher has considerable vision for the development of the accommodation as a prime learning resource and as a place of relaxation. Outdoors, the school is visually attractive and the range of facilities for play and recreation is very good. The 'chill-out zones' were provided after representation from the pupils and are a valuable addition to the facilities, which are used well on a planned basis by all pupils. Indoors, the school is bright, cheerful and well decorated. Some of the displays, which are generally of very good

quality, inspire pupils to greater achievement and build self-esteem very well. All staff work hard to make the school warm and welcoming to pupils, parents and visitors alike.

63. The school manages its budget well. The level of funding is well above average but it is used properly in the education of the pupils. The carry-forward in the previous financial year was earmarked for improvements to the outdoor learning environment. This work has been completed well. Governors and staff are well involved in the process of school improvement planning and the priorities in the school improvement plan are matched well to the budget.

64. Additional grants are also used effectively to improve teaching, learning and standards. For example, the provision for pupils with additional language needs is good. The management of provision for English as an additional language is well managed by a team of teachers, which includes the deputy headteacher, special educational needs co-ordinator and specialist language teacher. The documentation, for all aspects of provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language, including assessment and monitoring, needs to be drawn together in a more accessible and dovetailed way. Resources are used effectively to make sure that the pupils' understanding of language is being enhanced. The good quality of management is helping the significant number of pupils to make good progress in their learning. The work of the learning support assistant and bilingual support staff also effectively supports pupils' language development. The overview of the deputy headteacher is carefully and well developed so that the language teacher and support staff feel valued for the work that they are doing.

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

65. The school has moved ahead well since its opening and is providing an effective education. All managers, staff and governors are united in their work to make further improvements and there are good prospects for the future. With these aims in mind, the school should work to:

### **1. Continue to improve standards, especially in mathematics, science, geography and religious education.**

See paragraphs: 1, 2, 5, 19, 21, 46, 102-4, 112-3, 115-6, 132-5 and 163-5.

### **2. Extend the systems to check and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning and ensure that they are rigorous.**

See paragraphs: 31, 37, 43-5, 48, 57, 60, 64, 112, 127, 131, 135, 141, 148, 157, 161-2 and 166.

### **3. Make sure that the information produced by assessment in all subjects is used fully to plan future learning and keep track of pupils' progress.**

See paragraphs: 2, 43, 45-6, 53, 61, 64, 70, 100, 105-8, 110, 116, 127, 131-2, 148, 161-2 and 166.

Governors should also include the following lesser issues in their action plan:

- **Maintain efforts to improve the levels of attendance.**

See paragraphs: 12, 18 and 50

- **Ensure all statutory requirements, including the provision of all the necessary policies, are met.**

See paragraphs: 39, 46, 49, 53 and 59.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	104
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	39

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	4	66	29	4	0	0
Percentage	1	4	63	28	4	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

### 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)	60	401
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	-	166

FTE means full-time equivalent

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	47

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	297

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	62
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	41

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.1
National comparative data	0.5

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



### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	21	32	53

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	15	15
	Girls	26	26	27
	Total	38	41	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	72 (82)	77 (88)	79 (86)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	15	14
	Girls	29	25	27
	Total	43	40	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (80)	75 (88)	77 (82)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	28	24	52

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	14	16
	Girls	11	7	15
	Total	23	21	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	44 (59)	40 (58)	60 (68)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	15	13
	Girls	18	9	16
	Total	34	24	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	65 (n/a)	46 (n/a)	56 (n/a)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

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

**Exclusions in the last school year**

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
23	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
12	1	0
0	0	0
6	0	0
6	0	0
175	0	0
62	0	0
27	0	0
2	0	0
59	0	1
1	0	0
20	0	0
1	0	0
5	0	0
2	0	0

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.5
Average class size	25.6

**Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	8.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	204

**Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	37.5

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001-2
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	£
Total income	1 354 981
Total expenditure	1 284 407
Expenditure per pupil	2 744
Balance brought forward from previous year	43 069
Balance carried forward to next year	113 643

Total number of education support staff	3.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	75

Number of pupils per FTE adult	11.5
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	401
Number of questionnaires returned	138

### **Responses (percentage of answers in each category):**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	73	22	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school	53	35	7	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good	56	36	2	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	35	32	15	13	5
The teaching is good	62	31	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	49	32	14	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	56	31	6	4	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	60	31	4	2	3
The school works closely with parents	46	36	11	4	4
The school is well led and managed	52	33	3	4	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	53	35	9	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	53	25	8	1	8

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

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

66. Provision for the children in the nursery and reception classes is one of the strengths of the school. This is because they are well taught in a very welcoming learning environment. Staff of the Early Years Unit provide the children with their own special world of learning, reflecting well Rookery's own aims for a rich, imaginative and stimulating curriculum.

67. During the inspection three quarters of the teaching observed was good. All staff provide a calm, purposeful learning environment. They have a good understanding of the needs of young children. Staff plan carefully and undertake regular assessments of children's needs. Nursery nurses are used well to support children's learning. They also provide good quality bilingual support for children for whom English is a second language. As a result of this good teaching, most children make good progress. Children identified with special needs make satisfactory progress with their individual targets. Higher attaining children make good progress because they are well catered for in the planning. For example, some younger nursery age children work with reception children for some activities.

68. The admission arrangements are effective and ensure children settle easily. Home visits are undertaken and care is taken to settle in the nursery children over a period of time. Well-attended weekly 'stay and play' sessions for parents and toddlers held in the unit mean that many children are familiar with the layout and routines before they start. Parents are made to feel very welcome at the beginning and end of each day. Some children find it difficult when they transfer to Year 1, as the organisation is different. The school has identified this as a priority in the school improvement plan.

69. Children identified with special needs are identified early and follow appropriate action plans. They make satisfactory progress with their targets. Some receive additional support from the schools special needs co-ordinator. They make good progress in these short weekly sessions.

70. Staff use information provided by parents and their own detailed assessments to good effect. The range of baseline assessments indicates that the majority of children start in the unit well below the level expected. There is a wide span of ability. All these different groups are well catered for. Weekly ongoing assessments by all team members are used to group children and plan work. As a result staff plan work that is suitably challenging for the different children's needs. The children's records while detailed do not cover the stepping stones of learning in enough detail. This has been identified as an area to develop by the school. Because of the good quality of teaching, children make good and some very good progress towards their early learning goals by the end of the year.

71. The unit is well led and managed. The co-ordinator ensures that all staff contributions are valued and the way the curriculum is organised makes full use of the staffs' talents. All staff have worked hard to establish this new Early Years Unit. It is spacious and attractive, with very good resources. These include a computer suite, a separate hall, a soft playroom and a secure shared outside area. The way the curriculum is organised and delivered ensures that all these resources are well used.

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

72. Staff help the children settle in very quickly. They plan together and deliver the curriculum in a similar way, which ensures the children learn with confidence. The learning areas are laid out in a way that enables children to select items independently. They have regular opportunities to choose activities and are responsible for putting away any equipment they use. They enjoy these sessions because they are delivered as play experiences and are fun! Reception children are good role models to the nursery children, in following established routines. There are many planned opportunities for older and younger children to mix. Well-established routines such as registration and juice times help build the confidence of younger children. Daily opportunities to plan and choose activities help children develop their social skills. Children respond well to these opportunities. At times during freely chosen activities, too long is allowed without adult intervention and some children need more structure.

73. The children work well in small groups. Care is taken to include all children in lessons and to make sure that no children are isolated or upset. Appropriate support is in place for those who have special learning or behavioural needs. There is regular sharing of information from home, school and the various agencies that give guidance. A child with physical needs is given good support and care is taken to make sure her needs are catered for and that she is fully included in lessons. There are very good relationships between the staff and children and between the children and one another. The staff make sure the children know what behaviour is expected. Staff use lots of praise and encouragement to ensure children understand and follow the unit's rules of behaviour. Most children enjoy learning, behave well and work hard.

74. The majority of children start nursery classes with their social development well below the expected level for their age. Because this area is very well taught, children make very good progress in nursery and reception towards their early learning goals. Most reception children are on course to achieve their early learning goals by the end of the year.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

75. Most children enter nursery with skills in speaking and listening, writing and reading well below expected levels for their age. There is, however, a wide span of ability. By the time they are in reception they have made good progress. A strength of teaching is the time all staff give to promoting children's speaking and listening, reading and writing skills. The attractive and spacious role-play areas are used well to promote language use. Every opportunity is taken to encourage talk and to help children use their imagination. For example, the current transport topic includes a travel agent's shop. Some reluctant language users who find it very difficult to express their ideas have additional targeted support. The numbers in each reception group are very small and consequently children have good opportunities to express their ideas. In a good lesson the teacher used an attractive big book, *Mr Ted goes to the beach*, to promote talking. Her questions skilfully extended the very able children. She also encouraged less fluent children to express their ideas in sentences.

76. Children who use English as a second language make good progress because their particular individual language needs are identified and bilingual support is available in most home languages. For example more secure, confident language users are encouraged to extend their vocabulary, while quieter children have their language and confidence developed informally. Some children struggle to maintain their concentration in the afternoon in the more structured lessons and become more restless.

77. While the two reading areas are welcoming, they are quite small. Very few children actively use them when they have choice times. These two areas do not have a high enough profile. Children need more targeted encouragement to actively sit and share a book. Most children handle books with care because they are taught to look after books. Children enjoy

sharing books and some are beginning to develop sounds and words to help them read. This is because good use is made of rhymes and songs and sound games. Good use is made of computer programs to match sounds and words.

78. Staff actively encourage children to use informal writing areas and both boys and girls use these areas informally with pleasure. Care is taken to develop children's handwriting skills. Nursery children have many opportunities to trace, make patterns and form marks on paper. Reception children are given targeted writing sessions and many are developing good handwriting skills. Some children have difficulty forming their letters fluently. Children who are ready for more independent writing activities do not have their learning held back as they are identified early. They are well catered for and are beginning to make simple sentences. They would benefit from more occasions to experience wider writing opportunities.

79. Because this area is well taught, children make good progress and some very good progress towards their early learning goals. A significant minority are on course to achieve their early learning goals by the end of the year. The majority will not achieve their early learning language goals, however, because they start with less developed speaking, reading and writing skills.

### **Mathematical development**

80. Most nursery children start with mathematical skills well below expected levels for their age. Because of their early language skills many find it difficult to express mathematical ideas or use mathematical language. Staff have good strategies to match work at the right level for different children. Nursery children develop their early number skills and learn their shapes and colours. They enjoy regular use of number rhymes such as *Five Currant Buns* when practising their skills. Nursery children with better mathematical skills are well catered for as they work with the reception children. All children work in very small groups with good quality equipment. Reception children are beginning to record some of their work. Staff work hard to increase children's ability to express mathematical ideas. Children are also given opportunities to develop mental strategies. In a very good lesson children were given the opportunity to estimate the number of teddies in a jar. Most were able to have a guess. Higher attaining children could make good predictions and could record their answers using numbers up to 20.

81. Staff provide an appropriate balance between number-based activities, and activities that promote the children's understanding of mathematical ideas and language. A large number of children do not recognise more than a few numbers and have difficulty recording their work. Less confident children have their learning further reinforced through a range of number games, jigsaws, water and sand exploration. Good use is made of computer programs to reinforce number skills.

82. Because this area is well taught, children make good progress towards their early learning goals, with many making very good progress. A significant minority are on course to achieve their early learning goals by the end of the year, but the majority will not achieve their early learning mathematical goals, because they start with well below average number skills.

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

83. Most nursery children start with knowledge and understanding well below expected levels for their age. Topics such as 'Clothes' and 'Journeys', together with special walks, help nursery and reception children to build up their picture of the world. The unit has made excellent use of an indoor corridor to extend children's knowledge by creating a street with a road and a range of shops, to reflect the local community. The staff strike a good balance

between intervening and letting children explore. Through these opportunities the children build up their environmental, geographical and scientific knowledge. While there is an investigation area, children rarely choose to handle the items available. They need more encouragement to explore and use interesting items such as magnifying glasses and kaleidoscopes.

84. The staff successfully extend the children's knowledge of different cultures through the wide range of books, music and resources. Activities such as making chapattis give children real pleasure and show them that various cultures are valued. In a good lesson the nursery nurse skilfully extended the children's expressive language while they mixed ingredients. Many shared their home experiences of cooking and food. Children also learn about a number of festivals including Diwali and Christmas, as well as joining special school assemblies.

85. ICT skills are very well taught. The children use the unit's specialist ICT suite in small groups twice a week. Additional stand-alone computers are also in use daily. There is a good selection of programs to reinforce basic skills. As a result children have positive attitudes. Most reception children can use the mouse confidently, with some assistance. Children are actively taught to use tape recorders to listen to music tapes. Girls and boys display equally good skills and show the expected attainment for their age.

86. Teaching is good and children make good progress, with some making very good progress. The majority will not achieve their early learning goals, because they are unable to express their ideas.

### **Physical development**

87. Most children start nursery with below expected levels for their age. However, there is a wide range of physical development, with some above and below that expected. The staff provide a full programme of physical development. The unit's hall, soft playroom and outdoor area give children daily opportunities to learn and practise their physical skills. In an effective lesson children used a parachute to explore space and movement. Children made significant gains in their skills because the activity was such fun that all children fully participated. Staff ensure that children make good progress in a safe environment.

88. Within the unit, staff provide regular opportunities for girls and boys to play with large and small construction equipment. The staff also provide many opportunities for children to practise their skills in cutting, sticking and painting. Teaching is good and children make good progress. Most children are on course to achieve their early learning goals by the end of the school year.

### **Creative development**

89. Most nursery children start with skills well below those expected for their age. However, there is a wide ability range. By the time they are reception age, staff have provided children with a wide range of creative experiences. These include different painting techniques and collage work. Children are encouraged to experiment freely when mixing paints, printing or using materials. They learn to handle equipment such as paintbrushes and scissors safely. Staff show the children that their creative efforts are valued by the careful way work is displayed.

90. Staff develop the children's music talents well. Music is taught in a way that promotes children's confidence. Children regularly sing rhymes and handle and explore instruments. Enrichment activities, such as participation in musical events and having visiting specialists,

also bring music to life. During the inspection week children showed real enthusiasm whilst listening to a music specialist playing different instruments. They sang *Twinkle, twinkle little star* with real pleasure.

91. The imaginative play areas are used well to extend children's creativity and language skills. The staff skillfully interact with children, extending their language and encouraging their imagination. Children respond well and thoroughly enjoy these opportunities.

92. Teaching is good and as a result most children make good progress. They are on course to achieve their early learning goals in relation to music making and development of their artistic skills. However, many are unable to fully express their creative response to art, music and dance. This is because many have gaps in their vocabulary as they are still developing their language skills.

## ENGLISH

93. Standards at the end of Year 2 are below average in writing and reading but are average in speaking and listening. At the end of Year 6 they are average in reading, writing and speaking and listening. Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and it is good in Years 3 to 6. There is no difference in the progress made by boys and girls from different ethnic backgrounds, though in some lessons girls are often more reticent than boys to answer questions. The school has worked successfully to improve standards in English, particularly by making changes to the curriculum and to teaching and learning. Its additional strategies to boost standards in English are working well. Thus, standards are now average, rather than the well below average results seen in last year's SATs.

94. The level of support offered in infant and junior classes by the language support teacher and learning support assistant continues the good provision. Writing skills are still limited because there is a regular flow of new arrivals in the school, together with the fact that some pupils come from home backgrounds where there is no systematic writing in the home language. A positive feature of the provision is the way that teachers in Years 2 and 6 ensure that pupils are challenged by some of their work. This is done in mixed ability classes in Year 2 whilst in Year 6 the highest achievers work together with the headteacher on a regular basis.

95. The school's strategy for literacy has been successfully embedded in the school's practice. Some teachers in the junior classes are now comfortable enough to ensure that it is sometimes adapted effectively to meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Pupils who have identified special needs are also well supported by the adoption of this adaptation strategy. The school has paid careful attention to its SATs results and embarked upon a structured targeting of improving performance in all areas of learning in English. Writing was originally identified as a target before moving on to reading. It was possible to give focus to writing and reading in the infant and junior classes because of the beneficial work in nursery and reception classes in developing speaking and listening skills. The introduction of additional strategies for literacy is having a positive effect on standards because of the extra support given to pupils learning English as an additional language. This is a significant group of pupils in the school and they take some time to build their skills, especially those at an early stage of language acquisition. Their learning is developing gradually but surely because of the effective strategies and support provided by the school.

96. Good opportunities are created to engage pupils in discussions in the beginnings of lessons. This is a regular successful feature of the pupils' learning. Pupils' confidence grows when they are supported in group reading sessions. The skills of speaking and listening are progressively built on throughout the school. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils listened with care

because a large-scale photograph of a familiar classroom activity, which helped them to use appropriate describing words, had captured their interest. In the same year, in an additional literacy lesson, a small group of pupils benefited from working in a concentrated way on listening to, and identifying, sounds in the middle of words. In a Year 2 class pupils talked enthusiastically with one another and adults as they considered the structure of non-fiction books. They responded to questions sensibly in well-structured sentences because they had listened with care. This painstaking work has a good impact in the junior classes. In a good lesson in Year 6 the pupils conducted a debate on the availability of mobile phones. This also supported their developing knowledge of citizenship. They listened and argued points of view with maturity. An equally mature appraisal of the contents of poems was made in another very good lesson in Year 6. Pupils listened carefully to one another as well as the teacher before they made decisions on some of the messages being given in the poems they were focusing on.

97. Standards in reading are below average at seven years of age but average at eleven. There is some inconsistency in the practice of reading throughout the school. The pupils have reading journals that give them effective support in developing positive attitudes to reading. Higher attaining readers read with skill and enthusiasm. They read with fluency and expression. Comprehension and inference skills are developing well by the end of Year 6 because they are being gradually built up over the other year groups in group reading sessions. Lower attaining readers are not so enthusiastic because they experience more difficulties and do not always have opportunities to enhance skills, other than through group reading sessions. Nevertheless a good proportion of pupils identifies favourite authors and talk knowledgeably about their books, with the majority of them preferring fiction to information books. Although reading skills are developed soundly, not enough opportunities are created for pupils to read regularly to adults. There is a good library in the central area of the school, which gives pupils ample space for working as well as providing them with a satisfactory range of books. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported in lessons and when they are withdrawn for specific reading skill work with the language teacher. Pupils with special educational needs are helped to make good progress towards meeting reading targets identified in their individual education plans.

98. Standards in writing have been subject to an in-depth focus by the school. Whilst standards are below average at the age of seven, all staff have been rewarded for the time and effort that they have given to this focus because standards have improved and are average by the age of eleven. The task now is to spread these standards into other areas of the curriculum by extending the pupils' opportunities to use their skills more extensively. Teachers in infant classes are benefiting from the greater emphasis that is given to developing the literacy skills in nursery and reception classes. Additional literacy skills are also being taught effectively to small groups of pupils so that they are building knowledge and understanding of words. This enables them to put them into accurate contexts and use them as they write more successfully in sentences in Year 2 classes. Sampling of the pupils' work confirms the good variety of writing opportunities being given in Years 1 and 2 classes. The pupils are introduced to story frames that support sequential development in writing. Some extended writing is being attempted to help the pupils in making satisfactory progress in these year groups. Higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged with more difficult tasks to move them on more rapidly in their learning. Pupils in Year 3 are becoming adept at identifying the different purposes of instructional texts. They are then able to contrast this skill with explanatory texts in Year 5 classes to extend their knowledge and understanding of different forms of writing. Appropriate attention is given to the correct use of prefixes and suffixes in writing in junior classes in Years 5 and 6. There is a good focus on poetry throughout the school. Pupils in all of the sets in Year 6 classes show understanding of the interpretation of meanings that are only implied in poetry. The sheer enjoyment of poems such as *Jabberwocky* and *Spinner* is not lost and pupils delight in analysing whilst capturing

the emotions and feelings that are the focus of the poems. Good links to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are made through this good use of poetry. It is used well to inspire imaginative writing in several year groups.

99. Amongst the other skills that are being developed are writing letters of thanks to people when visits have been successfully completed. Diary entries, instructional texts and some play-scripts are amongst other writing tasks successfully completed over the year groups. Spelling is being given appropriate attention as pupils build up spelling journals that give them regular support in spelling correctly. Most are proficient at using dictionaries to give them further support. Handwriting is also being taught as a skill but this is not always transferred to the presentation of the pupils' work. The written work is regularly marked and in the best practice teachers' comments set targets to help the pupils improve. Pupils pay attention to teachers' comments and sometimes respond to these with a message of their own, but more often through correcting work appropriately. The good marking practice is inconsistent across the school. Some use is made of computers for word processing their work with increasing levels of skill but this is not consistently practised in all year groups.

100. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the infant classes and good in the junior classes, with some particular strengths in Years 2 and 6. Pupils work together well in groups and on their own. They enjoy being challenged especially when they are interested in their tasks. Where teaching is best teachers have secure subject knowledge and devise imaginative tasks to involve pupils in being creative learners. Brisk pace in lessons ensures pupils work hard and cover a good amount of work. Plenary sessions are often used appropriately in order to assess what pupils have learned but this practice is not always consistent.

101. The leadership and management of English are good. The subject leaders have been able to monitor teaching and standards being achieved. This has enabled them to support the steady improvements that have been made through giving guidance to other teachers to support the improvement in pupils' overall learning in all aspects of English.

## **MATHEMATICS**

102. The findings of the inspection are that the attainment of pupils in the current Year 2 and Year 6 classes is below average. Overall, pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress in their learning. In Years 3 to 6 the majority of pupils make good progress and achieve well. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is particularly good and as a result these pupils often make very good progress in their learning. However, a small minority of lower attaining pupils do not make the progress that they should, and as a result overall standards are not as high as they could be. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported in their learning and as a result make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are higher than those recorded in the SATs last year because of the school's good efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

103. In lessons, most average and higher attaining pupils in Year 2 mentally add and subtract single digit numbers to 10. Lower attaining pupils often use their fingers when adding together single-digit numbers. Higher attaining pupils successfully subtract numbers to 20 but average and lower attaining pupils find this difficult. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the value of number to 99 and most average and higher attaining pupils successfully complete simple addition sums. A few average and lower attaining pupils find this work difficult, and do not apply their knowledge of number facts to the solving of number problems. Close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that most average and higher attaining pupils count accurately in 2s, 5s and 10s. Lower attaining pupils find it difficult to apply what



they have learned in lessons to problem solving and other activities, for example when working with money. Most pupils know the names and properties of some solid and flat geometric shapes, recognise shapes that are symmetrical and use standard units to measure.

104. In lessons, most average and higher attaining pupils in Year 6 use mental recall of number facts when solving number problems. In one lesson higher attaining pupils displayed good levels of problem solving skills as they tackled questions relating to volume, capacity, percentages, money and time. However, many average and lower attaining pupils struggle with this type of work because they do not have sufficiently developed number skills. For example, in one lesson in a Year 6 class, pupils found it difficult to apply their knowledge of multiplication facts when trying to find a fraction of a whole number, and in another they struggled with money problems. A close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of the value of numbers up to one million and use the four number operations to two decimal places. They also have a good understanding of fractions and percentages and use formulae to solve number problems. Average attaining pupils have a satisfactory understanding of numbers up to and beyond a thousand. Most pupils successfully calculate the perimeter and areas of shapes and identify the properties of geometric shapes. All pupils collect data and create frequency charts and graphs and interpret their findings accurately.

105. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the infants and good in the juniors. However, there are examples of good and satisfactory teaching in both phases of education. Planning is very detailed and identifies what pupils should learn with appropriate learning objectives. At the beginning of lessons teachers share the learning objectives with the pupils so that they know what they are expected to achieve, and in the best examples check at the end of the lesson to see how successful they have been. Teachers' assessments of pupils' progress in previous sessions are often used well in planning. Teachers often refer to previous work to help pupils to make connections in their learning. Most lessons begin with a rigorous mental session or game to engage the pupils in their learning. Teachers often use digit cards and number fans well to ensure that all pupils are involved and to check their understanding. In response, pupils become involved and are keen to participate. On occasions they become over-enthusiastic and lose concentration. Teachers give careful attention to the development of pupils' mathematical vocabulary and often support this by the use of visual resources and good quality classroom displays. Teachers appropriately encourage pupils to explain how they came to their answers and to speak in whole sentences using appropriate mathematical vocabulary. In a good lesson in a Year 4 class, for example, the teacher used cards with the key words of 'doubling' and 'partitioning', and carefully described the processes of each. However, some pupils find it very difficult to explain what methods and strategies they have used to solve number problems. In many lessons, teachers provide pupils with good strategies to help them calculate and check their answers.

106. During most lessons, but not all, teachers move around groups providing good support and guidance. Sometimes, teachers focus too much on the work of one group and fail to check the progress of others. Teachers sometimes rely too heavily on pupils coming to them when they have problems, rather than checking their progress for themselves. On occasions, pupils struggle with the work they are given, and do not make the progress that they should. Most teachers support and manage pupils well, ensuring good standards of behaviour and positive attitudes. In some classes, however, routines and expectations are not sufficiently well established, and as a result pupils do not work as hard as they might and do not make the progress that they should. On one occasion a teacher did not effectively manage pupils' unsatisfactory behaviour, and this led to the pupils making unsatisfactory progress.

107. Teachers' questioning of pupils at the beginning and end of lessons is good at times. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of questions that are carefully chosen to check the understanding of individuals and groups of pupils. In a minority of lessons, however, it is not used sufficiently well to assess what pupils understand or have learned. For example, the session at the end of the lesson is used to take pupils on to their next stage of learning without first checking what they have understood. Teachers often mark pupils' work very well, providing clear guidance on what they have done well and where they need to improve. There are some examples, however, where pupils' work is not marked, and that which is does not provide guidance on how they can improve. Teachers sometimes ask pupils to correct errors in their work, but do not always ensure that these are completed.

108. Learning support staff are often used effectively to help pupils learn, in particular those who speak English as an additional language. They support these pupils well at the beginning and end of lessons as well as with group work and as a result these pupils make good progress in their learning. Similarly, pupils with special educational needs are well supported in class and often make at least satisfactory progress. However, there are particular problems relating to the provision of appropriate work for some lower attaining and pupils with special educational needs when they move from the reception class into Year 1. Teachers in Year 1 do not always use assessment information sufficiently well to plan and build on these pupils' previous learning. In other classes, there are further examples of work not sufficiently tailored to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils, and as a consequence these pupils are not making the progress they should. The school has recognised the need to be more rigorous in its assessment and support of pupils who have specific learning difficulties related to mathematics. Individual education plans are being drawn up in an effort to raise the achievement of these pupils.

109. The curriculum is satisfactory. The school uses its numeracy strategy well to plan the curriculum, with good emphasis on mental skills, the development of mathematical vocabulary and developing problem solving skills. Teachers provide a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects, for example science, art and design and history, but these opportunities could be broadened. In science, pupils in Year 4 measured the temperature in the classroom and created line graphs. In an art and design lesson pupils identified lines of symmetry on mosaic tiles. In history, pupils in Year 5 studied a timeline of the Victorian period. There are comparatively few examples of computer programs being used to support pupils' learning in this subject. The school organises a mathematics fun day, which promotes the enjoyment of mathematics. Pupils produced a good range of work on shape, measurement, probability and number patterns. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is very good. Pupils attend additional lessons provided by the National Primary Trust and as a result several pupils have achieved well in GCSE, with one achieving a grade A\*. The school has also developed a good partnership with a local high street bank that helps the school operate a bank of its own and with a local football club where pupils undertake a range of mathematical tasks.

110. Procedures for assessing pupils' levels of achievement and checking their progress are satisfactory overall, with some good features. Teachers record pupils' progress against 'key objective' statements for the elements of mathematics covered. The school analyses pupils' performance in SATs and uses these and the results from the annual non-statutory tests in Years 3, 4 and 5 to set targets and to check pupils' progress. This information is being used well to target groups of pupils for additional support. The school analyses test results to ascertain where particular weaknesses lie in pupils' understanding of different elements of the curriculum. All classes have targets, and pupils in Years 2 to 6 have individual targets pasted in the front of their exercise books. During the inspection, there were comparatively few occasions when teachers referred to these to motivate the pupils to try

harder. Numeracy certificates are presented each term to pupils who have made particularly good progress in their learning.

111. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The two subject co-ordinators are knowledgeable and very enthusiastic. They monitor teachers' planning, observe lessons and check pupils' progress by looking at their exercise books. The co-ordinators have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and where they need to move forward. In particular, they know that many pupils struggle with problem solving and mathematical language and have worked effectively to develop these areas. They have sought to involve parents in their children's learning by providing workshops and through the provision of a mathematics games library. The school has a good number of resources that are well used.

## **SCIENCE**

112. Attainment is below expected levels in all year groups in the school. The standards achieved by this year's eleven and seven year old pupils remain below the national average, but this is an improvement on the levels achieved by pupils in last year's SATs, when results were well below both national averages and the average scores of pupils in similar schools. The school has recognised that there is an urgent need to improve the science curriculum and the methods used in teaching science in order to raise standards. Some changes have been made over the past year, which are beginning to have a positive impact on learning. There are still key elements to be addressed to help pupils build up their learning in a more coherent way across the school, and to enable them to think more scientifically by the time they reach Year 6. Most pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school, including pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, who have good support in the classroom from teachers and support staff. However, on occasion some pupils regularly miss science lessons to attend specialist language support from the special educational needs co-ordinator. The impact of this on their learning is not monitored.

113. By the age of seven, pupils have learned to classify musical instruments by the movement needed to make a sound, and explored the reasons why animals have different habitats. They know that pushes and pulls are examples of force, and can sort objects that are hard from those that are soft. By the age of eleven, they are beginning to understand how the human body works and to know about reversible changes through making mixtures and solutions. They are less secure in their knowledge of appropriate equipment to use, for example when trying to separate mixtures, and have little confidence in using correct technical language such as 'components', 'vibration' and 'fair test'. Their knowledge of the dangers of electricity is well developed.

114. Science is taught through an appropriate range of topics, with effective links to other areas of the curriculum where possible. Senior managers are working to ensure that the timetabling of science fully reflects its status as a core subject and that the amount of time and regularity of science lessons are consistent through the school.

115. Topics are studied in depth, giving pupils a solid body of knowledge. Where teaching methods are structured and inspiring, pupils are able to use these opportunities well. An example of this occurred in Year 4 where pupils used their knowledge of circuits to explore the properties of materials and decide which were good or bad conductors of electricity. The teacher introduced the lesson through a combination of methods – demonstration, questioning earlier learning, and explanation – emphasising key words such as 'insulators' 'conductors' and 'prediction'. She gave pupils an outline of the necessary process they were to follow in their experiments. This simple teaching device is not always evident, however.

When there is no firm framework for investigations, and pupils have not studied science for some time, each learning experience is new. The recall of previous learning is difficult, and pupils have too few strategies to aid this process in learning, with a detrimental impact on progress.

116. While the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with some good teaching in Year 2 and Year 4, it could be better. Most year groups are given a sound knowledge and understanding of the topics taught as they are learning about them, but pupils find it very difficult to retain this learning effectively. The systematic development of skills so that pupils can apply previous experiences to new areas of learning is not rigorous or consistent enough. Pupils from all attainment levels in Years 3 to 6 are frequently set the same work, which does not challenge all pupils enough. Procedures for assessment are limited at present, only giving clear information about the content of work covered. There are no targets in any year group to focus key areas for learning, either for classes or for individual pupils. School managers accept that the next step is to develop consistent and rigorous assessment and target setting and tracking systems in science that will ensure all pupils make the best progress possible.

117. The co-ordinator has recently purchased a new commercial scheme for teaching science and is beginning to use elements of this to improve the quality of provision. She and her team have sound subject knowledge, and are committed to improving the quality of learning as soon as possible. Resources are satisfactory and pupils use them well, but very little use is made of ICT to aid pupils' learning.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

118. Standards are average by the age of seven and eleven, with some older pupils attaining above average standards. Most pupils, including pupils who use English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs, make good progress.

119. Pupils are enthusiastic about art and design and many say it is one of their favorite subjects. The school is committed to developing pupils' creativity and talent. Planning is thorough and covers all the elements of the programme of study. However, not all aspects planned have been delivered, for example work with clay in Year 2.

120. By the age of seven pupils are developing appropriate skills. They cover a range of techniques and skills including self-portraits, colour mixing, paintings, printing, patterns, pastel work, observational drawings and some collage work. Scrutiny of work shows that Year 1 pupils produce attractive self-portraits with a good level of detail by some. In the Year 2 lessons observed, teaching was good. In both lessons the teachers had high expectations of the pupils and encouraged careful observational skills. As a result, pupils produced some pleasing work on plants with good use of pencil and pastel crayons to create detail and shade effects. Pupils were enthusiastic and fully engaged in the practical part of both lessons. Nevertheless, some pupils in each class had difficulty concentrating during the introduction to the lessons.

121. Work on display shows that by the age of eleven pupils experience a wide range of materials, tools and techniques. These include detailed portraits of historical figures, some work on perspective, paintings, block printing, abstract patterns, pastel, and acrylic work. They study the styles of British, European, Islamic and African art. There is evidence of some three-dimensional work, and techniques such as batik, tie-dye and collage. Pupils have sketchbooks linked to each topic from Year 3 onwards and use them effectively both as a tool to practice aspects of their work and to experiment with ideas. Some examples of the work

displayed are of a higher standard than the national expectation, for example Year 4 Tudor and Elizabethan portraits and some block printing in Year 6.

122. Teaching is good across the school. During the week of the inspection, of the four lessons observed, all were judged to be good. Staff displayed good subject knowledge, were well prepared and used a good range of resources. In all lessons observed pupils were given good opportunities to use their speaking and listening skills when evaluating their work. At times writing skills are used to help pupils evaluate the work of artists. For example, a Year 5 pupil wrote eloquently of Claude Monet's painting *She is Irises*: "You can almost feel the gentle winds soft touch." The scrutiny of art and design work around the school also shows that good attention is given to the development of skills in a range of media.

123. Good links are made with other subjects. For example, in a well-taught lesson in Year 2 pupils looked carefully at a range of plants and considered their features before drawing them. There are also good links with history. Works on display show art and design skills used well to support work on the Romans, Benin, and the Tudors. In a successful Year 3 lesson pupils designed mosaic tiles after looking carefully at a Roman mosaic tile. The teacher skilfully helped the pupils to discover the mathematical links of symmetrical patterns.

124. Staff encourage pupils' creative response to art and design. For example, in an effective lesson with Year 5, by the end of the session some pupils had begun to produce abstract three-dimensional forms to a high standard. The teacher's interventions helped pupils develop an awareness of abstract art. While pupils used materials from the Internet, an opportunity was missed for them to collect the images themselves. Throughout the session, most were motivated and collaborated well.

125. From discussion with older pupils, the boys and girls are equally enthusiastic about the art clubs. Some of the art and design produced in them is original and imaginative, for example the humorous cartoons produced in the technical drawing club. Staff show pupils that their artistic endeavours are valued by the way they display pupils' art from lessons and from the art clubs around the school and in their own art gallery.

126. Enrichment activities such as the work with a local secondary school make a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development. The project with a small group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 is successfully raising pupils' self-esteem and confidence. In the session observed teaching was of a high calibre and pupils were treated with real respect as artists. Good quality materials and tools were available. As a result some pupils produced masks and ceramic tiles to an above average standard. The pupils showed pride in their work and were keen to talk about what they were doing.

127. Two staff within the creative arts team satisfactorily lead the subject. Both teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. However, they do not have the opportunity to monitor teaching and learning in classes or to work alongside colleagues. While informal ongoing assessments take place within lessons, there is no formal assessment system across the school. Resources are good and include an art room.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

128. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the standards attained by seven year olds, or the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2. Standards attained by eleven year olds are broadly average overall with examples of good work in each of the junior classes. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve satisfactory standards.

129. Examination of previous work indicates that pupils in Year 6 were involved in a project where they produced a pair of slippers. Initially they entered into the design process where they considered the market for their goods and manufacturer's costs and produced a design specification. This included an evaluation of the properties of the materials they intended to use, for example whether they were hard wearing or waterproof and which had the best grip. They disassembled a pair of moccasin-style slippers, and drew around a template to make a pattern for their feet. The slippers were made from a variety of fabrics, including felt, and decorated with detailed designs and patterns. Some examples were of good quality and showed high levels of care, particularly in the production of the intricate patterns. There are also some good examples of work in other years. For example, pupils in Year 3 made toy monsters that could move through the use of pneumatics. Pupils in Year 4 designed and made some innovative chairs from papier-mâché and recycled materials, following a design brief of designing a chair for an interesting person. Pupils in Year 5 designed and made musical instruments. There were particularly good designs for a rain stick, a *kabasa* and a xylophone, that provided clear instructions and labelled drawings. Pupils in this year evaluated their work, considering whether it was easy to make, what worked well and what they would change.

130. The teaching and learning in the lessons observed were satisfactory overall, although one lesson was judged to be unsatisfactory. Where teaching is most effective the teachers set high expectations of pupils' attention, concentration and effort. In response, pupils try hard and work with interest and enthusiasm. Teachers often make good links with current science projects, and place appropriate emphasis on health and safety issues. On occasions, however, although the instructions given by teachers are clear, insufficient emphasis is placed on key technological elements to enable pupils to be fully successful. In other lessons pupils do not settle to their work well and do not make the progress they should.

131. The subject co-ordinator has recently produced guidance for the teaching of this subject. Pupils are provided with a satisfactory range of opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, including food technology. The guidance is relatively new and has yet to have a significant impact on the raising of standards. There is no whole-school approach to the assessing and recording of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. ICT is not yet used greatly to hone skills and knowledge in design and technology. The co-ordinator has worked effectively to raise the profile of the subject in developing the curriculum and improving the quality and range of resources. Currently she does not formally monitor the standards the pupils achieve.

## GEOGRAPHY

132. Attainment in geography is below average for pupils aged seven and eleven. Progress across the school is unsatisfactory overall, although pupils make good progress during the blocked teaching times that have recently been introduced. The reorganisation in planning pupils' learning is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of that learning, but this new arrangement will take time to be of benefit to all pupils in the school. The teaching of geography is blocked into units of time, where classes are taught a topic intensively for a few weeks, and then not taught geography at all for a few months. During this blocked time, there are good opportunities for pupils to build up an appropriate depth of learning, providing the

planning of work is thorough and relevant to the learning needs of the pupils. The new system of planning is being tried in Year 2 and Year 5, where it is clear that pupils' learning is appropriately enhanced. At present, assessment is weak. This lessens the impact of some of the good work in those year groups, because teachers are not aware of pupils' individual progress, and have no system in place to ensure that learning continues to be built up. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, and the quality of their learning is similar to that of the other pupils.

133. Pupils in Year 2 are knowledgeable about the climate and wildlife of India, and the teacher uses this first-hand information well to help them compare life there with their everyday experiences of living in Britain. A video of family life in New Delhi encourages pupils to think about the similarities and differences between the two continents. However, few are yet able to recognise key features such as the differences in modes of transport, or to express views in speaking or writing on what it might be like to live in India.

134. Year 5 pupils have a sound grasp of key geographical vocabulary in their study of rivers, which is based on a recent visit to Hams Hall. Pupils are able to recall the wide range of features they had identified such as flow, meander and flood, and to discuss the relative merits of building on a flood plain. Learning is enhanced in this year group by the use of some good resources. For example, learning support assistants use pictures and maps to aid the learning of pupils who have recently arrived in this country and ICT is used to research questions about the River Nile, such as its length and the countries it passes through. By Year 6, however, the impact of previous learning is diluted because of the lengthy gaps between blocks of geography. Much of their knowledge is hazy.

135. Not much direct teaching of geography was observed during the inspection. The teaching that was observed varied in quality from good to unsatisfactory. There is clearly a need for the school to monitor the curriculum, teaching and learning in geography to ensure that provision is satisfactory at all times and pupils' progress is consistent through the school. However, recent developments in the planning and organisation of the subject have clearly had a positive effect on the knowledge and understanding of pupils in Year 5. The co-ordinator and her team have sound subject knowledge, and are committed to improving the quality of pupils' experiences over the next school year. She is ready to develop a system for recording pupils' progress and to make sure that geographical skills are clearly identified in planning, rather than the current system which is based almost exclusively on content.

## **HISTORY**

136. Standards in history in the practical activities that are the major focus of the pupils' work in lessons are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Standards are average by the end of Year 6 in the written recording of work. There is not, however, enough evidence of written recording of learning throughout the school. In lessons, the pupils were seen to show sound knowledge and understanding of historical concepts, including chronology, when they answered questions.

137. All pupils are making good progress throughout the school. The significant number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is being well supported by both class teachers and support staff. Further support from a drama teacher who works in junior classes helps to make learning more meaningful for pupils. Teachers draw up tasks very carefully so that all pupils are helped to achieve appropriately.

138. The work in infant classes is targeted effectively at areas of natural interest to the pupils. The local area around the school has a good variety of shops. The pupils are able to compare past times with the present through studying photographs of shops at the Black

Country Museum and then visiting the local area shops. The pupils are very adept at identifying features such as words on the shop sign that tell them what sort of shop it is. They have an appropriate number of well-briefed adults with them when they make the visit so that they are being well supported in looking carefully at the materials used to build the shops. When they make comparisons with the photographs of older shops the teacher models the list of features on the whiteboard for the whole group. The pupils are enabled to discuss the photographs purposefully before co-operating in groups of three to draw up a list of contrasting features. They listen carefully to one another when sharing knowledge before some record in writing but most record by drawing features of the present-day shops.

139. In junior classes pupils continue to have an emphasis on practical learning about the past. The study of Roman times focused on the pupils producing models of Roman towns after they had made accurate plans following research in books. They worked co-operatively, and built three-dimensional models successfully. A buzz in the classroom demonstrated the high interest level of the pupils, supported by the good relationships that they shared. Work in the junior classes often supports skills in other subjects. Pupils work with a skilled drama teacher to reinforce their learning about Roman times. They are utterly absorbed in Year 3 in the events in the life of Boudicca. They built a picture of events that led to the Boudiccan revolt against the Romans. They made sensible suggestions that developed the theme of how such a revolt could have gathered momentum. The same teacher worked with other year groups, including Year 5 classes. In Year 4, pupils concentrated upon Tudor times. They constructed an accurate time line about events in the life of Sir Francis Drake. They did so after listening to their teacher reading, very expressively, from the logbook of a sailor who sailed with Drake when he circumnavigated the world. The difficult idea of circumnavigation was clearly explained to pupils by the class teacher, demonstrating a moving globe of the world. This supported the development of literacy skills. Art and design also supports skills in history, for example, when pupils designed and made an effective Roman mosaic.

140. Teaching is good throughout the school with a good impact being made by the visiting drama teacher in the junior classes. Teachers have sound subject knowledge. They plan tasks with imagination and care. Resources support the work thoughtfully. There is a brisk pace in the best lessons. Pupils are clear about their tasks. Teachers consistently share the learning objectives with their pupils. Tasks are very practical and, although this meaningfully supports the development of the pupils' knowledge and understanding, too little attention is paid to written recording. This is confirmed in the small amount of recording in the sample of the pupils' work. ICT is being given greater emphasis in work involving historical research. Pupils increasingly use the Internet to find out more about their historical topics; for example, Year 4 pupils successfully found information about Sir Francis Drake in an ICT lesson devoted to building skills of Internet use. There is a good impact upon the pupils' knowledge of citizenship as they make comparisons between conditions now and in the past.

141. The leadership of history is good. The leader of the humanities curriculum team works closely with teachers representing all phases in the school to produce a clear progression of work throughout the school. The subject is managed efficiently by the whole team through the provision of a satisfactory level of resources. However, there is not enough systematic monitoring of the outcomes of the pupils' learning. This is an area for improvement.



## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

142. The school has been working hard to provide good experiences in ICT for the pupils. It has equipped three ICT suites, one for each stage in school, and bought laptop computers to give greater flexibility to its ICT provision. The subject leader has identified that there are still aspects of ICT which require additional software or hardware, but overall, the school is able to provide an appropriate curriculum for the subject and give pupils ample opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge.

143. ICT has been a core priority for improvement since the school opened. This is reflected in the investment made in resources and staff development. This investment is paying off well, as teaching and learning are good overall and this contributes to the good progress made by the pupils. Standards are average through the school. Pupils have increasing knowledge and skills as they move from year to year because the programme of work is well structured and firmly focused.

144. Pupils in infant classes develop good confidence when using the computers. During the inspection, these pupils used the new middle phase computer suite for the first time. They were excited and to some degree awed by the prospect of using such a pristine resource. They settled to work and showed some good knowledge of the Internet and particular websites. One higher attaining Year 2 pupil reckoned that because the website on British animals was part of the BBC site "it should be a good one." Other high attaining pupils recited website addresses from memory and one generalised this detail to "You write 'www.something.com.'" Pupils in Year 2 know how to make choices, select hyperlinks and find keywords in the text to help them answer questions. They link this research to the homework where they used books to find out about British animals. In this way, good links are made to the development of literacy skills.

145. In junior classes, basic skills in ICT use are developed well. By the age of eleven, pupils have used software and hardware to learn about all the strands of ICT. They use the computer to monitor and control physical processes, they use spreadsheets to aid their work with mathematical calculations and have sound skills in formatting text with a word processor. In a good Year 5 lesson, for example, pupils used the *Publisher* package to create birthday party invitations. Before doing this they decided it must include the time, date and venue, state what the invitation is for, and include *RSVP*. They also planned and researched an appropriate image to import into the text. When the draft invitation was complete they experimented with different fonts (*Garamond* was a popular choice), colours, size, bolding and other features to produce the desired layout.

146. Pupils are interested in their ICT work. Behaviour is generally good, though there are moments when concentration, effort and motivation wane. This is after sitting listening for lengthy periods. Once the practical, hands-on task is started, the application to work is generally good. Pupils work well together, there is very good racial harmony and the collaborative approach to work successfully promotes pupils' personal and social development.

147. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expectations and they use good methods. Basic skills of ICT are developed well. The management of pupils is generally effective and lessons move at a brisk pace. Learning is similarly good. Pupils work productively on the whole, despite the sometimes fussy behaviour in a few lessons. Older pupils show increasing independence and responsibility in the work, which stands as a good model for work in some other subjects.

148. ICT is led and managed well. The subject leader has firm plans for the development of resources and assessment in the subject. This last is the next major priority for the subject. She has not had opportunities to monitor and evaluate teaching, learning and standards in other classes but is ready to take on this role. The subject leader has established a firm platform of provision in ICT that will enable continued improvements to be made.

## **MUSIC**

149. Not enough lessons were observed to make judgements overall about teaching. Judgements about standards are based on discussion with pupils and evidence supplied by the school, which includes compact disc and video recordings. Standards are at the national average by the age of seven and eleven, with some pupils attaining above the national expectation. Most pupils, including pupils who use English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs, make good progress.

150. The school is committed to developing pupils' creativity and talent through its focus on the expressive arts. Pupils are enthusiastic about music and many say it is one of their favorite subjects. Planning is thorough and covers all the elements of the programme of study. In the Year 1 lesson observed, teaching was good and pupils made good progress. The lesson was delivered in a lively way that caught the imagination of the pupils. By the end of the session most pupils were able to perform their own short compositions in small groups. One group were particularly well led by an enthusiastic conductor.

151. Singing in assemblies is satisfactory across the school. Younger pupils sing with enthusiasm. Older pupils sing in tune with clear diction. However, not all older boys participate fully. Video evidence of performances such as the annual festival indicates that pupils in the school choir attain higher standards. They performed a range of songs well, with accurate melody and pitch.

152. Good use is made regularly of music specialists to enrich the curriculum provision. During the week of the inspection different specialist teachers worked with nursery children, Year 4, and a group of Year 5 and 6 pupils, all on music making activities. Year 4 pupils enjoyed a good range of instruments and the opportunity to perform. The mixed group of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils (working with a musician in residence from a local school) made very good progress with their singing. This is because the teacher had high expectations of their performance, having worked with them over a period of time. The group's enthusiasm and creative effort was high as they practised in preparation for making a compact disc with a number of local schools. The performance by Year 4 pupils in the annual festival following a project with a musician on African beat and rhythm was vibrant and atmospheric and above average standards were achieved.

153. There are good curriculum links planned between music and other subjects. For example, Year 1 pupils learn about sounds in science. Year 5 explore changing sounds in science and make musical instruments in their design work. In a well-taught science lesson Year 1 pupils had good opportunities to handle and explore a range of instruments. By the end of the session most could identify and classify different ways of getting sounds such as banging, shaking, tapping, etc.

154. Pupils with musical talents are well catered for. There is tuition for a range of instruments, with high quality tuition for drums, keyboards, violin, violas and recorders. Pupils also have the opportunity to practise alongside adults and other schools in the Handsworth String Orchestra held in the school on a weekly basis. They also perform at local schools and regularly at school assemblies.

155. A strength in the school is the emphasis on the performing arts. Pupils are encouraged to see themselves as performers and music makers. As part of a creative arts project, pupils with particular talents in dance, drama and music wrote and performed their version of *Romeo and Juliet*. The work achieved on keyboards and in singing was dynamic, exciting and to a high standard. Groups of older pupils have regular opportunities to work with high quality professionals. They work alongside children from other schools and also perform, for example, in the *Soho Road* musical. As yet, however, ICT is not used greatly to advance pupils' learning about music.

156. The music curriculum makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development. There are many opportunities planned in the curriculum for pupils to learn about and value music from a range of cultures. For example pupils in Year 6 talked enthusiastically about a recent performance when they used many languages in their oral chanting production. The weekly choir and music clubs are well attended. Members of the choir have regular opportunities to perform with others at venues such as the Symphony Hall and the National Indoor Arena. The annual music festival is well attended by parents and gives pupils of all ages opportunities to perform in public. Pupils also perform regularly in assemblies.

157. Music is well led by staff within the creative arts team. Music has a high focus in the school improvement plan. Good organisation ensures a rich and exciting curriculum is planned. The co-ordinators do not have the opportunity to monitor teaching and learning in classes or to work alongside colleagues. However, they have a good understanding of the standards achieved, through observation of regular performances. While informal ongoing assessments take place within lessons, there is no formal assessment system across the school. Resources are very good.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

158. Seven physical education lessons were seen during the inspection, all in either games or gymnastics. These lessons showed standards to be above average for the infant classes and average for the juniors. The school's records show that pupils are on target to reach the expected levels in swimming by the age of eleven.

159. In Year 2, pupils show above average ability in their physical control as they use large apparatus in gymnastics. They make well-controlled stretched or curled movements and shapes. They jump from apparatus with confidence and land carefully. Some higher attaining pupils make good attempts at forward and backward rolls from benches and take care in the way they finish their movements. Others make good star jumps from boxes, landing properly and safely before going into a roll. They move between apparatus in a very sensible way, always avoiding getting in the way of other pupils. In games, Year 1 pupils working with a professional football coach showed skills well beyond what would normally be expected of their ages. They dribbled footballs, using both feet, stopped the ball when asked to, turned with the ball and, in a 45 minute lesson, only twice did pupils lose control of their ball because they were trying to go too fast. At Year 5 pupils showed appropriate standards of control in gymnastics as they devised and practised balances and linking movements to create a coherent movement sequence. Very effective support by a classroom assistant ensured that a pupil with some physical difficulties achieved very well. In games pupils showed average standards in cricket skills as they practised hitting a ball with a correct stroke. Year 6 pupils demonstrated average standards in dribbling and passing a hockey puck. In the lessons seen the pupils, regardless of ability, gender and ethnicity, made good progress.

160. Of the seven lessons seen only one was taken by a teacher from Rookery. Of the rest, two were taken by a visiting secondary specialist physical education teacher, two by a

county cricket coach, one by students on a coaching skills course and one by a highly qualified football coach. Standards of teaching overall were good. In one lesson, taken with Year 1 pupils by a football coach, teaching was excellent. In this lesson there was an expectation that all pupils would succeed and that they would all behave, listen well, concentrate and persevere. As a consequence the pupils all worked extremely hard and were delighted with the results of their efforts. Nearly all of them had such beaming smiles as they warmed up and successfully dribbled their footballs up and down that their enjoyment was obvious. Despite being very enthusiastic and excited, however, the noise levels were very low with very little talk, and intense concentration at all times. Consequently all the pupils regardless of gender, ethnicity or ability met with success well beyond the levels normally expected of this age group and showed very good development of skills as the lesson progressed. The main strength in other lessons was the subject expertise of those taking the lesson. Consequently there was some very good direct teaching of techniques. Pupils learned how to hold a cricket bat or hockey stick correctly, for example in order to strike a ball or puck effectively. They learned how to perform forward rolls, or headstands and handstands properly and safely. The coaches and teachers in all lessons gave very good guidance to individuals on how to improve their stance, their grip or their sequence of movements so that most pupils made good progress in the course of a lesson. However, in all except the football lesson at Year 1, noise levels were often too high. Teachers and coaches allowed pupils' enthusiasm to bubble into over-exuberance and at times shouted over the noise of the pupils to regain their attention. As a result the pace of the lessons slackened a little. In the excellent lesson on the other hand this was never a problem. The management and control of pupils were a real strength and as a result progress was that much better.

161. There is a good scheme of work that shows all the elements of physical education are covered and given an appropriate amount of time. However, there are no assessment systems in place to ensure that teachers plan work to take all pupils' learning forward at a pace that suits the individual. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator has identified appropriate priorities for development. There is no systematic process in place for checking the quality of teaching and learning, or for evaluating the effectiveness of the expert providers from beyond the school. The school is blessed with very good accommodation for physical education including three halls, a playground and grassed areas. Resources are satisfactory.

162. In order to improve standards further there are two things the school should focus on. These are firstly, to develop and implement systems for systematically checking the standards pupils achieve, the quality of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of the outside providers. Secondly, to make use of the best teaching to demonstrate techniques to raise the quality of teaching overall. There is very good commitment in school to make these improvements.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

163. It was possible to see only two lessons during the course of the inspection and very little recorded evidence of religious education was available. It is not, therefore, possible to make definitive judgements on standards in the infant classes or on teaching and learning. Discussions with pupils at Year 6 and Year 4 indicate that standards in junior classes are below average and do not meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.

164. While pupils in Year 6 appreciate the need to know about religions "so you don't offend people" their actual knowledge and understanding are limited and sometimes confused. Much of what they do know about religions stems from their home background rather than from what they learn in school. There was confusion, for example, over

Christmas and Easter with some pupils thinking Christmas commemorated the death of Jesus and Easter being about chocolate and eggs. Some thought bonfire night was a Christian festival. They did know some facts about religions, like Diwali celebrating the story of Rama and Sita, for example, and that the symbol of Christianity is the cross. They knew that Ramadan is the Muslim fast but had no idea of the Christian Lenten fast. They knew Hindus worship several gods but could not name any. Both Year 6 and Year 4 pupils commented on how little religious education they did in school and struggled to remember when they last did it. When individuals did show some knowledge about a particular religion it was because of their personal experience, as when a Sikh boy explained some interesting facts about the Gurdwara. On the other hand pupils show average standards in terms of their attitudes and values. They recognise the need to know about other people's faiths and backgrounds and show good levels of respect for the values and beliefs of others. Much of this, however, stems from work on personal and social development rather than from the study of religions.

165. In the two lessons seen, one covered the story of Zaccheus from the Christian faith and used the story to explore the theme of mending damaged relationships. The other was about attitudes to ageing and perceptions of old people. The teaching was satisfactory in one and good in the other. The lack of recorded evidence indicates that opportunities to develop basic skills in literacy through religious education lessons are limited.

166. Although there is a good, comprehensive scheme of work for religious education based closely upon the locally agreed syllabus and providing plenty of guidance on what should be covered each week by each year group, there is little evidence of it being effectively implemented. Leadership and management are not yet effective enough. The co-ordinator knows what needs doing to improve religious education, including the more widespread use of ICT in the subject, and has done a tremendous amount of work in developing the scheme of work, lesson plans and resources. However, there are no systems in place to assess, monitor and evaluate the progress that pupils make or the quality of education. School managers accept the need to develop rigorous and consistent procedures to aid the more effective management of religious education.