

INSPECTION REPORT

SPRINGFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Rowley Regis, West Midlands

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 132140

Headteacher: Mr P Amey

Reporting inspector: Mrs S E Hall
21750

Dates of inspection: 31st March – 3rd April 2003

Inspection number: 248908

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Dudley Road Rowley Regis West Midlands
Postcode:	B65 8JW
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr L Walker
Date of previous inspection:	Not applicable

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21750	Mrs S E Hall	Registered inspector	Physical education	The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What could the school do to improve further?
19335	Mrs S Dixon	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes and values. How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18709	Ms N Bee	Team inspector	English Music Special educational needs Equal opportunities English as an additional language	
19507	Mrs B Andrews	Team inspector	Science Religious education	
22805	Mrs J Greer	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology The foundation stage	
20695	Mr C Kessell	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology	
18346	Mr R Bristow	Team inspector	Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
21378	Mrs J Harding	Team inspector	Provision for autistic pupils	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Springfield Primary School is in Rowley Regis, an urban area in the West Midlands and is within the local Education Action Zone. There are 425 pupils aged from three to eleven in the school, which makes it larger than most schools. The attainment of pupils on entry to nursery is below average. However, children make rapid progress in the nursery and attainment on entry to Year 1 is broadly average although weaker in the key skills of communication, language and literacy. Economic indicators for local wards are mixed but generally below average overall. Approximately 23 % of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly average. Pupil mobility in and out of the school is average. The number of pupils with English as an additional language is higher than in most schools at almost 3%. Two pupils are at an early stage of language acquisition. About 25% of the pupils are on the school's special educational needs register, which is above that found in most schools. There are 15 pupils with a statement of special educational need, most with learning difficulties on the autistic spectrum. The school was amalgamated in 2000 from an infant school and a junior school following the closure of the adjacent special school. The school is based in three buildings on a split site. There have been several changes of headteacher, deputy headteacher and 'acting' senior roles in the last four years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a school that provides a satisfactory quality of education following a lengthy unsettled period when the schools amalgamated. The school is currently making satisfactory progress in addressing some significant areas for development. Standards at the age of eleven are below average in English, mathematics and science largely because a lower than average proportion of pupils reach the higher levels of attainment. Teaching is generally good, but is better for the younger than the older pupils. The leadership of the school is satisfactory and management is efficient. Whilst expenditure is high, the value for money, including that for the Resource Base, is satisfactory overall.

What the school does well

- Teaching in the nursery and reception classes and the infants is effective and enables these pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and concentrate well.
- There are very good relationships and pupils behave well.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, social and moral development is good.
- Parents have positive views of the school.
- The management of pupils is consistently good.

What could be improved

- The development of policies and procedures that are corporate and ensure that the school works as a cohesive whole.
- Standards achieved by pupils at the age of eleven in English, mathematics and science.
- The provision for information and communication technology (ICT).
- The procedures for assessment and the use of this information to plan for the highest appropriate level of challenge for all pupils.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school.
- Provision for pupils supported by the Resource Base.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

As this is the first inspection carried out since the school amalgamated in 2000, there are no previous issues for development. In the past year the school has begun to make improvements in many areas following the disruption caused by the amalgamation of the two schools. The school now has an established senior management team, but there are some temporary teaching appointments. A particular feature of development has been the establishment and sudden growth of the resource base

for pupils on the autistic spectrum. The changes the school has had to manage have often been at very short notice and without much support or initial expertise. The school has managed many of these changes well and there is the capacity to make further improvements.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

When the 2002 national test results are compared with all schools, standards in English are average and those in mathematics and science are below average. In each of the three subjects a reasonable proportion of pupils achieved the expected Level 4 in the national tests but fewer than are seen nationally attained the higher levels, particularly in mathematics. When the results are compared with those of pupils in schools with similar numbers eligible for free school meals, standards were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. Targets of 83% to achieve the expected Level 4 in English were not met, although pupils almost achieved the target of 79% in mathematics. Information based on attainment at an earlier key stage indicates that progress made from the age of seven to eleven was below average in 2002. The school has set lower targets of 74% to achieve the expected level in English and 77% in mathematics in 2003. Inspection findings are that standards in English, mathematics and science are below average at the age of eleven. Whilst a reasonable number of pupils are expected to reach the average level, there are relatively few pupils working securely within the higher levels.

Pupils' attainment at the age of seven was well above the national average in the 2002 national tests in reading, writing and mathematics and in the top 5% when compared to schools with similar features. However, the school acknowledges this was an unusual cohort of pupils and that attainment in the previous year, which was average in reading and writing and below average in mathematics, was more representative of the standards achieved normally. Inspection findings are that current standards in English, mathematics and science are average at the age of seven.

Standards are average throughout the school in most other subjects. They are above average at the age of seven in religious education. Standards are below average at the age of seven and eleven in ICT and design and technology and in music at age eleven. Children enter the nursery with skills below average for their age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with broadly average attainment except in communication, language and literacy. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6. The school has identified that some girls do not achieve as well as expected but no significant gender variance was noted during inspection. Pupils with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and enjoy learning.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well in classes and at play and there is no significant anti-social behaviour.
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Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils make good progress towards becoming mature and responsible, although there are limited opportunities for taking responsibility. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Levels of attendance are below national averages.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall, with particular strengths in the nursery. Teaching in the infants is good and this enables pupils to achieve well. Teaching and learning in the juniors are satisfactory overall. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory throughout the school with several good features. A particular strength in teaching is the good and sometimes very good management of pupils, which ensures that lessons are conducted in a calm and purposeful manner. Teachers generally employ a good range of teaching methods to interest and motivate pupils. Most explain things well and create a positive learning environment where pupils feel valued and want to do their best. Grouping by ability from the reception class is helping to ensure that the wide spread of ability is appropriately met. However, in some lessons the pupils have to sit inactively for too long which affects their interest and concentration. Teachers' marking is supportive but they do not consistently identify how pupils can improve their work or meet their personal targets.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Planning in the Foundation Stage is good and that for other pupils is satisfactory. However, there are some inequalities in the access to all areas of the ICT curriculum and for pupils in the Resource Base.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The support for these pupils is satisfactory. Pupils have individual education plans with targets but these are not always specific enough. Provision for pupils with difficulties on the autistic spectrum is satisfactory with the quality of their pastoral care being good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The very small number of pupils at the early stages of English receive satisfactory support in the classroom but only a limited amount of additional or specialist help.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Opportunities for spiritual, moral and social development are good and enable pupils to develop awareness of themselves and of others and what is right and wrong. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The day-to-day pastoral care of pupils is satisfactory, but there are a number of health and safety issues associated with policies, procedures and the site that are unsatisfactory. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are inconsistent and therefore unsatisfactory and the information available is not used to best effect to ensure the

	highest appropriate challenge.
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The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Most have positive views of the school and support the learning of their children in a satisfactory manner.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher and the new deputy head are working hard to translate a vision for school improvement into practice. Senior staff are also working to establish common and consistent procedures in many aspects of the school's work. The management of the Resource Base is satisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory overall. The chair of the governing body has a good grasp of the role and of areas for improvement. Other governors are working to extend their active involvement in development planning through closer involvement and first hand knowledge of school life.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. The school makes reasonable use of a range of data to inform development planning but this lacks focus and clarity. The role of senior staff and subject co-ordinators is under-developed and unsatisfactory in rigorously monitoring planning, teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Financial management is carefully considered. Administration is smooth and efficient. The principles of best value are applied to purchases in a suitable manner. The school has satisfactory staffing arrangements, learning resources and accommodation.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They would feel comfortable approaching the school with concerns. • That teaching is good. • The school expects pupils to work hard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional activities outside lessons. • More information about how their children are getting on. • The school working more closely with parents.

Inspectors generally agree with most of the views of parents whilst noting that in the areas parents would like to see improved that provision is at least satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter nursery with skills below average in several areas of learning, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Several children have very limited speaking skills and some girls in particular are quite passive. These factors affect children's understanding in several key areas. However, due to very good teaching and learning in the nursery, children make quite rapid progress. In the reception year children make good progress so that by the time they enter Year 1 attainment is broadly average in each of the areas of learning except communication skills, which are still below average.

2. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 so that the attainment of pupils' aged seven in National Curriculum tests in 2002 was impressive. Standards reached were well above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared with similar schools attainment in each of the three areas was amongst the highest 5% of schools in the country. Pupils did particularly well in reading and mathematics with almost all pupils reaching at least the lower stages of the expected Level 2 and good numbers reaching the higher Level 3. However, the school readily acknowledges this was an exceptional cohort and the standard of their work was above that of previous and subsequent year groups. The school believes there were some unusual features that boosted standards. The group was only three-quarters the size of most year groups and had additional staffing during the period of movement into a 'new' part of the amalgamated school. Inspection findings are that current standards in reading, writing and mathematics are average for the age of the pupils.

3. Results for the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils aged eleven were in line with the national average in English but below average in mathematics and science. In the three subjects a reasonable number of pupils achieved the expected Level 4 in the tests but fewer achieved the higher levels than nationally, particularly in mathematics. However, when the results are compared with those of pupils in similar schools standards were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. In 2001 attainment in English was above average, that in mathematics below average and standards in science were well below average. As the school has only been amalgamated for two years no attainment trend is established.

4. In 2002 school targets for 83% to achieve the expected Level 4 in English were not met although pupils almost achieved the target of 79% in mathematics. The school has identified that the pupils currently in Year 6 are unlikely to do as well as last year and has set lower targets of 74% to achieve the expected level in English and 77% in mathematics in 2003. Inspection findings largely reflect the school targets, which are that standards in English, mathematics and science are below average at the age of eleven. Whilst a reasonable number of pupils are expected to achieve an average standard, there are relatively few pupils working securely within the higher levels. The 'value added' to pupils' early attainment is not as marked as it might be. Information based on attainment at an earlier key stage indicates that the progress made from the age of seven to eleven was below average in 2002. Inspection judgements confirm this position.

5. Children in the Foundation Stage and pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make satisfactory progress. Higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. Assessment procedures, particularly the use of individual small step

targets, are not yet embedded. This is an area for improvement. Consequently work is not always matched well enough to what pupils already know and can do.

6. Current standards in English are average at the age of seven and rather below average at the age of eleven. Standards in speaking and listening are generally average although few pupils have high levels of speaking skills and some have restricted vocabularies that subsequently limit their writing across the curriculum. Standards in reading are average at the age of seven but slightly below average at eleven. Most pupils master the mechanics of reading but relatively few have good comprehension skills and some struggle to explain what they are reading. Standards of writing are average at seven but below average at eleven because the writing of older pupils often lacks sufficient depth. Whilst pupils make satisfactory progress in English overall the ineffective use of targets for improvement and the generalised nature of marking sometimes limits the rate of learning.

7. Standards in mathematics are average at age seven and below average at eleven. Most pupils have reasonable understanding of numbers and how to use them in a variety of mental calculations although pupil confidence and the speed of such calculations are variable. Some pupils lack a range of strategies to tackle new work unless led through the appropriate stages by an adult. Pupils make satisfactory overall progress in mathematics although the match of tasks to pupils' abilities is not precise and more could be expected of some older pupils. Pupils' attainment in science is average at seven but below average at eleven. Whilst pupils have reasonable factual understanding of science, such as life and living processes, there are weaknesses in older pupils' ability to plan and carry out investigative and experimental activities without adult support.

8. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are below average across the school. Provision for younger pupils has been affected by the theft of computers. This has made it difficult for staff to teach the full range of curriculum activities on a regular enough basis. Whilst there is an ICT suite for older pupils many do not have enough depth in their learning to achieve the levels expected for their age. Standards in design and technology are below average throughout the school because not enough emphasis is placed on developing pupils' skills in making the artefacts that they design. Standards in religious education are above average at age seven and average at eleven. Standards in music are average at seven but below average at eleven. Attainment in all other subjects is average at the end of both key stages.

9. Pupils with special educational needs receive satisfactory and sometimes good quality support from their teachers and the learning support assistants. Work is generally well matched to their needs so they make satisfactory progress. However adults do not consistently reinforce the targets on pupils' individual education plans either during lessons or in marking and this hinders learning over time.

10. There are no significant variations in the inspection evidence of attainment among pupils of different gender, ethnicity or different backgrounds. Pupils with English as an additional language are supported satisfactorily and make similar progress to other pupils in their classes. The school has not identified any pupils as particularly gifted or talented. Whilst the school has identified that in some years girls do not achieve as well as boys there was little evidence of this during the inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' attitudes, values and relationships are a strength of the school. They contribute greatly to the pleasant and enthusiastic environment in which pupils learn.

12. Pupils have good attitudes to their work. They enjoy coming to school and feel that their lessons are interesting and that their teachers help and encourage them well. Pupils throughout the school reflect these views in their high levels of enthusiasm for all their activities. They listen well to their teachers and each other and instructions are followed quickly and quietly. Pupils work hard and maintain concentration throughout the day. When presented with challenging and stimulating questions they offer thoughtful replies. Pupils are encouraged to take some responsibility for their own learning; however, in some lessons opportunities are missed for pupils to develop investigative skills and independence. Some pupils are able to use reference books and the Internet confidently but this is not consistent across the school. Pupils work well alone, in pairs and in groups when required. For example in several lessons pupils are asked to discuss their work and opinions with their partner. This is very effective in stimulating new thoughts and ideas. A strong feature of this school is the high value placed upon each individual and the work that each does. Throughout the school there are many attractive displays of pupils' work and assemblies in particular celebrate achievement very well.

13. The behaviour of all pupils throughout the school is good. This has a beneficial effect upon their learning and upon the school community as a whole. Self-discipline is good and pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly way taking care that their actions do nothing to harm others. Lunchtimes are sociable and pleasant and pupils feel that conflict and bullying are rare. However older pupils report that there are a small number of occasions when there is unpleasantness and that these incidents are not always resolved effectively. There have been a small number of exclusions in the past year that have been supported by appropriate procedures.

14. The relationships amongst all members of the school community are very good. Adults in school treat pupils with great care and respect. In turn pupils are polite and helpful towards each other and to adults. They work and play together amicably and genuinely appreciate the successes of others. Pupils look after each very well; they are considerate and supportive. In lessons the very good relationships amongst pupils and between them and their teachers has a very positive effect upon the learning of all pupils.

15. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They act responsibly in their movements around school and behave sensibly in lessons. There are some opportunities to take responsibility through class duties and assembly preparation and for a small number of pupils by befriending less able or less confident pupils. This good practice is not developed consistently across the school. At present there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop aspects of citizenship, to serve the school community as a whole and take part in shaping the future of the school. There is no school council. Pupils do display sensitivity for the feelings and needs of others. Assemblies in particular support pupils' personal development well. Their content raises pupils' awareness of others and does much to promote self-esteem and ambition.

16. Attendance rates are below the national average and are unsatisfactory. Although the majority of pupils are keen to come to school and have satisfactory levels of attendance a considerable number of pupils do not. Unauthorised absence is too frequent for many and a significant number of pupils have attendance records that cause concern. The learning and achievement of these pupils is seriously disadvantaged. Otherwise absences are due to childhood illnesses and to an amount of holiday taking in term time. Registration time is brief and efficient and for the most part this time is well used for individual study.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching is generally good overall. It is better for younger than older pupils. During the inspection teaching was excellent in almost 3% of the lessons observed, very good in 21%, good in 40% and satisfactory in 36%. No teaching in the main school was unsatisfactory although the support of some pupils with autism had some unsatisfactory features.

18. A particular strength throughout the school is the good and sometimes very good management of pupils. This ensures that lessons are conducted in a calm and orderly manner so pupils concentrate well and make progress. Effective management also promotes good relationships, which are a feature of most lessons. Teachers exercise their authority fairly, intervening according to the needs of individuals and groups.

19. Whilst there is an overall lack of consistency in several areas of teaching across the school, staff generally use a good range of methods to stimulate pupils. Most explain tasks clearly and give information at an appropriate level for the pupils. Tasks are carefully planned to interest pupils, for example when a lower ability group of pupils in Year 5 were stimulated by their involvement in writing the next phase of their class myth based on their knowledge of other myths and legends. Staff often group pupils by ability from the reception year onwards. This generally works well in providing suitably challenging tasks and promotes higher standards particularly from reception to Year 2. Teachers also use a mix of individual, paired work and group activities alongside whole class teaching. Most teachers, and particularly those teaching the younger pupils, use questions well to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. During tasks staff move around groups of pupils well checking their understanding and providing help where necessary. Teaching of literacy, numeracy and other basic skills is satisfactory.

20. Teachers of younger pupils show good subject knowledge and understanding in the way they present and discuss their subject. They often build in opportunities for pupils to make choices in their learning. Teachers of older pupils have satisfactory subject knowledge. They plan lessons competently and often show a good understanding of the way the subject develops. There are few opportunities for older pupils to make choices or develop independent learning.

21. Teaching in nursery is very good because the teacher and nursery nurses have high levels of knowledge and experience of the learning needs of young children. Tasks are carefully structured so that all children have access to a good range of activities that help to build their confidence and experience in all areas of their development. Staff have high expectations of children both of behaviour and their early academic learning. This is seen in daily activities where children are encouraged to speak into a Dictaphone or telephone to identify their plan for the day. This encourages not only their speaking skills but also their independence and sense of responsibility in making choices about their own learning. The very effective use of time, support staff and resources is a particular feature in nursery. Every part of the quite cramped accommodation and the external area is used to provide a range of activities that stimulate interest and concentration. As a result most children develop very positive attitudes to learning, try hard and make good progress.

22. Teaching in the reception classes is good with particularly effective use of targets in lessons where a picture of a ball is moved inside a goal when they achieve their target. This is effective practice and emphasises to children how their efforts achieve success. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is generally good. The experienced team of staff plan well to organise activities that interest the pupils. Classrooms are bright and stimulating.

23. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory, with some good features in the methods and the management of pupils. Occasionally teaching is imaginative and shows flair as observed in a Year 6 geography lesson. Both Year 6 classes joined together to make group presentations of their independent work finding out about life in a chosen European country. Pupils and staff dressed in items representing their chosen country and answered questions from their classmates about what they researched. However, on several other occasions, whilst teaching was sound, there was not a particularly high level of challenge to move pupils forward in their learning. This was seen in both English and particularly in mathematics where too often the task was the same or very similar for all pupils meaning that some higher attaining pupils were not fully extended. This is one factor that limits the learning of some of the oldest pupils who are not yet working consistently within a secure Level 5 when they might be capable of doing so.

24. The use of time, support staff and resources is good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory in the rest of the school. Support staff in the nursery are an integral part of the teaching team. They are fully involved in planning and have specific roles in all activities. Support staff in other parts of the school are not so central to activities. On some occasions, such as the introductory part to literacy and numeracy activities, they are peripheral and miss opportunities to carry out observations of what particular pupils are contributing. The use of time is again better in the nursery than elsewhere. In the nursery activities are often short but focused and children are encouraged to move on to other activities when their concentration may be wavering. However, in other classes, including in reception, some pupils spend too long listening to the teacher at the expense of being actively involved in an activity. Resources are used appropriately.

25. The quality and use of on-going assessment is satisfactory overall, whilst being very good in the Foundation Stage. The use of verbal feedback is a strong feature of work with the youngest children so they know what they have done well and what else they need to do to improve their work. Whilst verbal feedback to pupils throughout the school is often warm and supportive, guidance on what to do next is sometimes more limited. This is also reflected in the quality of the marking of the pupils' work. This is inconsistent. Whilst there are examples of good marking clearly indicating to pupils what they have done well and what they need to do next, some is very brief and general and misses the opportunity to focus on the small scale targets for improvement.

26. The use of homework is satisfactory throughout the school. However, in the pre-inspection questionnaire several pupils indicated a wish that homework be set on a more consistent basis as this appears to several families to be unsystematic. The teaching of ICT, whilst satisfactory in the lessons observed, is limited by the lack of computer hardware and software and regular access by pupils to computers.

27. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. However work is not always well matched to pupils' differing abilities and this affects the learning in some lessons. Their teachers and the learning support assistants support most pupils satisfactorily in their lessons. Adults develop good relationships with the pupils they work with which results in pupils developing positive attitudes to lessons, which supports learning in all areas of the curriculum.

28. Pupils with English as an additional language are integrated satisfactorily in most lessons. Planning and content of the curriculum generally take account of age, ethnicity, background, gender and attainment but in some curriculum areas teachers do not always accurately match work to the needs of all pupils.

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

29. The curriculum provided by the school for pupils aged five to eleven is satisfactory. Statutory requirements are met and include requirements for religious education and collective worship. Since the amalgamation, planning is beginning to reflect the needs of the whole school rather than reflecting those of separate schools. Clear guidelines are being introduced to identify what pupils are to be taught each week, each term and each year. With the exception of ICT for pupils by the age of seven, all pupils are receiving their full entitlement and have access to the required range of curriculum experiences.

30. An appropriate emphasis on the time allocated to the development in English, science and mathematics and the response to the increasing demands of ICT has reduced the opportunities for more frequent opportunities to develop skills in other subjects that are now part of National Curriculum requirements. Physical development is given an appropriate proportion of the time available. Religious education is planned for all pupils in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus and parents have been informed about their right to withdraw their children. Arrangements for promoting personal and social education are satisfactory, and pupils are given opportunities to share experiences, views and opinions. Health education, which includes sex education and the raising of awareness about the use and misuse of drugs, is promoted sensitively through units of work such as 'New Life' in Years 3, and 'Good Health Matters' in Year 6 with the assistance of the school nurse. Personal, social and health education is to become a focused priority in the coming year and there are plans to become involved in Sandwell's Healthy School Initiative. Fruit and water are available to all pupils. Homework and the accompanying 'survival guides' provide satisfactory openings for parents and carers to support their children's learning.

31. The national strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy have been given due emphasis and have contributed to an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Opportunities are encouraged to promote speaking skills, and a wide range of styles of writing in other subjects, including the more advanced research and study skills in history and geography in Years 5 and 6. Good behaviour has contributed effectively to the quality of pupils' listening skills. Although in Year 6 some groups used 'PowerPoint' to good effect when presenting their findings on a chosen European country, skills in ICT are generally underused to support the quality of learning across the curriculum. Acquired skills in mathematics are used satisfactorily across the curriculum. Skills are promoted through charts, diagrams and graphs in science, time lines in history and scales and co-ordinates in geography.

32. National guidelines are used for the teaching of all subjects, and planning on a daily basis provides tasks for groups of pupils with similar abilities, especially in English and mathematics when pupils are grouped according to ability. Planning for other subjects sometimes varies from class to class in the same year group with higher attaining pupils often doing the same work as others, rather than being allowed to 'move up a gear'. The training of teachers in 'accelerated learning strategies' should help teachers to respond to this situation.

33. Visits to the school provide the governing body with a good overview of the achievements of the school and a greater understanding of the changing priorities. There are plans for the curriculum policies to be reviewed on a regular basis.

34. Opportunities are increasingly sought to extend and enrich curricular experiences. Risk assessment prepares for visits and residential experience is a planned part of academic and social experiences for pupils at the ages of seven and eleven. Every year group is involved in at least one visit and other funding supports voluntary subscriptions. The concern

which parents expressed concerning the lack of out-of-school activities is being addressed and staff give generously of their time whether in the 'Fitness Club' for pupils in Years 1 and 2, or in the drama and football clubs in Key Stage 2. These activities, including the 'Breakfast Club' contribute significantly to pupils' personal and social development as well as providing opportunities to develop talents.

35. Citizenship is promoted through an increasing range of curricular activities. Pupils in Year 6 are encouraged to make decisions and choices, and pupils in Year 5 were skilfully challenged by the Fire Service to understand more fully the inconvenience caused by hoax 999 calls. Experiences in geography enable pupils of all ages to comment and discuss how to improve their environment and the importance of conservation. Personal and social training encourages them not only to reflect on their own actions, but also to consider the effects of their action on others. Pupils in Year 1 commented on their likes and dislikes in the locality, whereas older pupils discussed the destruction of the rainforests, exploitation of the local quarry, pollution and disasters across the world.

36. There are sound community links. Pupils are taken out to investigate the locality and visitors, including family members, are invited to share their varied experiences. Local church representatives are welcome and guests and services such as Candlemas are shared with local schools. Links with a local college have provided opportunities for parents to explore computer technology with their children. Links with a local secondary school are developing, especially now that it has achieved technology status. There is increased contact between staffs as a result of involvement in the Education Action Zone.

37. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Identification and assessment procedures are satisfactory and individual education plans are reviewed regularly. However targets on some plans are not clear and make it difficult to measure the rate of pupils' progress.

38. Although the curriculum is organised satisfactorily some pupils do not have access to all subjects. This is unsatisfactory. Pupils in Year 2 classes do not have regular opportunities to develop ICT skills because of a lack of computers in their teaching areas. Teachers do not always deliver a similar curriculum in the same year group. Inspection evidence has identified discrepancies in the teaching of science, music, art and history. In addition some pupils in the Resource Base do not have access to all lessons. The school provides sound support for pupils for whom English is an additional language.

39. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with school assemblies and year productions playing a significant part in creating an atmosphere in which pupils flourish.

40. Spiritual development is good. Pupils are nurtured in an atmosphere in which pupils learn to respect the beliefs of others and to value similarities and differences. Displays around the school create opportunities for pupils to appreciate the beauty of art and literature. In some classes, opportunities are created in lessons for pupils to reflect on their achievements as when asked, 'What have you learned today?'

41. Moral development is good. Teachers provide good role models and pupils are aware of the differences between right and wrong. They are aware of rewards and sanctions, are involved in negotiating class rules, and are aware of the consequences of their actions for others. They are learning to express their views on world issues such as the devastation of the rainforests, pollution and the reasons for human disasters.

42. Social development is good and occasionally very good. Relationships are very good and encourage pupils to have good self-esteem, especially those with special educational needs. Pupils have a high level of respect for each other and thrive on their contact with pupils from the Resource Base, whether planned as in a buddy role or incidental. Collaboration was especially evident in the Year 6 group activities in which pupils demonstrated impressive degrees of responsibility, decision-making and initiative when sharing their research findings about the European Union. Productions and assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to work together and the promotion of citizenship encourages pupils to discuss environmental issues and to resolve conflict. Residential visits for pupils in both key stages contribute to good personal and social development.

43. Overall cultural development is satisfactory. What pupils learn about their rich heritage is good but pupils' knowledge of other cultures is limited. Although pupils experience a range of faiths in religious education and celebrate festivals such as Diwali in Key Stage 1 and the Chinese New Year, there are missed opportunities to widen their experiences. Visits to other places of worship, and visitors from other cultures are rare. Planned experiences in music, literature, art and dance have inadequate links with human achievement as reflected in other cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school provides a warm and caring environment where all are equally valued. Pupils are well supported by the very good relationships that exist and they feel confident and happy during their time at school. All adults in school know the pupils well and most are sensitive to their particular needs and difficulties. Despite this there are some shortcomings in the arrangements for the care and protection of pupils generally. The school is developing suitable policies and practices to support this area but some aspects of the school's risk assessments, often associated with the school site, are incomplete and need to be addressed. The procedures for child protection are unsatisfactory at present. Not all the teaching and non-teaching staff and midday supervisors have enough knowledge of procedures or the identity of the designated person. Training opportunities for all adults in school are insufficient.

45. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are satisfactory. The school has no formal systems in place but pupils are known well. Annual reports to parents include comment on personal progress and a good knowledge of the individual is conveyed in these although more use could be made of targets for improvement. This general area is well supported by a developing policy and provision for personal and social education and by the supportive and caring environment offered to all.

46. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. A suitable policy has been developed that explains clearly the systems in place. There are inconsistencies in this across the school and parents have expressed some concerns about this. Pupils across the school think that good behaviour is recognised and rewarded well. Older pupils feel that the system of sanctions does not always provide enough support for pupils and adults when misbehaviour is recurrent. The arrangements for promoting good behaviour at lunchtimes are satisfactory but insufficient authority is given to midday supervisors to allow them to play a full part in rewarding good behaviour and resolving problems promptly. Some midday staff do not provide warm and caring support to pupils.

47. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. The school meets the statutory requirements with regard to the publishing of attendance figures and in the registration of pupils each day. Attendance is closely monitored and absences investigated quickly. Parents are provided with clear messages about the detrimental effect

of holiday taking in term time. There are good plans in place to raise the profile of regular attendance and punctuality. This area has benefited from the appointment of a learning mentor but this is too recent for the impact to be apparent.

48. The school has good links with external agents and uses them when necessary to support pupils with special educational needs. However dining assistants are not always given adequate information about the needs of some pupils, in particular those with special educational needs and this is unsatisfactory. An external specialist is used when necessary to determine the language levels of pupils with English as an additional language. There is a limited amount of support available from specialist teachers and learning support practitioners to enable pupils to access the curriculum equally.

49. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their academic progress are unsatisfactory. There is no agreed, whole school assessment policy that promotes and builds on regular precise information relating to pupils' progress. As a result, many teachers are unsure of the exact level at which pupils are working in the core subjects and other subjects. Although both infants and juniors use a range of assessment procedures and these are sometimes wide-ranging and detailed, for instance in the Foundation Stage, they are often not standardised and there are variations in how the records are maintained. Children are assessed shortly after starting the nursery. Baseline assessments of pupils' progress in basic skills are made on entry to the reception year. Progress in reading, writing, number and science is recorded in Years 1 and 2 and passed on to Year 3.

50. In the juniors, teachers have files where they record the results of Year 2 national tests, results from annual non-statutory tests and other internal tests. There is some analysis of pupils' performance in national tests at seven and eleven to identify trends over time, including differences in the performance of boys and girls. This data is contributing to the early stages of the development of a whole school system for tracking pupils' progress.

51. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is unsatisfactory because common agreed systems for managing assessment are not sufficiently embedded to consistently and effectively guide curricular planning. Therefore, data is not used effectively to inform the next steps in pupils' learning or to set challenging and achievable targets for improvement. Even where there is a useful range of information available there is a lack of consistency and clarity in its use especially to provide the highest appropriate level of challenge for all pupils.

52. The management of day-to-day assessment is being developed but common approaches throughout the school have not been agreed. Marking is inconsistent across the school and is used too infrequently to extend pupils' learning by suggesting ways to improve their work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. The partnership with parents is positive. Parents are supportive of the school and appreciative of recent improvements. The parents' views of the school are good. They feel the school has high expectations, that the teaching is good and that their children enjoy school. They feel that the school is approachable and provides good support for both pupils and parents. Some parents are concerned about the unsystematic use of homework and feel the range of activities offered outside lessons is insufficient. Some are unhappy with the information provided about how their child is getting on and some aspects of the way the school works with parents. The inspection findings support the parents' positive views. The amount of homework provided is satisfactory overall but its provision is inconsistent across the school. Some extra-curricular clubs are provided and the school is keen to develop this

area with the support of parent helpers. Pupils' lives are broadened well by a range of visits and visitors that support the curriculum.

54. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is satisfactory. Parents are welcomed into school and the relationships between them and the staff are good. Parents are invited to school performances and special events and these are supported enthusiastically. Parents of older children gain some insight into the work that their children do by attending class assemblies but this is at present not extended to younger children. Parents' views have been sought and acted upon, for example by introducing training and information courses for parents. The school is keen to develop its links with parents and has good plans in place to do this especially since the appointment of the new deputy head. A recent coffee morning proved successful and allowed parents to discuss new ideas and school events.

55. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is satisfactory. A small number of parents are able to offer help in the classrooms with various tasks and this has a positive effect on pupils' learning. The school is encouraging more parents to offer their support in this way. School events are well attended and extra-curricular clubs benefit from parents sharing their skills. A friends association has been formed and is being keenly supported.

56. The quality of the information provided for parents is satisfactory. The school brochure is a well written, attractive and useful document. The governors' annual report is also useful but omits some required parts. Regular newsletters keep parents very well informed about the life of the school. Parents of older pupils receive useful 'survival guides' and some information about coming work is provided. However this provision is inconsistent across the school and not readily accessible to all parents. Information about pupils' work and progress is conveyed in an annual written report and with regular consultation events. Written reports offer satisfactory information about the work that pupils have done. The identification of areas of difficulty and clear guidance for improvement varies across the school and no indication is given about the level that each pupil is working to in relation to the National Curriculum and national expectations except in Years 2 and 6.

57. The contribution that parents make to their children's learning at home and at school is satisfactory and in some areas they support their children well. This is clearly evident in the large number of pupils and parents involved in the school's recent egg decorating competition. Homework is generally well supported but the provision is inconsistent from class to class and the information that parents receive about expectations and requirements is also inconsistent. Older pupils benefit from homework diaries that require parental signatures to indicate their ongoing support and also act as a good home school communication route. Whilst most parents clearly want their children to do well and are committed to supporting them, a significant number do, as seen in the unsatisfactory levels of attendance and the high number of unauthorised absences.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

58. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory following a difficult period in the school's development. In September 2000, largely against the wishes of the parents, staff and governors, two separate schools were amalgamated to become Springfield Primary upon the closure of the adjacent special school. These were an infant school and a junior school in separate buildings but within close proximity of each other. The very large majority of the pupils in the special school moved elsewhere. Shortly before this period the death of the junior school headteacher left staff and pupils very distressed and in a temporary staffing situation. The newly appointed head of the amalgamated school remained

in post for four terms before leaving. After a period in an 'acting' capacity the current head took over the role in May 2002. A new deputy headteacher began work in January 2003.

59. Following amalgamation, the local education authority designated the school as a Resource Base for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and later, within a matter of a very few weeks, the number of such pupils doubled. To a large extent, at that stage, the staff had little expertise in this area and the massive amount of time and work involved in setting up and managing this provision has taken its toll on senior staff.

60. During the period from amalgamation, teaching and support staff throughout the school have tried to continue to provide a similar quality of education to that organised previously. Whilst this has had some strengths in terms of continuity it has been difficult to achieve a consistent approach to many long, medium and short- term issues and there has been a lack of rigour in many areas. As yet the school has not been able to develop a unified and whole-school approach to many areas of its work and this is a major area for improvement. There are aspects of the school's work including teaching and learning, curriculum organisation, the care of pupils, assessment and day-to-day management where there are many differences that serve to highlight that this is not yet one school.

61. The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is satisfactory. Staff, parents and colleagues speak highly of the headteacher's commitment to the school in various roles over a number of years. He is now providing not only much needed stability in leading the school forward but is working with commitment to overcome the many difficulties with quiet determination. A start has been made on updating school policies, including that for race equality and disability and schemes of work. Whilst this is an attempt to move forward together, there is a need to move the pace of this work along. The newly appointed deputy headteacher is already beginning to identify where she can develop areas of responsibility and share the day-to-day and long- term leadership responsibilities. The work of the school reflects its aims and values satisfactorily and the headteacher and deputy head are working hard to translate a vision for school improvement into practice.

62. The delegation and contribution of staff with management responsibilities is satisfactory. The senior management team is beginning to identify the need to develop their roles further. Several staff have held senior posts in the three schools over some time and to an extent some of these roles and responsibilities have an historic framework. Some of the roles carry responsibility in one area of the school such as the nursery, the infants or juniors and are not whole school roles. Whilst this ensures there is a balance of expertise on the senior management team this is not really effective in developing the 'one school' ethos and in developing rigour in school systems.

63. The governors' involvement in the life of the school is satisfactory overall. The governing body generally fulfils its statutory requirements appropriately, although there are minor deficiencies in the information provided in the annual report. The chair of the governing body has a good grasp of the role. He has a clear understanding of how to involve governors in a more pro-active manner to ensure greater first hand knowledge of school priorities and aid school development planning. The chairs of committees also have a clear understanding and commitment to their roles and are seeking to develop the effectiveness of the different groups further.

64. As a whole governors have good awareness of the strengths of the school, although as yet they are not as effective in identifying weaker areas and knowing how to ensure they work in a purposeful manner to support various priorities. The governors' role in shaping the direction of the school is satisfactory. They have been active in their work prior to, during and following the amalgamation of the school and on site issues. However, there is now room to

move forward from these areas and focus upon school development and improvement planning.

65. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school lack rigour; this is unsatisfactory and a key area for improvement. This is both in the overall monitoring of senior staff and in the work of subject co-ordinators. Prior to amalgamation the separate schools had begun to develop some procedures to monitor planning, teaching and occasionally the work of the school. But during re-organisation this work was not a priority and diminished although procedures to support performance management were generally maintained. Most co-ordinators now see planning and liaise with colleagues where necessary. However, few subject managers have the opportunity to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in sufficient depth. This makes it very difficult for them to have well informed understanding of standards in their subjects and to know whether teaching builds in a continuous and progressive manner on what the pupils know, understand and can do. Some co-ordinators have only limited awareness of standards in parts of the school where they do not work and little or no non-contact time to observe the work in other parts of the school.

66. School development planning is broadly satisfactory although the current plan is lengthy, descriptive and somewhat lacking in focus. This does not always ensure that a clear educational direction for the school is established. This is the first plan produced since the appointment of the headteacher, who acknowledges this was a working document which will improve in subsequent years. The priorities for the year are not well linked to raising standards in key subjects and this has not been a help in enabling staff to grasp the nettle of whole school issues and achievement. The school has taken reasonable action to meet the school targets both in terms of pupil attainment at the end of both key stages and of school development targets. There is satisfactory capacity to succeed further. However, as yet the school has not entirely succeeded in pulling staff together and establishing a shared commitment to improvement. In several respects the school still functions as three units each with separate ways of working.

67. The school's strategic use of the financial resources available to it is satisfactory. Financial planning is appropriately organised and the school benefits from the good support and expertise provided by an independent financial advisor. The governors are actively involved in planning and managing the budget and took the decision to employ a financial advisor to enable the headteacher to have more time to manage other issues in the school. Because of the good quality expertise provided to the school, the headteacher and governors are able to make decisions confidently and ensure that the financial resources available to the school are properly targeted to improving the quality of education and raising standards throughout the school. However, although careful consideration is given to the demands of the school development plan, some of the costings in the plan are not rigorous enough. The levels of financial reserves (the money the school holds to protect it against unexpected happenings) are currently at levels similar to suggested practice. However, these reserves will be used during the current financial year and the headteacher and governors are very aware that a rigorous review of the school organisation and staffing structure will be necessary.

68. The use of the specific funds element of the school's finances and other additional funding is satisfactory overall but there are areas for development. Although appropriate use is made of the funding for mainstream pupils with special educational needs there are weaknesses in the management of the provision for pupils with autism. The school also has to contribute from its own funds to supplement the specific grants that it receives. The school is starting to gain some benefit from the consortium of schools that it belongs to (BREAZ) whose main purpose is to raise standards and pupils' aspirations by putting together a multi-agency team that supports the social elements of pupils' education. The school is starting to

benefit from a learning mentor provided by the initiative and other priorities are identified for the future from which the school should benefit. However, the initiative has only been in place since April 2002 and it is too early to judge its overall impact.

69. The school's overall administrative arrangements are satisfactory and office staff are well organised, competent and hard working. The school had an external financial audit towards the end of last year and its recommendations have been agreed and fulfilled by the school. To ensure the school provides best value in its educational provision there is satisfactory implementation of the four principles of compare, challenge, consult and compete. 'Compare' and 'compete' are the stronger elements. For example, the governors' finance and staffing committee are provided with good financial and staffing comparisons against national statistics by the school's financial advisor. However, the school's spending is not evaluated sufficiently to ensure that the most effective quality of education and support is provided for the pupils.

70. There are a sufficient number of teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. The school has a high number of learning support staff. Many of these staff provide individual support for the autistic pupils who attend the school. Support staff work closely with teachers, are clear about their roles and contribute well to the pupils' learning experiences. The school does not have a whole school policy for staff induction and the headteacher would acknowledge that this is an area for development. However, newly qualified teachers are well supported and provided with good quality mentoring. The school's strategy for performance management is satisfactory. Although it lost some momentum as a result of changes of management, the school is on target to begin its third cycle of performance management like most other schools.

71. The school's accommodation is made up of the former infant and junior school sites and an adjacent former special school. Although the accommodation is satisfactory for the delivery of the National Curriculum, the location of the buildings does not support the school's quest to become a 'whole' school. At present pupils work in three buildings and although the eventual school will be located in two buildings next to each other, this is not planned until September 2004 having been put back by the local education authority from September 2003. This is unsatisfactory for staff and pupils. Many of the classrooms in the old junior school building are too cramped for the older pupils and the shared computer suite and library has restricted space. The new school building will provide better facilities for ICT but September 2004 is a long time to wait. Much of the old junior school is in a poor decorative state but colourful displays of pupils' work help to mitigate this.

72. The quality, range and accessibility of learning resources are satisfactory overall. Resources for science, music and design and technology are good. Resources for ICT are unsatisfactory and do not ensure that the subject fully meets the demands of the National Curriculum.

73. There is a co-ordinator for special educational needs in both key stages. They are aware of the need to monitor more rigorously the systems in place, for example the quality of the individual education plans and the work pupils complete in the classroom. Funding for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school receives no extra funding for pupils with English as an additional language.

74. There are weaknesses in the school's attempts to reflect a positive commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils. No one has responsibility for co-ordinating this important area. In addition issues identified such as the lack of opportunities for pupils in Year 2 to develop ICT skills and the lack of monitoring of what is being taught in the different classes within the same age group makes it unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

75. In order to raise standards further the headteacher, staff and governors should:
1. Develop policies, procedures and daily practices that are corporate and consistent to ensure that the school works as a cohesive whole; (paragraphs 29, 49, 60, 62, 66, 71).
 2. Continue to raise the standards achieved by pupils aged eleven in English, mathematics and science by:
 - refining the use of individual targets for pupils to reach the next levels of achievement especially in English; (paragraphs 78, 87, 116, 120,124, 126)
 - providing a better match of tasks to pupils' ability in mathematics; (paragraphs 7, 12, 28, 32)
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to carry out a full range of activities in science; (paragraphs 7, 12, 139, 141)
 - improving the marking of pupils' work and verbal feedback so that pupils know what they need to do to improve. (paragraphs 6, 25, 52, 116, 120, 124, 124, 126, 134)
 3. Extend the procedures for assessment and the use of this information to track the progress pupils make as they move through the school and plan for the highest appropriate level of challenge for all pupils in the full range of subjects. (paragraphs 49, 51, 52, 135, 141, 154, 172, 176, 182)
 4. Raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT) by:
 - improving the range of computer resources available; (paragraphs 8, 26, 38, 71, 167, 168, 170)
 - teaching all strands of the ICT curriculum on a regular basis and in a continuous and progressive manner to ensure equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils. (paragraphs 167, 168, 169, 171)

5. Improving the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school by:
 - carrying out carefully planned, regular and rigorous evaluations of the quality of planning, teaching and learning using recognised criteria; (paragraphs 49, 65, 127, 150, 165, 176, 182)
 - extending the role of the subject co-ordinators in monitoring and evaluation procedures in subjects for which they hold responsibility. (paragraphs 65, 135, 165, 166)

6. Improve the provision for pupils supported by the Resource Base by:
 - a) clarifying the strategic direction of the provision: (paragraph 90)-
 - agreeing admission criteria and the optimum number of pupils with autism; (paragraph 89)
 - setting up an appropriate steering committee; (paragraph 89)
 - using the support staff more efficiently (paragraph 91);
 - b) improving the accommodation; (paragraph 92)
 - c) providing further training for all staff; (paragraph 91)
 - d) improving the curriculum by:-
 - ensuring that sufficient religious education and information and communication technology is planned and recorded; (paragraph 84)
 - increasing the amount of time for teaching; (paragraph 84)
 - extending the range of curricular experiences; (paragraph 85)
 - making more consistent use of signing. (paragraph 83)
 - e) making the targets in pupils' individual education plans more specific, with well-defined success criteria; (paragraph 87)
 - f) ensuring that pupils are properly integrated into the main school classes as much as possible. (paragraph 85)

76. **Minor issues the governors should consider:**
 - Improving the levels of attendance to at least the national average. (paragraph 16)

THE RESOURCE BASE FOR PUPILS WITH AUTISM

77. The Resource Base is part of the local education authority's Enhanced Learning Provision for pupils who are autistic. All pupils join Springfield Primary School's Resource Base after assessment by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals. There are currently 12 pupils in the school who are autistic, and ten of them have statements of special educational need. All have difficulties characterised by complex social, language and communication problems that impede their learning. Mostly pupils' attainment is well below national averages and expectations in all areas of learning, and sometimes very low indeed; however, a few have abilities that mean that their attainment is in line with national expectations in some aspects, such as reading and spelling. Many of the pupils have behaviours that are unusual, but few exhibit the very violent outbursts that are sometimes displayed by pupils with this sort of difficulty. All pupils are supposed to have access to the full National Curriculum, but some pupils do not do the national tests at the end of Year 2.

78. The quality of education provided by the Resource Base is satisfactory in several aspects, but unsatisfactory in others. Consequently, pupils make at least satisfactory progress in the areas such as communication in which the staff have made great efforts, but unsatisfactory progress in other areas. Some sound work was observed where the lesson given to the main school class was entirely appropriate to address the targets on the pupil's individual education plan. However, often the work done in the class was not useful, as the targets were mostly set in terms of the improvements to language. Many pupils have made good improvements to their social skills, and the learning seen in a music lesson for a small group of younger autistic pupils was good; they did not fuss, enjoyed the session and put their instruments away very well.

79. The pupils' attitudes to learning are good, and this is due to the careful management by staff. This is particularly of note, as records show that some pupils have been reluctant or unable to learn when they started at the school. In relation to their difficulties pupils' behaviour is good. Many of them have few skills that are socially acceptable, and some are quite withdrawn or seemingly indifferent to the activities provided. But they are acquiring a much more acceptable response to work and to school in general.

80. The teaching by staff in the Resource Base is satisfactory overall. Some good teaching by the teacher in charge was observed, but also elements that were unsatisfactory by some support staff. The unsatisfactory teaching is because the staff do not have a deep enough knowledge and understanding of the requirements of pupils, with much of the work being over-prescribed and rather un-stimulating. Day-to-day assessment is too general and does not lead to adaptation of future work to match the needs of individual pupils.

81. Staff have good relationships with pupils with autism, but are rather over-protective and so do not give pupils the level of challenge which would enhance their learning. Support staff sometimes have low expectations of pupils' capabilities and cosset them. Pupils' apparent happiness is given precedence over their achievement. However, staff are good at ignoring pupils' obsessions and in praising their appropriate behaviour. They are well practised at teaching suitable social behaviours, and this has done much to improve pupils' social skills.

82. The teaching strategies are usually used well, but there is a limited range. Activities are generally well organised and have a clear start and finish, although the lessons are sometimes far too long, making inefficient use of time as well as being ineffective in supporting pupils' needs. Too little ICT is used, partly because there is insufficient equipment, and partly because that available is not used well enough. Too much work that lacks challenge is given; examples include lots of 'cutting and sticking' that does little to develop

pupils' hand-to-eye co-ordination, and even less to develop knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are supposed to be learning. At times activities are given that are not appropriate for the age of the pupils, and this suggests a lack of understanding of the methods of teaching for pupils with such complex difficulties.

83. The curriculum is relevant for the specific needs of the pupils as far as communication goes, but unsatisfactory in several other respects. There is not the broad range of the curricular experiences and complementary therapies that is often found in units for autistic pupils. A recognised system of signing is used, but not enough by all staff. Staff, including main school teachers, need more training in this. The symbolic system used to help pupils to communicate has been very valuable, and is having a good impact on the improvement of their communication skills. The main school staff are getting used to it, and it is working. But the inherent difficulties of this system have not been sufficiently addressed; pupils are now using it to opt out of other, just as valuable, activities. Too much reliance has been put on this system, and too little use is made of other systems of augmentative communication.

84. A big problem is the unsatisfactory planning of the curriculum for each pupil. Given that they are supposed to be accessing the main school lessons, pupils do very little of some subjects, and none of others, and this includes religious education. As no pupil has been disapplied from the National Curriculum this is unsatisfactory, and the lack of attendance in religious education lessons and in acts of collective worship means that the pupils' spiritual development is not promoted at a suitable level. The time available for teaching is too short. Pupils go home early on Friday. The lunchtime sessions, which could be part of a structured programme, are not well organised nor are they considered part of the teaching. Some activities go on far too long, such as the hour-long session on mathematical development given to one reception pupil by a support assistant. This is an inefficient use of time, as well as being inappropriate for a child of this age.

85. Some valuable work was seen when autistic pupils were with their main school peers. In several lessons the Resource Base pupil became involved with other pupils and benefited from work in a wider range of subjects; an example included a mathematics lesson in Year 2. However, this is not always the case. Often the autistic pupil is in the class, but only doing separate work sitting next to one of the Resource Base support staff. At times, including a music lesson for pupils in Year 3, the autistic pupil could not derive as much benefit from the session as was possible. This was because she was removed when the work got interesting, to have separate 'social skills' training within a group consisting only of pupils who were autistic.

86. The care given to pupils by staff from the Resource Base is generally good. Staff know their pupils well and make every effort to help them. A calm, caring ethos has been set. However, some procedures are insufficiently rigorous and at times confidentiality is not ensured. Very few pupils have detailed plans to guide staff if there was to be a critical incident; the staff are not familiar with the school's policy in the event that pupils are in need of restraint, and this is a weakness. Opportunities are missed for pupils to integrate with pupils of their own age and to practise their social skills during the dinner break.

87. The quality of the assessment of pupils' needs depends on the age of the pupil and the length of time they have been in the school. Procedures are satisfactory for some aspects, such as communication, and unsatisfactory for their general development. Procedures are better for younger pupils. The use of the information acquired is often unsatisfactory. Pupils' individual education plans are often lacking in specific targets and success criteria are not set. Individual education plans do not always reflect the decisions made at annual reviews, and are not always considered when devising schemes of work for

individuals. Staff have had advice from education and health professionals, but these outside staff do not have a regular input to the programmes devised or the teaching of the pupils.

88. The Resource Base has a sound, and improving partnership with parents. Home-school diaries are used well. A useful support group for parents has been devised, and the teacher in charge has made many efforts to involve the parents in the assessment and learning of their children. This is a positive step.

89. The leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The current headteacher and the teacher in charge of the Resource Base were not in post when the provision was first set up, and have inherited many things that were not well organised then, and which have grown in an unplanned way since. There is no 'steering committee' or other appropriate group of people, from within the school and outside it, to ensure the proper development of the provision. There are no agreed criteria for admission, nor any limitation on the numbers of autistic pupils that the school can accept. Many of the deficiencies stem from the lack of sound organisation when the number of autistic pupils suddenly increased during a time of major upheaval for the school. The planning of the curriculum, the teaching and the learning, have not been well enough monitored, and this is partly because staff are not aware of best practice. However, Resource Base staff have worked hard, to some good effect, to keep the provision on an even keel during a time of great turmoil for the school. The teacher in charge has a sound grasp of what needs to be put right in the organisation of the Resource Base, but has had too little time and insufficient guidance about how to achieve this.

90. Philosophically the headteacher and staff are happy that the autistic pupils are members of the school community, but they are concerned about the practical implications. The headteacher has started to address the issues so that the provision for autistic pupils is improved. However, faced with the enormity of the task in front of them, and lacking the training and experience to be able to tackle the numerous problems in a coherent way, the headteacher and Resource Base teacher in charge have struggled to devise a workable strategic plan to improve the provision. The previous development plan for the Resource Base was of little use. Far too many issues were indicated, which could not be dealt with in one year, and some were not in the remit of the school. Very long-term aims were confused with operational issues. The current plans of the teacher in charge are more workable, but still need revision and need to be overseen by the headteacher.

91. There are sufficient staff to cope with the needs of the autistic pupils, but their use is not always efficient. Most require further training to develop their knowledge and understanding of the problems of the pupils, the strategies for teaching, and in devising appropriate individual education plans. Some training has been internal, and this has been beneficial. However, the disadvantages, in terms of the compounding of misconceptions, have not been sufficiently considered. Resource Base staff go on courses and this has been useful, but wider training is needed, alongside the opportunity to visit centres of good practice. Given that the main school staff are also involved in the education of the autistic pupils, they also are not well enough trained; this includes experienced teachers as well as support staff such as the midday supervisors.

92. The accommodation of the Resource Base is an issue that needs to be addressed very soon. There is no one room that is a separate base for autistic pupils, as they are on the roll of the main school classes. A teaching room has been set aside that is not in either the infant or the junior departments; this sends erroneous messages about inclusion. There are no quiet rooms for therapy or individual work and no safe, secure room where staff can take pupils if they become overwrought. This is unsatisfactory. Many areas in which the pupils are taught are cluttered and visually over-stimulating, and this is inappropriate for many pupils. There is no sensory room, which could be valuable in improving pupils' response and

communication. Resources are satisfactory in a limited range of work. Staff have made some useful and elegant resources. However, too little in terms of ICT is used, and this is unsatisfactory for many pupils.

93. The cost per pupil, over and above those costs of the main school, is generally within the usual limits for such provision. This sum would represent good value if the pupils were getting all that they should, and all that the school aspires to for them. However, current costs are above the money available to pay for them, and so the school has some difficult decisions to make about what to do in the future. For this they will require the advice of the professional staff of the local education authority.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	75
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	50

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	16	30	27	0	0	0
Percentage	3	21	40	36	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25	400
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	79

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	15
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6	98

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	15

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.2

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	27	18	45

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	25	26
	Girls	18	17	18
	Total	44	42	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (77)	93 (88)	98 (82)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	26	26
	Girls	18	18	18
	Total	42	44	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (82)	98 (81)	98 (88)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	23	31	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	19	19
	Girls	23	23	27
	Total	40	42	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (84)	78 (67)	85 (89)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	19	18
	Girls	25	23	27
	Total	42	42	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (87)	78 (67)	83 (80)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	306	4	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	84	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)	16
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	25

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	233

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65
Number of pupils per FTE adult	12.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	1,034,869
Total expenditure	996,702
Expenditure per pupil	2,479
Balance brought forward from previous year	13,437
Balance carried forward to next year	51,604

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	4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
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)	1

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	143

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	33	1	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	41	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	43	1	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	38	10	1	9
The teaching is good.	70	27	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	34	20	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	22	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	32	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	40	43	13	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	49	39	4	1	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	34	2	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	27	24	10	17

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents are generally pleased with the standard of education although several would like to see more out of school activities, the more systematic use of homework, more information about how their children are getting on and the school working more closely with parents.

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

94. Children are admitted into nursery in September following their third birthday. They attend five sessions a week, either mornings or afternoons. Children are admitted to reception in September following their fourth birthday. Almost all children in nursery transfer to Springfield reception. Almost all children in reception have experienced some form of pre-school provision. Children entering nursery do so with attainment in most areas below those expected for their age. Their physical development is at the expected level. Many children have particularly limited speaking skills; currently seven children are receiving additional speech development support.

95. Children make good progress in nursery so they begin reception closer to the expected level of development in most areas, but still below the level expected in language development. In reception children continue to make good progress, but language development, particularly speaking skills, is still below that expected by the time they enter the infant department.

96. Accommodation in the nursery is bright, cheerful and stimulating, though rather cramped for the number of children. The room is arranged in bays set out for different areas of learning. Resources are good, covering all areas of learning. Reception is a spacious open-plan area also arranged in bays, with a small quiet withdrawal area. The arrangement sometimes creates difficulties through background noise and when other pupils need to pass through the area. Resources are good. In both classes children's work is displayed well, valuing their efforts and adding to the stimulating environment. There is a good sized, hard surface, secure play area with access from both classes. The nursery has a small covered veranda. There is no designated grassed play area. Children have access to climbing equipment in the school hall for physical development.

97. The curriculum in both year groups is planned according to the six areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage. Liaison between the classes has improved recently so that half-termly topics are linked and the planned work builds on what children already know and can do. All adults keep ongoing informal notes of observations they make of achievement by individual children. These notes are added to their individual records. Formal records of nationally recognised assessments are kept. Teachers are exploring new forms of recording children's progress through the six areas, which are less cumbersome than the present ones and easier to assimilate by receiving teachers. Currently the records are unnecessarily copious and detailed. All adults know the children and their capabilities very well.

98. In both classes the children are organised in 'family' groups for registration. In nursery there is a full-time qualified teacher and two full-time equivalent well qualified assistants. In reception there are two full-time equivalent qualified teachers and trained assistants. Nursery children are in mixed ability groups. In reception children are grouped according to ability for language and literacy work and mathematical development. There has been some disruption to learning during the last year and a half because of frequent staff changes; a more stable staff is being put in place.

99. Teaching is good overall in the Foundation Stage. In nursery, teaching is very good. Planning for each day's activities is very detailed. The time is divided into group work times, free choice and specific learning focus times. Children plan their own free choice work and

talk about what they have done at the end. All play activities have specific aims which are shared with the children, this is very good practice. Outdoor play is also carefully structured to encourage learning or skill development as well as being fun. For instance when a group of children enjoyed riding tricycles and scooters they were asked to fetch items from different 'animal pens'. They were given a large number between one and four, asked to recognise it and show the number of fingers and then fetch that number of eggs from the hen, balls of wool from the sheep or churns of milk from the cow. The teacher noted how well each child recognised and counted correctly. This was a very imaginative way of reinforcing numbers during an energetic playtime in the sun. Adult intervention in play is ongoing, with constant good questioning to encourage children to talk about what they are doing and improve their speaking skills. During focused learning adults concentrate very effectively on developing children's mathematical understanding, early literacy skills and knowledge and understanding of the world.

100. Teaching in reception is good. Language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world are well planned and taught. Whilst the tasks set are usually relevant to the learning more care needs to be taken to ensure that not too much time is spent on colouring in and cutting and sticking tasks which are undemanding, especially in mathematics lessons. In creative sessions, the groups of children working with an adult spend their time well, developing skills and awareness, such as the group making animal masks. Other children have too much unstructured choice so that they do not always use their chosen activity with any real purpose. Adults are not always sufficiently aware of what these children are doing or how long they are spending on an activity. A group of boys was observed playing in the sand tray and another group in the water tray for the whole session with no intervention by an adult; the children used the resources sensibly but with no real purpose to their play.

Personal, social and emotional development

101. Children begin nursery with development below that expected for their age. They have limited skills in managing their own clothes and do not always wash their hands independently. Most children can put their own coat on but need adult help to do it up. They are unused to playing together, sharing or taking turns. Much effort is put into training children so that by the time of the inspection in April, children played well together, often co-operating well, such as building a tower from bricks, or completing a computer program together. There is only occasional minor squabbling over toys. Children listen to the adults and to each other and usually remember to put up their hand when they have something to say in group times. They know the nursery routines and expected behaviour and respect these. Children take care of toys and equipment and use resources sensibly. They know how to tidy up and put equipment away. Group time and 'candle time' are used very effectively to encourage children to respect their own and others' feelings. A candle time story was used very effectively to talk about what makes children feel sad.

102. Teaching in this area is good with some very good aspects in the nursery. Through the good training in nursery children enter reception with appropriate development in personal, social and emotional development. Children respect each other's feelings, take turns and share equipment. Children become independent and find what they need without constantly referring to an adult. For instance children completing a task fetched crayons and a rubber for themselves when they needed them. They work well together, co-operating sensibly when completing a group game, although some children find it difficult to accept they are not winning. Children's behaviour is good as are their relationships with all adults.

Communication, language and literacy

103. On entering nursery, children's language skills are generally below those expected for their age, with some children well below expectations; these children have a very limited vocabulary, often speak indistinctly making it difficult to understand what they mean. Most do not use complete sentences. All adults constantly interact with children encouraging them to talk about what they are doing and gradually adding new words to their vocabulary. Adults model language structures well so that children begin to use more complete sentences in their talk. When planning what activity they are going to choose, children speak into a Dictaphone, use real, but disconnected, telephones or draw the activity on a white board. These are very imaginative strategies to encourage skills in communication. Stories and rhymes are used frequently to encourage children's awareness of books. Opportunities for making marks to represent writing are always available in role-play and children are encouraged to create labels for any models they build. Children are introduced to the alphabet letters by matching a letter to one on a giant caterpillar. They begin to learn its name and sound. More able children begin to recognise their own name card and try to copy it. Most develop a firm grip of mark makers and paint brushes and control them reasonably well.

104. Despite the good teaching and good progress made in nursery, children are still below the expected level when they enter reception. Aspects of the National Literacy Strategy are used well to introduce children to books, early reading and writing. Children learn the names and sounds of letters and practise forming them in the air, different media and by writing them. Good attention is paid to the correct formation. About a third of the children begin to read and use their phonic knowledge to sound out simple regular words. These children use their phonic knowledge to write sentences independently. They read these back with confidence. The writing is appropriately formed for their age. By the end of Reception more than half the children will reach the expected level for their age, with about a third of these exceeding it. A significant number, however, who have speech difficulties and who learn more slowly, will still be well below the expected level.

Mathematical development

105. On entry to nursery many children have little knowledge or understanding of numbers, shapes or comparative measures. Many incidental opportunities are utilised to practise counting, recognising numbers, learning the names of simple two-dimensional shapes and comparing sizes. Children are frequently asked to show a specific number of fingers. This encourages good accurate counting. Children use strips of paper to measure themselves; these are stuck onto large sheets to create a simple graph of comparative heights. The charts are annotated with captions, for example 'Who is taller than you?', 'Who is the shortest?' Children enjoy joining in number rhymes. Most children count at least to five with confidence, and more able children correctly recognise the numeral and give out the right number of objects. By the end of nursery most children achieve the expected level.

106. In reception children continue to develop their understanding of numbers and the number system. More able children count in twos confidently to ten. They order numbers to 30 and count backward correctly. These children begin to recognise number bonds by making the 'story of four' with practical equipment. They begin early addition by combining sets to a total of five. Less able children recognise numerals to six, and order the numbers correctly. They sort objects into sets by size – big and little; they continue a simple repeating pattern. Teachers use recorded television programmes well to reinforce mathematical language, such as learning positional vocabulary – 'besides', 'between', 'around'. Overall, because of good teaching children achieve the expected level of development by the end of the year.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

107. Children begin nursery with limited experience of the world beyond their homes. All learning in nursery is centred on the current topic. At the time of the inspection this was 'Old MacDonald's Farm'. Stories of farms and farm animals were read to children, they learned nursery rhymes and songs, painted pictures of farm animals, used construction kits to build animal pens, learned the names of farm animals, their babies, the sounds they make and the food they eat. A farm visit gave children first-hand experience of watching and feeding animals. The school grounds are used well for walks to see the signs of different seasons. In many similar ways, children's knowledge and understanding is carefully developed.

108. Reception topics build on what children have learned in nursery. Their topic 'Three Billy Goats Gruff' increases children's knowledge of domestic animals to the less common ones. Reading, writing, mathematics and creative work are all linked to this. More able children write thank you letters to the farm manager. Children begin to use very simple reference books as a source of information. Teaching and learning are good overall. However, whilst activities are well planned; they are not always sufficiently carefully monitored.

Creative development

109. Teaching and learning are good. Effective opportunities are planned in nursery for children to experience a wide range of materials and media. They learn the primary and secondary colour names. They use different materials to create patterns and pictures in collage. Besides the vets' surgery, a 'garden centre' is set up for growing plants. Children enjoy responding to music. They learn to copy very simple rhythms and try to copy simple pitch patterns. They make satisfactory progress.

110. Reception teachers provide a similar wide range of opportunities to respond creatively using imaginative role-play, a wide range of art materials and musical instruments. Children produce good observational drawings and paintings of people and natural objects. They have very good opportunities to develop their singing voices and copy rhythm patterns introduced by a visiting specialist teacher. Children reach the expected standard by the end of the year.

Physical development

111. Children enter nursery with appropriate skills in controlling their bodies. They move well in different ways following instructions, running, skipping and hopping when playing 'Follow my leader' games. They pedal and steer wheeled toys competently. Children begin to control small balls well when rolling and kicking them. They are less competent in manipulating small objects, such as pencils and crayons, scissors, and when threading and pasting. Many opportunities are provided to develop these skills. Children learn to control the mouse to complete tasks on the computer. Because of good teaching children make good progress.

112. Similar opportunities are provided in reception so that most children cut and stick reasonably accurately, hold pencils and crayons correctly and colour in within the lines. About two thirds of children begin to form letters and numbers with a reasonable degree of control. They have access to the nursery outdoor-wheeled toys, but there are no bigger toys or two-wheeled bicycles for them to make progress in cycling skills. Children continue to make sound progress and achieve the expected level of development.

ENGLISH

113. At the age of seven, national tests for 2002 showed that standards were well above average in reading and writing. By the age of eleven standards were average. When compared with similar schools they were well above average. Results for 2002 indicate that at the end of Year 2 the number of pupils who reached the higher level (level 3) was above the national average. The number of pupils who reached the higher level (level 5) in Year 6 was broadly average.

114. Inspection evidence shows that the current Year 2 is on line to reach average standards. By the end of Year 6 standards are lower and pupils are likely to reach standards below average. This is because, although a reasonable number of pupils are likely to reach the average level (level 4), the number of pupils predicted to reach the higher level (level 5) is considerably lower than average. In addition the number of pupils unlikely to reach average levels is slightly higher than usual. Information collected on these pupils when they were in Year 2 shows that they have made satisfactory progress as they have moved through the upper part of the school. This is an improvement on the previous Year 6, who made unsatisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment.

115. Teachers plan lessons that closely follow the recommended structure for daily literacy lessons. The current Year 1 entered the school with generally average overall attainment although with some areas of communication, language and literacy being lower. The progress which pupils make is satisfactory. In most year groups pupils' learning is satisfactory over time but often good within some lessons. The good learning is specifically linked to good or very good teaching, where the teachers skilfully match activities to the needs of all pupils, which results in all being well motivated. Support staff are used effectively so that all abilities achieve well. Teachers use effective methods to reinforce the learning objective. For example in a Year 4 class to illustrate an explanatory text, the teacher rode his bicycle around the playground after telling the pupils to watch carefully before they started to write. In these lessons there are planned opportunities for pupils to think about and identify what they have learnt at the end of the lesson.

116. However past work shows that, although progress is satisfactory, there are weaknesses in teaching which affect progress over time. For example, learning within lessons is affected when teachers' marking does not clearly indicate what pupils need to improve. In addition work is not consistently well matched to the needs of some pupils, in particular lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. This affects the progress which they make over time. Finally, the setting of targets for English is in its early stages of development and teachers do not yet consistently refer to pupils' targets in lessons or in their marking of work. At present target setting is not influencing the standards pupils are reaching.

117. Standards of speaking are broadly typical of seven and eleven- year-olds. When pupils are given opportunities to sit and listen and watch, for example in assemblies, they do this well. Overall speaking and listening skills are well promoted. There are well-planned opportunities in lessons, in most areas of the curriculum, for pupils of all ages to talk to each other. As they do this they reinforce their thoughts and ideas, for example as they work in their well developed 'talking partner' pairs. A good example where speaking and listening skills were well promoted was in Year 6 as pupils worked in groups and developed presentations about European countries. Questions were later directed at individuals and all pupils were involved. Pupils learn well during activities such as these.

118. By the age of seven reading standards are average. Above average readers are fluent and read texts accurately and with good understanding. They talk confidently about the main characters in the text and show a clear understanding between fiction and non-fiction books.

Average pupils sometimes have difficulty trying to sound out words such as 'first' but generally read accurately. Although below average pupils read hesitantly, they are beginning to use single letter sounds to help them with words which they have difficulty reading. Most use the pictures well to guide them as they read. A few average attaining pupils and most lower attaining pupils are muddled about fiction and non-fiction books. All pupils take reading books and their reading diaries home. These show the books they have read and the best ones have comments, which inform them what they need to do in order to improve. Most pupils make satisfactory progress.

119. By the age of eleven pupils' reading levels are below the average standard. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 read fluently showing a good understanding of various texts and excellent expression as they read books confidently. They enjoy reading, identify humour in the stories they read and clearly identify where it appears in the text. They talk about authors who they like best such as Roald Dahl. Records show that some average and lower attaining pupils in Year 6 have scored well on recent reading tests. However when talking to a group of these pupils who were reading a text about fox hunting, although they read the text satisfactorily, their comprehension was weaker and they showed a muddled understanding of what they had read.

120. Most pupils are keen to read and read with enjoyment and enthusiasm. Teachers keep reading records and the best comments identify what the pupils need to do in order to improve. Reading targets have been given to pupils and are linked to National Curriculum levels. However they are not reinforced in pupils' reading records, lessons or in marking and because of this, do not effectively improve the progress pupils make. There is a satisfactory selection of reading books and of books for reading sessions. Progress in reading is satisfactory but the lack of clear promotion of reading targets for individuals hinders the progress the pupils make over time. In addition pupils who appear to read texts fluently do not always understand what they are reading about.

121. The library in the upper part of the school is underdeveloped. It also houses the ICT suite. The room is now cramped and pupils do not regularly visit it to develop library skills. Hence although the books are coded and computerised, many pupils in the upper part of the school are not really sure how to locate books. The headteacher is aware of this and that the present system is unsatisfactory.

122. Standards in writing by the age of seven are average. Pupils practise handwriting and learn how to write their letters from an early age. They develop an idea of writing in sentences and begin to use capital letters at the beginning and full stops at the end. Good examples of written accounts were seen on display in Year 2 classrooms as pupils used writing skills confidently to describe characters in the books they read. One higher attaining pupil wrote as he described a dragon, 'It kills people, he has wings and can fly. He can breathe fire'. An average attaining pupil wrote about what she would like to be when she grew up. She wrote, 'I will be a famous singer like Madonna. I will wear pretty cloz and peepl will clap me.'

123. Pupils' attempts are well presented and show that they develop a good idea of drafting and re-drafting their attempts at writing from an early age. However there is little evidence of pupils using dictionaries to develop spelling skills. In Years 1 and 2 there are many examples of pupils writing for different purposes. For example in Year 1 pupils write clear instructions on how to make chapattis, they retell Bible stories about Jonah and write poems. All pupils develop a satisfactory knowledge of sounds and blends and begin to learn how to spell words correctly. Previous work and displays in classrooms clearly show the satisfactory progress which the pupils make in Years 1 and 2. However the development of writing skills is not systematically developed when some teachers do not match work accurately to the needs of all pupils and marking does not inform the pupils what they need to do to improve.

124. By the age of eleven standards in writing are below average. However inspection evidence indicates that standards vary between above average and average in Years 3, 4 and 5. In Year 6 a majority of pupils write confidently with a developing cursive script as they write for a range of purposes such as stories, play scripts, diary extracts, letters, poems and biographical accounts, for example by using texts about William Shakespeare. In all classes pupils have many opportunities to write and are encouraged to choose words imaginatively. For example a higher attaining pupil in Year 5 wrote about Jason and the trip to Kursian. He wrote 'It didn't take Jason and his crew long to defeat the horrible creature'. Lower attaining pupils in Year 5 wrote about their personal targets. Their efforts show weak spelling for simple words such as 'rede' (read), 'speke' (speak) and 'beter' (better). Progress in the development of writing skills is satisfactory but too often past work shows that, although marking is supportive, it does not inform the pupils about what they need to do in order to improve. Writing targets are not yet used effectively to raise standards.

125. Writing skills are used well across the curriculum. Pupils have many opportunities to write in other subjects apart from English and some good examples were seen in all year groups. Pupils in Year 5 cleverly linked their writing to science as they wrote about 'My Journey as a Molecule'. One higher attaining pupil wrote: 'I had turned into gas! I floated through the kitchen window and formed a cloud! 'Where are we?' asked Katie. 'I think we're a cloud' I replied. Pop! the cloud burst and we came pouring down as rain". In Year 6 there are good links between art and design and English. Pupils' cultural development is enhanced as they write about great artists such as Claude Monet and Vincent Van Gogh. Writing is well presented, fluent and legible. In Year 2, pupils have good opportunities to write as they develop plans before making puppets. Other pupils write confidently on their 'leaves for their dream tree' as they link religious education with the development of personal and social skills.

126. Teaching is satisfactory overall but there was some good and very good teaching seen during the inspection. However, previous work clearly reflects the satisfactory judgement. Good and very good elements of teaching include tasks, which were chosen well to motivate the pupils, for example as they wrote explanatory texts in Year 4. Teachers matched tasks accurately to the needs of all pupils in the class. In addition the classes were managed very well, in particular regarding the pace of the lesson, which was brisk. However in many lessons this was not so. When this happened pupils sat on the carpet for too long and then had difficulty concentrating. Teachers did not always include all pupils in class discussions and this resulted in many not contributing. There was little evidence of any teacher referring to pupils' targets for reading or writing either in lessons or in the marking of previous work. In all lessons seen work was well matched to the needs of most pupils but this was not so when looking at previous work. In particular, lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs were sometimes given tasks which were too hard, and then too little adult guidance to help them to improve. Relationships and pupils' attitudes to learning were good in all classes and pupils enthusiastically completed their tasks. Teachers generally have sufficient knowledge of English to teach it satisfactorily and all teachers have good control of their classes, which enables pupils to learn soundly. Planning is detailed and clear. All teachers promote what has been taught in clear, informative displays in their classrooms.

127. Management of the subject is satisfactory. Procedures for assessment are satisfactory and information collected on pupils is used well to place them into ability groups within classes in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 it is used to set pupils and then develop ability groups within the sets in each year group. The school is beginning to use this information to track pupils in terms of the National Curriculum levels they achieve. Pupils are regularly tested and teachers have recently begun to inform pupils what levels they are working on for reading and writing. However the teachers would agree that target setting is in

its infancy and in-service training has been organised for teachers to develop their expertise in this area. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet rigorous enough to affect the standards pupils achieve and the progress which they make. Resources are satisfactory in quality, quantity and condition and easily accessible to staff and pupils. Their social development is promoted well in all classes when they are encouraged to work together in groups and well-chosen texts enhance their moral and cultural development satisfactorily. ICT is beginning to be used to support the curriculum, in particular the development of word-processing skills.

MATHEMATICS

128. Standards at the end of Year 2 are average. This represents a difference to last year's national test results when standards were well above average, but there are significant differences between the two year-groups. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6, standards are below average. This is similar to last year's national test results. Progress through the school is currently satisfactory; however, there are some inconsistencies. Evidence from inspection indicates that a minority of pupils in Year 2 have made good progress in relation to their prior attainment whilst some pupils in Year 6 have not achieved as well as they could have. Last year national data indicated that by the end of Year 6 pupils had made unsatisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment in Year 2. Pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as their classmates but are not consistently given work that is appropriate to their needs. Although recent national test results have shown some differences in the performance of boys and girls, these differences were not apparent during the inspection.

129. The majority of pupils in Year 2 use an appropriate mathematical language for their age and attempt to give reasons for answers being correct. They identify number patterns such as odd and even numbers and use money accurately when solving simple problems. Pupils begin to understand the place value of digits, with higher attaining pupils using hundreds, tens and units. They identify common two-dimensional shapes such as squares, triangles, circles and pentagons and measure objects using simple metric units. They add two-digit numbers together, understand simple fractions such as halves and quarters and appreciate the similarities and differences between digital and analogue time.

130. Many of the pupils in Year 6 understand the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. They participate in data-handling exercises interpreting information and producing pie charts and trend graphs. Pupils draw nets for three-dimensional shapes and calculate the surface area and perimeter of rectangles and other common shapes. They order positive and negative numbers and undertake problem-solving exercises such as those involving ratio and proportion. However, about 30% of the year group are less confident in these activities and find it more difficult to develop their own strategies for problem solving and are more limited when using mental computation. A strength of the work in Year 6 for pupils of all abilities is that their work is presented consistently neatly and in an organised way.

131. Teaching is judged to be satisfactory through the school. Although a majority of lessons during the inspection were judged to be good, additional evidence provided by an analysis of pupils' work indicates that there are still some areas for development in teaching, particularly in Years 3 to 6. However, there is no indication that any pupils currently are not making sufficient progress. Teachers use the recommendations of the National Numeracy Strategy satisfactorily and most lessons start well with dynamic and effective mental mathematics sessions. This was seen to good effect as pupils in Year 1 doubled numbers 1 to 10 and then added either 1 or 10. All pupils were prepared to have a go and did not feel inhibited by making errors as the class teacher successfully emphasised that "making

mistakes is part of learning". The 'counting duck' (a glove puppet operated by the class teacher) who regularly 'visits' the class also encouraged the pupils to enjoy their learning and feel a sense of achievement. Pupils in Year 3 were challenged right from the start of their lesson to identify missing numbers from an addition sum and pupils in Year 4 worked at a rapid pace as they were multiplying numbers by 10. Teachers use the start of the numeracy lesson well to promote good speaking and listening skills. Very good relationships in the classroom mean that pupils listen attentively to the class teacher and each other. In many instances, questions are directed at different ability groups so pupils are answering questions that are appropriate to their level of understanding. This is good practice.

132. After consistently good starts to lessons, the pace of learning becomes slower. Much of this is due to pupils being given work that is either too easy for them or too challenging. Although most teachers attempt to provide different work for the range of ability found in all classes, this process is not accurate or rigorous enough. Consequently, not all pupils make the progress of which they are capable. For example, although extension activities are provided for higher attaining pupils, too few teachers demand that the pupils actually reach or start these activities. Time limits are not consistently imposed on the amount of work that pupils achieve and often the phrase "if you finish your work" is used with pupils. This sends out the message that it is acceptable not to finish. In Years 3 to 6, the pupils are put into numeracy groups in relation to their ability, but too often pupils of different ability within these groups are given the same work. One of the reasons that pupils in the current Year 6 are achieving below average standards is that an insufficient number of pupils are reaching the higher level 5. This was also an issue in the last academic year.

133. In a number of lessons during the inspection, pupils made good progress as a result of good or very good teaching. Pupils were enthusiastic about their work, maintained a high level of effort and, when questioned, showed a secure understanding about the work they were doing. Year 2 pupils worked quickly as they counted backwards and forwards in fives and identified accurately that when time is 'half-past the hour, the little hand must be half way between two numbers'. There was a 'buzz' of enthusiasm as pupils started activities that were accurately matched to pupils' ability and the lesson ended with a hearty rendition of 'The big minute hand rock' of the teacher's lyrics to a familiar rock-and-roll tune. Year 6 pupils were challenged effectively as they tried to work out half and quarter turns from angles provided by the teacher. The pupils maturely discussed a question posed by the teacher, "What are angles?" The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject and inspiration encouraged the pupils to learn and be involved.

134. Teachers mark work regularly and pupils are offered encouragement though supportive comments. However, marking does not always provide pupils with sufficient information on how to move on to the next stage of learning or offer any further challenge to the pupils. Numeracy skills are developed effectively in other subjects such as science. During the inspection Year 6 pupils were observed measuring the size of petals as part of their work on flowers and Year 1 pupils used Venn Diagrams to help them sort living and non-living objects. Although ICT was used by Year 6 pupils during the inspection to estimate the size of angles and by Year 2 pupils to count in groups of five, insufficient use is made of ICT to support learning in mathematics. This is not necessarily the fault of the teachers, but the result of unsatisfactory resources in ICT. During the inspection, many examples were provided of pupils working together well or discussing their work sensibly. These opportunities provided by the teachers contribute well to the pupils' social development.

135. The subject is satisfactorily managed by two co-ordinators. They are good role models in the classroom but having a subject manager for each stage of the school is unusual and does not help the process of two schools amalgamating together. The impression is still given of two separate schools. The school has a satisfactory range of

assessment procedures but, given that not all pupils are consistently provided with work that is appropriate to their needs, some teachers are not using this information effectively. The co-ordinators have monitored planning and pupils' books but have not undertaken any formal lesson observations and this is an area for development. The school has recently introduced a process of target setting for the pupils but it is too early to judge its overall impact in terms of raising standards and improving the quality of education for the pupils. There are sufficient resources to deliver the National Curriculum and these are appropriately organised in classrooms or held in resource areas.

SCIENCE

136. Standards in science, although below the level expected in Year 6, reflect a good improvement since the school's reorganisation two years ago. Results of national tests in 2001 at the end of Year 6 were well below that of schools nationally, since when there has been a significant rise. Current standards in Year 6 are below average and there is a lower percentage of pupils working at the higher Level 5 than in previous years.

137. Teacher assessments of pupils in Year 2 last year were above the national level at the expected level 2 but close to the national average at level 3. Pupils currently in Year 2 are judged to be achieving broadly average standards, as there is a lower percentage of more able pupils in this particular group than the previous year.

138. Although inspection evidence shows that attainment at the end of Year 6 is below average, a number of strategies are being introduced leading to increased progress in science. A revised scheme of work based on a nationally recognised programme is now taught through a range of topics that are introduced and built on as pupils move through the infants and juniors. The development of a whole school pupil tracking system is intended to provide teachers with data to build on strengths and address areas of concern.

139. Pupils' scientific skills of enquiry and investigation are not consistently challenged throughout the school. However, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils' skills of enquiry and investigation were developed from the outset as a result of the teacher's imaginative approach. Pupils gasped with excitement as the teacher entered in the role of a 'mad' gardener who having mixed up her plants required help to sort them out. The frequent opportunities to think and talk about their work during the lesson, helps them to explain and classify living and non-living things. The lesson linked well with mathematics and reinforced previous learning. Opportunities to talk about observations and share ideas is a valuable learning strategy and is further extended in a Year 2 lesson when an 'envoy' from each group explains to a neighbouring group the results of their investigation into changing the shapes of different materials.

140. Pupils' concept of living and growing develops as Year 2 pupils carefully observe and record the necessary conditions for healthy growth of cress seeds. Pupils in Year 3 investigate the functions of different parts of a plant. They know words including petal, root, sepal, stigma and ovary. In Year 4 pupils build on their understanding of living things as they study the functions of bones, muscles and joints in the human skeleton. They recognise the important bones of the skeleton and identify skeletons belonging to other living creatures. In Year 5 pupils think about the effects of the seasons on plants and animals, investigating the provision of food through seed dispersal and decomposition. Year 6 pupils are introduced to the main functions of the most important human and plant organs. Higher achieving pupils in Year 6 research the process from pollination to germination. They apply the principles of scientific enquiry as they dissect a range of flowers, measuring and counting petals, stigma and stamen, recording and identifying patterns.

141. An analysis of pupils' work shows that progress across the school is uneven. This is due to a range of factors. The school has experienced a number of considerable challenges during the years following amalgamation. It is aware of the need to bring consistency to teaching, learning and the assessment of pupils' achievement. Currently there are a variety of methods for assessing pupils' progress throughout the school. This is not helpful in consistently tracking learning or identifying individual needs and this limits the progress made by some pupils. The quality of the presentation of work and the quantity of work produced by pupils is also variable across the school. In Year 2 there is a good balance between pupils' own efforts to present their work and the use of worksheets to support their presentation. There are examples of particularly well presented and good quality work in Years 3 and 5. Also in Year 6 the scientific skills of more able pupils are evident in the high standard of their project booklets on the Solar System.

142. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. There are good examples of the support they receive from classroom assistants; nevertheless support is variable. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also make similar progress to their classmates.

143. Pupils' interest and enthusiasm for the subject are good. They concentrate well and apply themselves to set tasks, working together effectively. In the lessons where they are given an appropriate degree of independence they make good progress. The use of specifically designed worksheets can be useful; however it is important that there is a balance between the use of worksheets and opportunities for pupils to present their work and record their findings in their own words.

144. Teachers plan appropriately for the needs of different groups of pupils. In order to raise standards there needs to be whole school consistency in planning tasks and resources that rigorously challenge pupils, particularly the higher achieving pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally sound. Pupils in the main are well managed. The overall quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and there were examples of very good teaching observed in Years 1, 2 and 6 during the inspection. This very good teaching accounts for a number of pupils increasing their knowledge and understanding of science. The most effective teaching takes place when teachers have very good subject knowledge and know their pupils well. Good teaching also occurs when planning is detailed and matched to the different needs of individuals and groups of pupils. Learning is good when the lesson is well managed with a good balance between direct teaching and pupils' activities. When teaching is less effective more emphasis is placed on imparting knowledge than on the learning process and activities are too long. A variation in the quantity of work produced and the level of in-depth study was particularly evident between parallel classes in Years 3, 4 and 6.

145. The recently introduced science curriculum is balanced, ensuring coverage of the relevant elements of the National Curriculum. However, there has been insufficient time to evaluate its effectiveness as a whole school programme. There are effective links with literacy, mathematics and geography but ICT is insufficiently used throughout the school for research and recording work. The headteacher is managing the subject but due to the many other tasks that rightly demand priority the school plans to appoint a new science co-ordinator. Resources are good, providing good support for teaching and learning in science.

ART AND DESIGN

146. Pupils' attainment in two-dimensional art meets the expected level by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils have limited experience of three-dimensional work, especially abstract sculpture. They achieve a satisfactory knowledge of famous artists. Pupils make good progress through the school in knowledge and skills. Pupils' artwork is valued and celebrated.

There are many examples of framed drawings and paintings displayed in corridors alongside reproductions of famous works of art. Effective display of work in classrooms adds to the environment as well as valuing the work.

147. No lessons were observed in the infants, and only two in the junior department. It is not possible to make a secure overall judgement on teaching through the school. Teaching in the two lessons seen was at least satisfactory, with some very good features in a Year 4 lesson. The teacher held pupils in thrall when she introduced a framed reproduction of the Mona Lisa and asked them to compare it with a portrait by Picasso. Pupils compared the immediate differences between the two images and then described their interpretations of the expression in each by suggesting mysterious, strange and eerie for the Mona Lisa and cheerful, happy and exciting for the Picasso. The teacher introduced to pupils the word 'enigma' and explained how artwork is a means of non-verbal communication. Pupils then attempted quick sketch portraits of each other in the style of one of the portraits shown. When they evaluated the results, pupils could identify the styles used. Examples of other work displayed in this classroom indicate the imaginative training these pupils enjoy.

148. Scrutiny of work on display around the school and pupils' sketchbooks show that they are taught systematically the skills and techniques needed to achieve good observational drawings and paintings. They learn how to produce lines, shading and blending using different pencils, pastels and charcoal. Pupils learn how to mix colours to achieve skin tones for portraits, and the effect of different kinds of paint. They combine different materials to achieve good effects in collage work, for instance when reproducing Van Gogh's sunflowers and Monet's water lilies. However there are significant inconsistencies between some classes in the quality, quantity and standards of work produced.

149. There are good art links across the curriculum. Pattern making is linked to symmetry in mathematics; collage and clay work is linked to history when producing busts of Tudor figures and portraits of Henry VIII. Older pupils research biographies of famous artists as part of literacy work.

150. Art has been a particular focus for development recently, which has ensured that it has retained an appropriate place in the curriculum. The subject co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. She is beginning to become effective in leading and managing the subject through monitoring and evaluating the scheme of work and pupils' work. However, there is no direct evaluation of the quality of teaching and this makes it difficult for the co-ordinator to determine whether pupils could do more. There is no formal procedure for assessing pupils' progress, although a useful portfolio of examples of work is being compiled. The co-ordinator has supported colleagues through demonstrating skills and techniques in staff meetings and is aware of the need to develop three-dimensional work. Currently the use of ICT to support the art curriculum is satisfactory although limited by resources.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

151. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are below average overall. Standards in designing and evaluating are sound and all pupils make satisfactory progress through the school in these aspects. However, the key skills of making a range of artefacts are underdeveloped. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make unsatisfactory progress; older pupils make poor progress.

152. As very few lessons were observed during the inspection it is not possible to make a secure judgement on the quality of teaching overall. Teaching was good in Year 1 where pupils designed and made a fruit salad. This project was linked well to their science topic on healthy living. Pupils practised skills in using a variety of tools for cutting, peeling and grating fruit. When evaluating their experience at the end of the lesson they discussed which tools had been most appropriate for the different fruits and how they might use a different one on another occasion and why.

153. A Year 4 project was satisfactory. Again it was linked to the science topic. Pupils had analysed manufactured torches before designing, making and testing their own. However, pupils had not observed carefully enough how these torches use reflectors or magnifying lenses to increase the light output, nor had they noted the need for easy access to batteries to replace them. The result was that their own torches relied on the bulb and battery strength alone and to change the batteries when they were exhausted would mean totally dismantling them. Finishing and joining skills on these products were unsatisfactory and relied heavily on sticky tape. Examples of Tudor buildings by Year 5 pupils were poorly constructed relying almost entirely on boxes and card; they were more representative of the standard expected from younger pupils.

154. The present scheme of work is unsatisfactory. There is no provision for learning about structures and mechanisms, or opportunities to include these in products of their own. The school has a good supply of materials and tools for such activities but they are not used sufficiently. There is no structure for the progressive development of skills in accurate cutting, drilling and joining using different materials, tools and techniques. There is an overemphasis on designing and evaluating processes with not enough time left to developing making skills. There is no assessment procedure, formal or informal.

155. Leadership and management of the subject have been unsatisfactory because there has not been a designated co-ordinator for the role. A member of staff has very recently been appointed. She has not yet had time to have an impact or to monitor the quality of planning, teaching and learning. She is fully aware of what needs to be done and has the support of the headteacher to develop the subject. The use of ICT to support the design curriculum is under-developed and limited by resource availability.

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

156. Generally, standards in geography and history are typical of those expected for pupils by the end of Years 2 and 6, combined with examples of standards that are above this as in the Year 4 history lesson and the Year 6 geography lesson. This judgement of standards in both subjects has been made after talking to pupils and the subject leaders; reviewing work in pupils' books, and observing lessons.

157. The standards and presentation of work in pupils' current geography and history books do not always reflect the expectations of teachers or the enjoyment that pupils show when carrying out investigations. There is very little difference between the standards of boys and girls. Pupils integrated from the resource base, with statements of special educational

need, receive a variety of experiences that vary considerably from being fully included in the class topic by skilful planning and support, to hardly being involved at all. In discussion with pupils in Year 6, there is clear evidence that pupils are acquiring sound skills in both subjects, particularly when searching for information from secondary sources. There is evidence that planned experiences, and the amount of work produced is not the same for pupils in classes of a similar age, as for example when pupils in Year 5 did not experience the same opportunities when undertaking independent research.

158. In geography the focus on mapping skills has been rewarding. The youngest pupils in Year 1 have produced simple maps of their routes to school and have begun to use symbols. Co-ordinates are introduced in Year 3 in order to indicate more precise locations, and pupils have worked in pairs to use computer technology to plan routes. Maps of the British Isles and world maps enable pupils in Year 4 to locate physical features such as continents, oceans, mountain ranges and main rivers. Mapping skills have been extended in Years 5 and 6, to include keys and simple scales. More detailed use of co-ordinates is developed to locate human and physical features, and is enhanced by residential experiences. The pupils' study of places begins with the school and the local environment, and is then extended to compare localities such as Rowley Regis with personal experiences at the 'seaside' by the age of seven. Pupils contrast the localities of Dudley with Bewdley by the age of 11. A study of weather patterns enables pupils in Year 2 to compare clothing needs in contrasting climatic regions, and pupils in Year 4 investigate and record temperate conditions which they record effectively in a graphical style.

159. In Year 1, there is a satisfactory understanding of the differences and similarities between 'then and now' in history. Younger pupils have plotted their families and events that have taken place during their short life span and were enthusiastic when being introduced to the delights of the 'washboard' and the 'dolly tub'. By the age of seven, pupils talk enthusiastically about famous people such as Florence Nightingale and Guy Fawkes. Letters home inform the world that 'Scutari is filthy'. Pupils were also introduced to the lesser-known African-American Mary Seacole. In Year 3, pupils have studied 'invaders and settlers' and have a sound knowledge of the differences between the Celtic and Roman lifestyles as well as the legacy of roads, housing and Roman baths. The visit of a 'Roman soldier' raised the quality of learning. Year 4 pupils have considered and compared lifestyles in ancient Greece - including their military lifestyle and the roles of women and children. Similar comparisons have also been made in Year 5, where pupils have a good knowledge of the Tudors. After considering comparisons and differences between the rich and the poor, some pupils have been encouraged to use a variety of secondary sources to research texts in order to extend their understanding. Pupils in Year 6 have researched briefly ancient Greece.

160. In both geography and history first hand experiences through fieldwork are given a high priority that add considerably to pupils' understanding. Visits have been arranged such as when visiting a local nature park, quarry, or places of historical interest such as Wightwick Manor to deepen their study. Even the youngest pupils classify human and physical features appropriately. Visitors have proved valuable to plan for greater understanding, whether when parents and family share their experiences of former times, or when questioning the local member of the European parliament, or a Roman soldier.

161. Although only two lessons were observed in geography, the quality of teaching and learning was good in a Year 2 class and excellent in Year 6. In both lessons pupils were exposed to stimulating learning situations. Year 2 pupils investigated the human features of the locality and Year 6 shared group study skills and became impressively involved in their own learning by demonstrating promising personal and social skills. There was evidence of decision-making, with pupils thriving in their response to greater challenges. In the two history lessons seen, teaching was at least good. It was very good when pupils became enthusiastic

amateur archaeologists and 'dug-up' pottery, which illustrated life in ancient Greece. Pupils enjoy their experiences in geography and history. They enjoy each other's company and collaborate well when working together. Their very good behaviour and the effort they give contribute well to the quality of their learning.

162. The time available for geography and history limits the development of skills term on term and year on year. Often there is little written evidence to verify the quality of teaching and learning. Although long- term planning, and the use of national guidelines are now used for both subjects, there is still a need to monitor carefully. For example the organisation in Years 4 and 5 results in a gap of almost twelve months in the promotion of knowledge and understanding. There are not enough history lessons in the autumn term in Year 6.

163. There are good links with other subjects, especially English, mathematics and art. Questioning is used increasingly well to promote valuable opportunities to develop speaking and social skills. There are good examples of note taking and non-narrative writing, which have enabled pupils to extend their writing skills. 'Florence Nightingale' writes home to share her findings in the hospital in Scutari; pupils in Year 3 share their findings in the Roman baths; and pupils describe effectively the rainforest which is 'a spectacular place full of amazing plants and animals'. Numeracy skills are also promoted well. Scales and co-ordinates develop mapping skills; bar charts record temperatures; and time lines are used to record Tudor monarchs. Computer technology is used effectively in Year 5 to plead for the life of Ann Boleyn, 'You should cherish her forever' and, 'to behead your wife is evil, wicked and bloodthirsty'.

164. Geography and history contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are learning to appreciate the influences of their rich industrial heritage and are forming and sharing beliefs and values of different societies. Younger pupils are beginning to form opinions about what they like and dislike in their locality, and by the age of 11 pupils have considered pollution, disasters and the conservation of the rainforests.

165. The recent decision to give subject leaders an overview of geography and history throughout the school should prove significant. Both co-ordinators are developing management skills. They handle a budget and manage the satisfactory range and quality of resources well. A closer monitoring of planning and pupils' books by one person will help to remove the inconsistencies evident in teaching and learning during the inspection. At present, subject leaders are not able to contribute to raising of standards by observing lessons but both have begun to produce a folder of work representative of the minimum standards required at each age group.

166. Both co-ordinators have intentions to introduce manageable strategies to assess and record what pupils know, understand and can do. They plan to create stronger links across the curriculum; match the levels of challenge to different ability groups more closely; and improve the use of ICT to promote research and study skills. They are well placed to build on the strengths in teaching and learning which were evident during the inspection, and to contribute to the raising of standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

167. Standards of attainment are lower than those expected nationally at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Not all pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 are severely restricted in their learning and access to the curriculum as a result of insufficient resources being available to them. Progress in Years 3 to 6, where pupils have access to the school's computer suite, is currently satisfactory. There are a number of weaknesses in the school's provision for ICT, which are having a negative impact on the standards achieved by pupils

and the quality of education. As a result of theft, one Year 2 class does not currently have a computer and the other Year 2 class computer, offers a limited range of programs. Although there is some distance between the Year 2 classes and the school computer suite, this does not seem a sufficient reason for not providing these pupils with access to the suite. The school would acknowledge its shortcomings and the development needs of the subject are recognised in the current school development plan. The future improvement of the school site is also likely to contribute to an improvement in resources but this might not occur until September 2004. Currently, the ratio of computers to pupils in the school is well below the average found nationally.

168. Pupils in Year 2 understand the use of the mouse and keyboard but are unable to develop basic technological skills at an appropriate rate and frequency. Discussions with Year 2 pupils indicated that the opportunities they have had to work with computers is not the same as found in most other schools. For example, very few Year 2 pupils could remember anything that they had used the computer for in Year 1 and identified undertaking some art work and counting up to 50 in fives as their Year 2 work on the computer. Some talked confidently about writing fairy stories whilst others had not been given this experience. The pupils were not confident about discussing entering, saving and retrieving work and could not recall using control technology to investigate real or imaginary situations. The pupils who often talked most confidently about ICT were those who had access to computers at home and could use the Internet with their parents.

169. The pupils in Year 6 talked more confidently about the subject but their knowledge and experiences are not quite at the level one would find in the majority of schools. This is likely to be the result of weaknesses in past curriculum provision. They have used the computer to write letters to children and their former teacher who now lives in America. The pupils have made graphs, worked with spreadsheets and understand phrases such as 'cut and paste'. They use the Internet to research information but have not sent e-mails. Their knowledge of multimedia presentations is limited, as is their understanding of technical vocabulary such as 'hyperlink' and they could not identify any work where they have controlled processes by producing simple procedures.

170. Insufficient lessons were observed during the inspection to judge the quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2. However it should be made clear that the below average standards found in Year 2 are not the result of poor teaching but inadequate resources. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall. Pupils in these year groups have access to the school computer suite that is in the same room as a library, is very cramped and on a sunny day, can be very hot. However, it is better than nothing and there are no computers in the Year 3 to 6 classrooms so it is very difficult to promote the use of ICT through other subjects except in the computer suite. Year 3 pupils were observed using a program that supported their learning in music, whilst Year 5 pupils were producing word- processed documents for history and religious education.

171. The pupils are enthusiastic about ICT and work well together. They manage the cramped and hot conditions of the suite well and the subject contributes effectively to their social development. The main area for development in teaching is providing work that is appropriate for the wide range of ability and experience found in all classes. Some teachers manage this more effectively than others. In lessons where pupils find activities unchallenging, too much time is wasted as higher attaining pupils finish activities quickly and then wait for the next part of the lesson. Teachers could make better use of the suite by positioning groups of pupils more thoughtfully. This would allow them better access to those pupils who need more support rather than having to move to all parts of the suite. Not all teachers are confident in their subject knowledge.

172. The management of the subject has been unsatisfactory. There have been recruitment difficulties and the school has only recently appointed a subject co-ordinator, who starts the post at the beginning of next term. There is not a whole school policy for the subject and although a curriculum plan is in place some of the lessons observed during the inspection did not reflect the topics indicated on the plan. There are no assessment procedures. The school is part of a consortium of schools who are working together to raise standards and the quality of education. A feature of this initiative is to raise standards and accessibility for pupils and this is likely to have a positive impact in the future in terms of providing extra resources and improving staff expertise.

MUSIC

173. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in singing are average and progress is satisfactory. There is too little evidence to make a judgement on the standards reached overall in music or the progress that pupils make by the end of Year 2. Standards achieved by the end of Year 6 are below the expected level. This is because pupils have had too few opportunities to develop the composing and appraising element of music. In addition they have a limited understanding of subject vocabulary or terms associated with music and the work of famous composers. Progress in these elements of music is unsatisfactory. Judgements were made from a limited amount of lesson observations, and additional evidence was gained through listening to pupils sing in assemblies and discussions with teachers and pupils.

174. Whilst there is too little evidence to make an overall judgement in music, in the lessons seen in Years 2, 3 and 5, teaching was satisfactory. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge that results in instructions being clear and pupils knowing what is expected from them. Activities were interestingly thought out which resulted in pupils concentrating well, showing interest and enthusiasm in the subject and working well together. Pupils in Year 2 looked at musical patterns and matched them successfully to the song they sang. A good feature in this lesson was when the teacher used clear prompt cards and a few pupils to reinforce the lesson aims. However, in Year 5 teachers expected pupils to listen to the work of others and develop their own melodies and opportunities were missed when they were not expected to evaluate their work. In addition pupils were not able to record their efforts after developing melodies because there were no pencils in the music room. Behaviour was good in all lessons and pupils concentrated satisfactorily although at times in Year 5 they were too noisy and then others had difficulty listening. In Year 3 pupils learnt the rhythm of a Jamaican song and use body parts to beat out the rhythm. They did this showing enthusiasm and enjoyment and a satisfactory idea of 'beat'. However the teacher missed opportunities to develop cultural awareness and geographical skills by not explaining where the song came from.

175. Singing throughout the school is satisfactory and sometimes good during assemblies. Pupils sing tunefully and with enjoyment. Discussions with pupils in Year 6 clearly show their limited knowledge of the composing and appraising element of the music curriculum. A few are muddled between composers and artists and they say they have had few opportunities to make their own music or listen to famous pieces of music. Few could recall the name of a famous composer. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to promote music better during assemblies and in the classrooms where there are few music displays. However a lovely display was seen in a Year 5 class where art and design had been linked to music as the pupils had drawn musical instruments.

176. The subject is led satisfactorily. The co-ordinator has recently introduced new guidelines but these have not been in place long enough to affect standards, in particular at the top of the school. There is a good range of musical instruments to support the subject

and the co-ordinator has begun to organise them more effectively so that they are easier for adults and children to access. There is a spacious music room but the whole school does not consistently use this. Music specialists come in weekly from the local education authority and work with individual classes and give pupils the opportunity to play a musical instrument such as the violin. The co-ordinator is aware that assessment and monitoring systems are under developed in music. There is little evidence of pupils using ICT, or literacy and numeracy skills to support the music curriculum and there are no extra curricular activities to promote the subject. The subject does support pupils' social development satisfactorily, but there is little evidence of it developing pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

177. Standards at the age of seven and eleven are average for the age of the pupils. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language make good progress and achieve what is expected of them. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. It is not possible to make comparisons with previous standards. Whilst it was not possible to observe swimming, games or athletic activities, these are organised appropriately. In the lower junior classes pupils take part in swimming lessons and most achieve at least the expected 25 metres by the end of these sessions. However, parents have expressed a wish that these lessons should take place over a greater period of time, to enable skills to rise to a higher level.

178. By the end of Year 2, pupils have made good progress in developing their skills and knowledge in gymnastic activities, with most having a good understanding of the value of a warm-up before engaging in physical activity. In both Year 2 classes pupils show they know some of the effects of physical exercise on the body, such as their increased heart beat. In parallel lessons that ensure the pupils have equal access to an appropriate curriculum, the pupils make good progress in combining travelling actions with specific body movements in order to perform a simple sequence with a clear beginning and end. Most pupils demonstrate appropriate body control and co-ordination and due attention to safety when making spinning, twisting and curling movements. Pupils enjoy these activities and try hard to improve their performance, with several being keen to be chosen to demonstrate their sequences to the rest of the class. Some pupils are developing the ability to be self-critical and identify how they could improve their performance.

179. By the end of Year 6 pupils are able to create and perform reasonably fluent gymnastic sequences on the floor and when using apparatus. They are able to include variation in level, speed and direction in their work. The oldest pupils have a particularly keen awareness of the safety issues of working in an extremely crowded school hall where with the large apparatus in use safety is of paramount importance. Pupils use the equipment with care and are very mindful of others working in close proximity.

180. Pupils also make progress in developing dance skills. In Year 5 pupils made good progress when working in groups. They practised sequences to different pieces of music linked to a science topic on solids, liquids and gases. Pupils were able to interpret the quick jerky beat of the 'solids' music in their mechanical and jerky movements and contrast these with slower more flowing movements for the 'liquids' section of their dance. In Year 4 pupils made satisfactory progress when interpreting music for a 'cat dance' to the music of 'The Jellicle Cat'. With reasonable skill pupils are able to develop an aesthetic interpretation including through gesture.

181. Pupils of all ages and abilities make good overall progress as they move through the school because the quality of teaching is good. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and make strong cross-curricular links with other subjects including English and

science. Teachers plan activities carefully and make clear to pupils what is expected of them both in their behaviour and performance. All staff manage pupils well, which ensures lessons are conducted in a purposeful manner. Because of this virtually all pupils develop positive attitudes to their learning and most try hard. Staff use praise well to encourage them to try even harder. This includes some initially reluctant Year 5 boys in a dance activity who through gentle coaxing achieved what was expected of them.

182. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The recently appointed co-ordinator has made a good start by reviewing and updating the scheme of work to ensure that this meets current requirements. However, there is currently no opportunity for him to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and this makes it particularly difficult to know what standards are like in other parts of the school. Assessment is at a very early and informal stage and together with developing a programme of monitoring, is an area for improvement. Extra-curricular activities including football and basketball are satisfactory, with plans to extend these further. The school is satisfactorily resourced. However, there are concerns over the use of the school hall by older pupils. This is very crowded and creates health and safety concerns when pupils work in close proximity to others. This restricts the type of activity possible in some gymnastics lessons, where higher order skills would be difficult to teach.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

183. At the age of seven years standards in pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious education are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. By the time pupils are 11 their attainment is broadly in line with expectations. All pupils make steady progress, with examples of some good progress in several year groups.

184. The quality of teaching was predominantly good in Years 1 and 2 and never less than sound in the juniors during the week of inspection. Lessons are planned to ensure that pupils learn about religion but also learn from their studies by applying messages to their own lives. Children are expected to think for themselves and to make connections between stories and their everyday lives. As a consequence pupils in Year 2 talk with confidence about the concepts of fairness and forgiveness, applying the lessons drawn from the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Labourers in the Vineyard to their personal experiences. Year 1 pupils know that forgiveness requires a change of attitude and apply the idea to their own actions. For example one pupil recalls smacking her sister but realised that forgiveness demanded a change in attitude.

185. Teachers use a variety of interesting methods to enthuse pupils. Following up a visit to the local church pupils studied photographs taken in the church when their teacher was baptised. They were fascinated to learn that adult baptism involved full immersion in water. Through their role-play of the baptism of Jesus Christ and comparison with the present day christening ceremony, they began to develop a greater understanding of different initiation observances. Older pupils study the trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ and link the personalities involved and the chain of events to 'rules and authority' in their own lives. Year 6 pupils talk about the Easter story and recognise that Jesus Christ as a leader still inspires people.

186. Pupils respond well to the teachers' expectations to concentrate on what they have been asked to do, working hard in lessons to further their learning. They generally take pride in presenting their work, enjoying opportunities to use a variety of approaches. However, this is inconsistent across the school and the best work is seen in Years 3, 5 and 6. Many pupils record their work on specifically designed worksheets and, although this is a useful tool, it is important that pupils are given opportunities from Year 1 to develop their presentational skills

by recording work in their own words. Lessons, teachers' plans and the work seen on display and in pupils' books show that generally teachers provide a balanced religious education programme based on good subject knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated and make similar progress to their peers. This is generally the same for pupils who have English as an additional language.

187. The subject is appropriate in promoting aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and in raising awareness of different customs and beliefs. Assemblies make a good contribution to religious education. Displays around the school represent different faiths. However, pupils have few opportunities to visit different places of worship and there are few visits by members of different faiths.

188. The management of the subject is satisfactory and priorities for development are clear and focused. Resources are satisfactory and there are books and artefacts available to support the different religions studied.