

INSPECTION REPORT

BIRCHFIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Fallowfield

Manchester

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 130380

Headteacher: Mrs. Jean Rule

Reporting inspector: Mrs. Jean Harding
21378

Dates of inspection: 8 - 11 July 2002

Inspection number: 250200

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:	4 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Lytham Road, Fallowfield, Manchester
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. Fadima Zubairu
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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16249	Mrs. Sheelagh Barnes	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage of learning	Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development
12301	Mrs. Joan Boden	Team inspector	Science Design and technology	
20326	Mr. Peter Clark	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education	
11402	Dr. Tom Gorman	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
21277	Mr. Steve Hill	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
25577	Mr. Bill Jefferson	Team inspector	History Physical education	Curricular provision
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a school for boys and girls from 4 - 11 years of age. There are 633 pupils on roll, including 40 full-time and 10 part-time children in the nursery. The school is considerably bigger than average size for primary schools. Most pupils are of non-white ethnic origin and 87 per cent speak English as an additional language, or are at an early stage of English language acquisition; this is a very high percentage. About half of these pupils are supported by special tuition and funding. There are a few refugees and asylum seekers. About 25 per cent of pupils join and leave the school during the year, and a significant number of them are taken on long holidays in their family's country of origin during the school year.

Twelve per cent of pupils are on the special educational needs register; this is below the national average; most have difficulties with their learning. Seven pupils (1 per cent) have a statement of special educational needs, which is average. A few pupils at Key Stage 1 do not do the National Curriculum tests as they are newly arrived in this country and speak no English. About 35 per cent per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals; this is above average. The school is situated in an inner city estate of mainly rented housing and there are many indicators of social deprivation. The majority of pupils' families are at the bottom end of the socio-economic range. Two pupils are looked after by people other than their own families.

Most pupils have had pre-school educational experience within the school's own nursery. Attainment on entry to the reception class is mostly much lower than expected, with many children having some language delay. Attainment on entry for pupils who join the school after the age of five is often low as they speak little English and have not had the usual educational experiences. The school is part of the 'Excellence in Cities' initiative, and this provides extra money and support for individual pupils' particular learning needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school that is providing well for its pupils under difficult circumstances. Standards of attainment are generally below national averages and expectations, but most pupils achieve well considering their language difficulties and their attainment on entry. Levels of attendance are poor and this has a negative effect on standards. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and behave well. The curriculum provided is good overall, but when standards are lower than expected, in subjects other than English, this is often due to the unsatisfactory planning of the work. Provision for pupils using English as an additional language is good, as is that for pupils with special educational needs, and so these pupils make particularly good progress in their learning. The teaching is good overall and very good in the nursery. The headteacher has established clear educational direction. The leadership is good overall, but the management is only satisfactory and this constrains further development of the school. A supportive ethos has been set and the school is racially harmonious. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Literacy and numeracy are taught well and so pupils make at least satisfactory progress and more able pupils, especially those whose education has been continuous, achieve well in English and mathematics.
- The provision in the nursery is very good and so children make very good progress in their learning.
- All groups of pupils in the school, whatever their racial or cultural background or abilities, make at least satisfactory progress, and often achievement is good for pupils using English as an additional language, those with special educational needs, and more able pupils.
- Pupils' learning is good because the teaching is good, especially of basic skills.
- Due to the ethos set, and the good overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils' attitudes to school are very good, and their behaviour and personal development are good.
- A rich curriculum is provided, including very good extra-curricular activities, and this provides well for pupils' creative development, and so standards in art and design, and in musical performance, are high.

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment in science; they are too low, mostly due to the unsatisfactory curriculum.
- Pupils' attendance; it is poor and this is having a seriously damaging effect on their learning.
- The management of the curriculum.
- The use of some staff, including senior staff, which is inefficient.
- The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment in non-core subjects and in religious education, which are unsatisfactory and sometimes poor.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1998, when it received a generally favourable report. Since then it has made satisfactory improvements overall. The school was required to raise pupils' standards of attainment in English and in information and communication technology, and this it has clearly done. However, attainment in science has not been improved, as the subject has not been organised properly. Similarly, there has been very little improvement to the management of the curriculum, which was a Key Issue last time, and this is hampering the development of many subjects and also the raising of standards of attainment in those subjects. There have been improvements to assessment in English and mathematics, and higher attaining pupils are now sufficiently challenged in these subjects, but assessment in other subjects is still at best unsatisfactory. Most aspects of the school are essentially the same as they were four years ago, but attendance has declined and this is of serious concern. However, the teaching has improved and this is a key factor in the improvement in pupils' standards of English and mathematics. The leadership and management are of the same quality; the rôles of subject co-ordinators are still under-developed. Resources for information and communication technology have improved and, consequently, standards in this subject are much higher than they were. However, pupils' attainment in science, geography, music and religious education have deteriorated due to the unsatisfactory management of the curriculum. Lack of detailed planning means that pupils do not all have equal opportunities to curricular provision. The school gives better value for money than it did in 1998. The governors are aware of many things that need improving, but not all. There is satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

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	
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	E	E	D
Mathematics	D	E	E	C
Science	E	E	E	D

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

The trends in pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2 since the previous inspection have been rising in line with national trends. There are no national comparisons for this year's tests as yet available, but the grades obtained in the 2002 National Curriculum tests are 51 per cent of pupils attaining the required grade in English (a rise of 2 per cent), 64 per cent in mathematics (a highly significant rise of 11 per cent), and 60 per cent of pupils attaining the required grade in science (a fall of 5 per cent). Comparisons between year groups over time are not always relevant due to the mobility of pupils. Lower than average attainment in English is to be expected, given the very low level of English language as pupils join the school, but pupils' achievement in English is sound overall. At Key Stage 2 achievement in mathematics is satisfactory, but in science it is not good enough. In design and technology, physical education and history pupils' attainment, by the end of Year 6, is in line with national expectations. In information and communication technology, music, geography and religious education it is below expectations. In science attainment is

well below expectations, especially in the area of investigations. In art and design pupils' attainment is above the level expected.

Children join the school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are well below those expected. They achieve very well in the nursery and well in the reception classes, especially in personal and social development and reading. Pupils achieve well through Key Stage 1 and, by the time they join Year 3, standards in English are below average but in science they are well below average. In mathematics pupils' attainment is average. In design and technology, information and communication technology, history, physical education, art and design, geography and religious education standards are in line with national expectations, and pupils often make good progress. No firm judgement can be made of overall standards in music as only singing was seen, and that was good, but indications are that standards are as expected.

Pupils' attainment is constrained by their attendance. Those pupils whose attendance record is poor, and especially those who go on extended holidays to their family's country of origin, do not make the progress of which many are capable, due to the lack of continuity of their education. This also brings down the school's overall grades in the national tests. The situation is especially serious for those younger pupils who are only just getting to grips with the English language; test results at the end of Key Stage 1 are markedly affected by pupils' poor attendance.

Pupils generally make sound use of their key skills of learning such as communication, number and information technology. Most pupils make at least satisfactory progress in their learning, and often progress is good for pupils who have had continuity in their education at the school. Progress is especially good for pupils using English as an additional language, refugees and asylum seekers, and those with special educational needs, particularly those with statements of special educational needs. More able pupils also make good progress, as do gifted pupils. There are some differences in the test results of boys and girls; girls do not do as well in tests as girls nationally; but there were no gender differences in attainment observed during the inspection. Pupils from all racial groups make at least satisfactory progress. The overall targets set for pupils to achieve in English and mathematics are appropriate and the school is likely to attain them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils love to go to school and try hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. It is very good in the classrooms and good at other times. Pupils are kind to each other. There have been few exclusions and very little bullying.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships between pupils, pupils and staff are good, and pupils love to take responsibility. Personal development in the nursery is very good.
Attendance	Poor. A significant number of pupils are frequently absent for no good reason, extended holidays are taken, and punctuality is unsatisfactory for many pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal and social development are strengths of the school. The low rates of attendance and lack of punctuality are having a damaging impact on pupils' attainment.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching has been consistently good over time. Almost all the teaching observed was at least satisfactory, most of it was good and a high percentage was very good. A few lessons were observed that were unsatisfactory; this was due to the unsatisfactory nature of the curriculum and teachers' own lack of expertise with the subject. The teaching in the nursery is consistently of very high quality. There is little difference in the quality of teaching between other year-groups, but some differences between classes in the same year-group, due to the quality of the planning of the subjects and teachers' own knowledge and understanding. Good teaching was observed in all classes. Staff are technically competent to teach basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and information technology. A major strength in the teaching is the quality of staff's management of pupils; all insist on high standards of behaviour. A weakness lies in the use of time, which is sometimes wasted, and in using support staff and information and communication technology. Homework is satisfactory overall, but too variable. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, history at Key Stage 2, physical education and art and design. It is also good for pupils who use English as an additional language and for those with special educational needs. Some teachers lack knowledge and understanding in science, art and design, geography, and music and this affects standards.

Pupils' learning is good. Pupils acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills and apply effort to their work. Although they work well generally, they could work faster with more encouragement from staff. They show genuine interest in their work and concentrate well. They do not think for themselves well enough, as they are not always encouraged to do so, especially in science. Pupils mostly know what they are doing but not always what to do to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	It is very broad and highly relevant, but not balanced. Some subjects have too little emphasis. The 'taught time' for pupils at Key Stage 2 is below that recommended. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage ¹ is good. There is a very good range of activities outside the classrooms.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Much time, staffing and money is devoted to this, and the school benefits from having high quality input from the local education authority.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. There are well-trained staff to give good support to pupils at all stages of English language development. Procedures are thorough and the local education authority's staff are appropriately involved.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall but very good for pupils' cultural development; there is a very good multi-cultural approach. Provision is satisfactory for spiritual development, but religious education makes too little contribution to this. Many good things are happening, but are unplanned and unrecorded.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good procedures for care and welfare, but Child Protection procedures are not good enough. There are very good procedures to monitor and eliminate oppressive behaviour. Assessment in English and mathematics is good, but for most other subjects it does not exist and this is poor.

¹ The Foundation Stage applies to children from the age of three to the end of the reception year.

Pupils do not have equal opportunities to the full range of activities on offer as different classes in the same year-group sometimes study different topics. There is no established programme to cover education in personal and social issues. There is an effective emphasis on the performing arts. There are very good relationships with the community and partner institutions which have a highly beneficial effect on pupils' learning. This is a caring school with a family atmosphere that is appreciated by pupils and their parents and carers. The school's links with parents are effective but could be better if parents were given more information about the curriculum and their children's progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership is good overall and management is satisfactory overall. The headteacher sets clear educational direction. The management of the deputy headteachers is ineffective and most curriculum co-ordinators do not have the authority to manage their subjects effectively. There is insufficient delegation and this is inefficient.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors mostly do that which they should and statutory requirements are generally met. The chair is effective.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The managers know the strengths of the school and some of the weaknesses, but not all. Effective evaluation is not assured as success criteria are not set and there is not a culture of constructive self-criticism, or peer evaluation.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall. Grants are used well, but some resources, such as the senior staff, support staff, the classroom computers and the library are not used efficiently. Time is sometimes wasted. The school development plan covers too short a time and, although finances are administered well, the budget is not well enough linked to the planning for improvement.

There is a satisfactory number of teachers, and plenty of support staff; the staff are well qualified and experienced. Resources are generally good except for those for science and geography. The accommodation is just satisfactory and there are appropriate plans for building a new nursery and to refurbish other areas. The management of Key Stages 1 and 2, and that of the overall curriculum and many subjects, is unsatisfactory, and inhibits pupils' attainment. This is because there are too few management systems and structures in place to ensure compliance and conformity.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school; • They feel that their children make good progress; • They are comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem; • They feel that the school is well led and managed; • They feel that their children are helped to become mature and responsible; • Most think that behaviour is good; • They feel that staff work hard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant number are unhappy about the amount of homework; • Some feel that they are not well enough informed about what their child is doing; • Many would like more extra-curricular activities; • A very small minority feel that the school does not act on their legitimate concerns; • A very small minority think that the toilets are unacceptable; • A very small minority think that school dinners are unsatisfactory.

Most parents think highly of the school and inspectors agree with most of their positive views. However, the management is only satisfactory, and should be better. Mostly inspectors disagree with the criticisms, but there is a degree of truth in some of them. Homework is inconsistent, and parents could be better informed, especially in pupils' annual reports. Some toilets are rather smelly and the school knows this. However, the school dinners are some of the best that inspectors have ever seen, and the range and take-up of extra-curricular activities are very good. Governors and staff are happy to discuss grievances with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The attainment of children on entry to the nursery is well below the levels usually seen for four year-olds. They make good progress in the short time that they spend in the nursery, especially in language development. Attainment on entry to the reception classes is lower than expected in the areas of development measured. The progress of children in the reception class is at least satisfactory and usually good, but when they join Key Stage 1, almost all are still working at levels below those expected for five-year-olds, due to the influence of their restricted language. However, they do make good progress in personal, social and emotional development and in their reading, and this helps them greatly in other curriculum areas. The progress of children through the nursery and the reception classes is better than it was reported to be at the inspection in 1998, although their attainment on entry to Year 1 is lower in mathematical and creative development as their English difficulties are more marked.
2. National Curriculum test results for Key Stage 1 for 2001 show pupils attained very low grades for reading, writing and for mathematics. The pupils achieved well below expected grades for science and below expected levels of speaking and listening, as assessed by the teachers. The percentages of pupils in Year 2 achieving higher grades was well below average in reading and mathematics and about average in writing. In comparison with schools that admit pupils from similar backgrounds, results are well below average for reading, writing, and mathematics. Account must be taken of the negative influence of pupils' attendance on the progress in learning and the school's National Curriculum test grades. Extended holidays to their family's country of origin affect pupils' achievement to a very great extent, especially their English. Since the previous inspection in 1998, pupils' achievements at Key Stage 1 have been variable due to the different attainment on entry of the cohorts as well as their attendance. The previous inspection stated that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was in line with national averages in mathematics and science, and below average in English.
3. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress in most subjects through Key Stage 1, but not in science, as they have not been taught enough, especially about investigations. Progress in learning to read and write is satisfactory, and is the result of concentrated work on these skills. Pupils' achievement in speaking and listening is good. The results of the National Curriculum tests, from 1998 to 2001 show that standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics were at best well below average. However, pupils' grades for this year (2002) show a great improvement in the percentages of pupils attaining the expected level. Seventy two per cent of pupils gained at least the expected level in reading, compared with 50 per cent last year; 83 per cent in writing, compared with 47 per cent; and 87 per cent in mathematics compared with 54 per cent in 2001. This is a very good improvement and reflects good teaching, an improved curriculum and better attendance for some pupils. Unconfirmed figures suggest that the grades for Birchfields pupils at Key Stage 1 are around the average grades in writing, spelling and mathematics, but below average in reading. This is, nevertheless, good progress when considering the pupils' attainment on entry to the school. Progress has been very good, especially, in writing and mathematics.
4. Evidence about Key Stage 1 gathered during the inspection, including observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and interviews with pupils, shows that pupils attain levels in most non-core subjects that are at least in line with national expectations and averages. Standards of speaking, listening, reading and writing are below average, but improving. Standards of attainment in mathematics are as expected, and this reflects the good progress made through the key stage. Attainment in science is well below expectations, due to the curriculum and pupils' language difficulties. The standards pupils attain in design and technology, information and communication technology, physical education, art and design, history, and geography are as expected. Standards and progress in religious education are generally in line with the requirements of the locally

Agreed Syllabus. No overall judgement can be made about attainment in music, as no lessons or performance were seen; but performance in singing is good and records of other work show that pupils are given an appropriate range of experiences. Standards and achievements at Key Stage 1 are about the same as those found at the 1998 inspection, with higher standards in information and communication technology and history and lower attainment in science and art and design. The variation in the National Curriculum tests results between years reflects the different abilities of the different year-groups, and pupils' rates of attendance, as well as the improved teaching.

5. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment in most subjects are below national expectations and averages, as the effect of absences and the continuing difficulties with English continue, but also due to the curriculum provided in some subjects. In speaking, listening, reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology standards are lower than expected, but are rising due to the improving progress of most pupils. However, progress in learning in geography and religious education has been unsatisfactory and so pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 is lower than it should be, as they have not had enough appropriate teaching in these subjects. Attainment in science is well below expectations as the curriculum has not been good enough. Pupils' attainment in design and technology, physical education, and history is in line with national expectations and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Attainment in music is below the usual expectations as pupils have not been taught enough of some of the strands of the National Curriculum; however, in singing and performance many pupils attainment is high. Due to good progress through the key stage, and the wide range of techniques and media that they have used, pupils' attainment in art and design is high.
6. The National Curriculum test results at Key Stage 1 for 1998, the year of the previous inspection, showed grades that were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. These pupils are now in Year 6 and are working at below average levels in these subjects and so they have made good progress through Key Stage 2. Progress in learning in reading and writing, through the school, has been at least satisfactory due to the quality of the teaching, and a great deal of practice. Pupils' progress through the school in mathematics has often been good, especially at Key Stage 1. Progress in science has been unsatisfactory, due to the unsatisfactory curriculum.
7. The results of the National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 2 for the last four years show fluctuating grades, dependent on the ability of each cohort of pupils, and, most especially, the rates of attendance. Overall, the trend in attainment has been in line with the national trend. The National Curriculum test results for the current year (2002), for which there are no national comparisons yet available, show a vast improvement at Key Stage 1 and some improvement at Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics, where a significant higher percentage of pupils achieved the required grade than has been the case since 1998.
8. The National Curriculum test results at the end of Key Stage 2 for English, mathematics and science in 2001 show that, overall, pupils attained well below the national average level in English, mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools results were below average for English and science, and average for mathematics. However, the comparisons over time are, also, not really valid, as the school's grades are more than usually affected by the composition of each year-group, in terms of their language skills, as well as their abilities, and the amount of time that pupils have been absent. The amount of movement of pupils in and out of the school has also affected grades and the comparisons over time. Surprisingly, the movement in and out of school and the poor attendance of some pupils, do not affect the attainment of other pupils, as the staff make sure that they are not disadvantaged. Those pupils whose education has been continuous make better progress than other pupils. Most parents feel that their children are making good progress.
9. Across the school pupils make sound use of their learned communication and numeracy skills in other subjects. They make insufficient use of their skills in information and communications technology. Pupils are able to work with others well, they are acquiring more skills in deciding how to improve their performance and to solve problems, especially in design and technology and

information technology; this helps them in all subjects. Their thinking skills are improving but often their evaluation skills are weak as the methods of self-assessment are not always taught.

10. Pupils with special educational needs at the school make at least satisfactory progress in learning, and often it is good, especially in relation to targets relating to literacy. This is the result of good extra provision, including withdrawal from their classes for literacy and the teaching of the support assistants. Pupils with statements of special educational needs, especially those who might be at special schools, or who have been reintegrated from these schools, usually make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in their own classes, but the work is not always planned with their specific needs in mind, and so their achievements are not consistently as good as they could be. Mostly, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in subjects other than English and mathematics, but this could be better if work was targeted more specifically, and information and communication technology was used more.
11. Pupils who use English as an additional language make good progress, and for some it is very good. This good progress is not dependent on their first language. The progress that these pupils make is very dependent on the continuity of provision and this is compromised by any long-term absences. Pupils using English as an additional language make good progress, especially, in speaking, reading and writing, and this helps their achievements in other subjects. Pupils from all cultural backgrounds, whatever their religion or country of origin make the same progress; this is not always the case for pupils whose families come from some countries in the Indian sub-continent. Pupils who have arrived at the school as refugees or as asylum seekers make good progress and sometimes progress is very good.
12. The school analyses tests for gender influences. No significant differences are apparent in the work seen, but in the national tests girls often do not do as well as girls do nationally and is the result of cultural differences; last year's English and science results were affected by under-performance of girls. During the inspection there was no observable difference in the attainment or progress of boys and girls in any subject; most made appropriate progress. Pupils of higher attainment are sufficiently challenged, and so do well; most are working at high enough levels in the National Curriculum programmes of study, but this is dependent on the rigour of the planning for some subjects. The school has identified more able pupils, and a few who are gifted or talented. These pupils achieve well.
13. The school has set targets for overall improvement in pupils' attainment in English and mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 for this year and next. The target of 61 per cent to attain the required level for English was not attained this year, but the 68 per cent target for mathematics was missed by an acceptable 4 per cent. The targets for science are not likely to be met without more focussed teaching in Year 6, and more emphasis on scientific investigations, which are not tested nationally. The headteacher has started to keep a check on the improvements in pupils' performance from the end of Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2, so that staff know if any pupil is not doing as well as he or she could. Monitoring takes account of gender and prior attainment, but only recently is achievement compared with attendance and this is an area for further development. Teachers are mostly aware of the factors that have compromised the attainment of pupils, and are trying to work with parents to improve the poor attendance, which is a major factor in constraining pupils' higher attainment, especially at Key Stage 1.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and to their work. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when they were judged to be good. Boys and girls of all ages and from all groups, including those with English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs, take part in lessons and extra-curricular activities with energetic enthusiasm. They are keen to learn and listen to their teachers and other adults with polite concentration. This was

particularly evident when a class who had been playing football during lunch-time settled back to work in a history lesson with remarkable speed and minimal fuss at the start of the afternoon session.

15. Children in the nursery and in the reception classes are happy coming to school and confidently separate from their parents and carers. All pupils pay good attention to what they are told and settle to their work happily. Pupils are interested in lessons and try to do their best at all times. Even very young children in the nursery sustain concentration for quite long periods. Pupils all work well, together or on their own, as their teachers instruct.
16. Behaviour throughout the school is good. The high standards noted at the time of the previous inspection have been effectively maintained. Pupils follow the school rules consistently. They know what is expected of them and they comply with these high expectations. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong, and are beginning to understand and respect the views of others. They generally think through the consequences of their actions and make responsible judgements, such as whether they are likely to be expected to be indoors or out in inclement weather.
17. Pupils' personal development is good. Children in the nursery are given very good opportunities to take responsibility and, as a consequence attain high levels of independence. They help in the day-to-day organisation and look after themselves and their friends effectively. For example, they take care to put on aprons before painting or playing in the water and tidy away after sessions. If their teacher is delayed in another part of the room a child will assume responsibility for the group and "read" them a story or encourage the others to wait quietly, perhaps singing a song or rhyme.
18. Pupils throughout the school relate well to each other irrespective of their age, attainment or ethnic group. They work together well and develop a feeling of being part of the school community. They represent their class or their school with pride, as when they play against other schools in football or when they took part in rehearsals for the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games. Pupils accept that there are times when they need to listen to the advice of those in authority. They know that they have a duty to work hard and to do their best. Some older pupils volunteer to help around the school, such as in the dining hall at lunch-time, or helping their teachers to prepare the classroom for the next lesson.
19. Relationships are good throughout the school. The high standards at the time of the previous inspection have been effectively maintained. As was noted in the previous report, boys and girls from all groups mix together well in the classroom and around the school and work together in harmony. Pupils relate well to each other and to adults, whom they approach in an easy, friendly manner. Because of these good relationships, they work effectively together as part of a team, when required, and support the needs of others in their group, with consideration. They share views and opinions with others and resolve conflicts amicably, in the main. They show respect to their teachers, other adults and fellow pupils, and treat equipment and the school environment with appropriate consideration. The good behaviour of the pupils and the good relationships throughout the school, have a positive effect on the standards they attain.
20. Although attendance levels had been rising over the last three years, the latest figures show a decline. Attendance is very low in comparison with other schools, placing the school within the bottom five per cent of all schools in the country. Large numbers of pupils are absent for periods from 3 - 15 weeks, usually when they go with their parents on extended holidays. During this school year, in Year 1, nearly 20 per cent of pupils were taken on holidays averaging seven weeks, and in Year 2 about 18 per cent of pupils were away for an average of 10 weeks; this has had a great impact on the learning of these young pupils. The statistics are worse for Year 3, but better as pupils move up the school. In many cases pupils returning from a long holiday have a further period of absence because they are too ill to attend school. This is very unsatisfactory as such high levels of absence have a detrimental effect on the progress that these pupils make. The school tries to help by providing work for pupils to do whilst they are away, but much of this work

is not carried out. Another area of concern is the high number of pupils arriving after the end of registration. These latecomers often miss important parts of the lesson and disturb the education of other pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. The teaching is good. This appears to be an improvement since the previous inspection, although no overall judgement was made then. In the school overall 97 per cent of lessons observed were at least satisfactory, 70 per cent were good or better, 23 per cent were very good including one lesson that was excellent. Three lessons, three per cent, were unsatisfactory and this was due to the unsatisfactory planning of the curriculum and teachers' lack of confidence in the subject. The percentage of teaching that is of high quality is having a great impact on pupils' rising standards of attainment and is considerably higher than the very good teaching observed at the previous inspection, which was just six per cent. As a result of the good teaching pupils are acquiring secure skills and extending their knowledge and understanding of most subjects.
22. The teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall, but it is consistently very good in the nursery. About 80 per cent of lessons observed in these classes were good or better and 21 per cent were very good, including an outstanding lesson given by the nursery teacher and support staff. There has been good improvement in the standard of teaching in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. At that time teaching and learning was judged to be good in the nursery and satisfactory in reception. Teaching is currently very good in the nursery and children make very good progress in all areas of learning, and especially in their personal and social development. The teacher and support staff in the nursery work together very effectively to provide a high quality of education for all children. They plan together weekly, making good use of assessment to ensure that the work set is suitable for children of all levels of prior attainment and those for whom English is an additional language. The way that they work together to reinforce learning and vocabulary is a great strength of teaching of these very young children. In reception teaching is good overall and the teachers effectively build upon the very good start nursery children are given. Planning is generally good, but sometimes opportunities for classroom assistants to support learning are missed. As a consequence of this quality teaching in the Foundation Stage, boys and girls of all levels of attainment and from all groups, including those with English as an additional language, make good progress overall.
23. The teaching at Key Stage 1 is also good, although it is less consistent than that in the Foundation Stage as the planning and teamwork are not so good. Over 66 per cent of lessons seen were good or better and 15 per cent were very good. Two lessons (7 per cent) were unsatisfactory due to unsatisfactory planning; one of these was religious education. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 2 with similar inconsistencies as are found at Key Stage 1. Nearly 70 per cent of lessons observed were good or better and nearly 30 per cent were very good. One lesson (2 per cent), again religious education, was unsatisfactory. Good teaching was seen in all classes at both key stages. The school has fostered good relationships with teachers who come in on a temporary basis, either short or long-term supply teachers. These teachers also provide good quality lessons, and so pupils are not so disadvantaged as they might have been under other circumstances, when the regular teacher is away. The teaching is best in Year 6 and this has had a clear effect on pupils' National Curriculum test results and on their general development.
24. The teaching of English and mathematics is good. Pupils are taught in ability sets at Key Stage 2 for these subjects, and, as the planning is better pupils' learning is better. At Key Stage 2 about 70 per cent of pupils' learning was at least good in these subjects observed, and about 30 per cent was very good; this is having a highly beneficial effect on standards. There are clear differences in the teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics. The quality of the organisation of each subject has a direct influence on pupils' learning. When subjects are planned well, such as in physical education, art and design, and history at Key Stage 2, pupils' learning is better and their achievement goes up. Current teaching of information and communication technology is

satisfactory overall, although it is good when it takes place in the computer suite. The teaching of science is satisfactory overall; deficiencies in pupils' learning are due to deficiencies in the curriculum, although some teachers require further training. Few music lessons were observed, as they mostly take place at the end of the week, but evidence (or lack of it) points to the fact that a significant number of teachers do not feel comfortable teaching music. The teaching of music is good by the co-ordinator and visiting specialists, but the school knows that overall the teaching of music can only be satisfactory at best, as some staff have insufficient knowledge and understanding. The teaching of design and technology is satisfactory. Geography teaching is unsatisfactory as teachers do not have sufficient depth of knowledge and insufficient time is given to the subject. The teaching of religious education is satisfactory, but too little is done, and this is of concern, especially in a school that prides itself on its multi-faith ethos. The reason for the weaknesses lie in lack of proper co-ordination which allows teachers to select aspects of their own choice, and the lack of understanding of some of the faiths taught, by some staff.

25. The teaching of pupils using English as an additional language is good and this partly accounts for pupils' good progress in English. Teaching is enhanced by specialist staff giving particular language support, and also by other staff who take proper account of the needs and aspirations of all pupils. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, especially for pupils with the most marked needs, including pupils with statements. The teaching of pupils when they are withdrawn from their classes for specialist help, either in small groups, or individual, is generally good. Although pupils have sound support in their own classes, more progress could be made in subjects other than English and mathematics if suitable work was planned, appropriate to their needs, which would ensure reinforcement of their learning in other subjects. Pupils' individual learning plans are insufficiently used. This is an area for development for class teachers.
26. There are many strengths in the teaching, including staff's competence to teach the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Most teachers have at least satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach, but there are deficiencies in training in science, especially in Year 6 and in geography, art and design, and music. Most teachers plan effectively, setting clear objectives for the lesson. However, the programme given to the pupils in different classes in the same year-group rather depends on individual teachers' own interest in the subject and competence to teach it; this compromises equal opportunities for all pupils.
27. Staff's management of pupils is a great strength. The pupils' good behaviour and politeness are the result of staff giving sensitive but positive guidance during lessons. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and presentation of work. Visiting staff and parents commented on this very good class management by all staff. Because staff are demanding, pupils make good efforts to learn, and they sustain concentration; this is especially the case in the nursery.
28. A few lessons seen really challenged and inspired pupils. Examples include the history lesson in Year 6 about the changing rôle of women since World War II, and the lesson on Indian music, given by a visiting specialist for a group of pupils in Year 5. These lessons were well planned and given by teachers with a real love of their subjects. Pupils' learning was, accordingly, very good, and they took away from the lesson, ideas and skills which will be with them through the next part of their lives.
29. Most teachers use a wide range of resources effectively. Good use of the over-head projector is made in many classes. Some good quality worksheets were seen, but there is generally not an over-reliance on these, which is good. Information and communication technology is insufficiently planned into all lessons and this is a weakness in much of the teaching. Time is not always use effectively. Lessons, especially those first thing in the morning, take a long while to get started; parents bringing their children late does not help here. Support staff make a sound contribution to lessons, but these skilled and experienced people are not always used effectively. Too often they sit for a significant part of the lesson doing very little and this is an inefficient use of their time and expertise. Marking is satisfactory overall, it is least constructive in science. Most teachers make

adequate use of day-to-day assessments, but this could be better, especially if they used their support staff for on-the-spot recording. This is particularly the case in the reception classes and in Key Stage 1. The improvement in the evaluation of lessons, and of individual pupils' work, although satisfactory, could be better and would enhance pupils' ability to consider how well they have learned. In this aspect, the school has some way to go to improve pupils' learning.

30. Homework is an issue for a significant number of parents. Many would like their child to have more, and most would like it to be more regular. Homework is satisfactory overall, but this hides many differences between classes. It is set, but it is patchy. The amount and regularity depends on the whim, and organisation, of individual teachers, and this is unsatisfactory. The lack of checks on the timing and content of the homework are weaknesses which the key stage co-ordinators (the deputy headteachers) have not addressed.

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

31. The previous report stated that the curriculum was balanced, relevant and broadly based. Although there have been significant improvements in the schemes of work for some subjects, the overall curriculum is not as well planned as it could be, and in some year-groups it lacks balance. The school teaches all subjects of the National Curriculum and makes satisfactory provision for all of its pupils. By concentrating on raising standards in English and mathematics, the planned curriculum is very relevant to the pupils of Birchfield School. The development of art, singing, dance and drama adds a richness of which the school can be justly proud. A short course in French is taught to older pupils, using teachers from the local High School who have expertise; this enhances pupils' preparation for secondary education. Statutory requirements are met, including those for Foundation Stage children. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is good. Appropriate provision is made for religious education related to the locally Agreed Syllabus, but too little time is given to the subject in Year 6. Teachers endeavour to include all pupils in the activities relating to the curriculum that the school offers. However, management of the curriculum is an area for development. A significant proportion of prime teaching time is inappropriately used at the beginning of every morning. This is driven by the regular, late arrival of many pupils in all classes. With the inclusion of an afternoon playtime, the length of the teaching day for pupils in Key Stage 2 is less than the national recommendation, and this is affecting pupils' attainment in some non-core subjects.
32. Schemes of work have been implemented for all subjects. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Policies are written for all subjects with the exception of personal, social and health education and citizenship. The planning of the curriculum shows inconsistency and a lack of conformity. There is insufficient monitoring of both subject material that is actually taught, and the length of time that individual teachers allocate to the different subjects in their planning. As a consequence, standards in science, geography and religious education are lower than they should be. Additionally, lack of scrutiny of planning clears the way for individual teachers to do their own thing. For numeracy and literacy, all teachers plan and teach lessons using the national guidelines. These lessons are often well supported by links with other areas of the curriculum. For example, in Year 6 history lessons, pupils are encouraged to write extensively to make illustrated books related to the historical topic being studied. This good practice supports the efforts being made to raise overall standards in English and it also encourages independent learning through the development of research skills. Planned opportunities to include information and communication technology across the curriculum are very limited.
33. Satisfactory provision is made for personal, social and health education but here is no policy or scheme of work to guide teachers' planning. The governing body has decided that there should be no direct teaching of sex education. It is taught as it arises during health-related discussions in science lessons for older pupils. Misuse of drugs and the side effects of alcohol and tobacco are regularly identified to pupils. Only a small number of Key Stage 1 class timetables include 'Circle Time' to develop inter-personal relationships.
34. The school provides equal opportunities for pupils of all ages to access the curriculum. There are no difficulties over pupils with special educational needs and those using English as an additional language missing out on parts of the work. The staff actively try to redress the balance of expectation by challenging girls so that they do not achieve less well than they could. This is good. However, as the curriculum within year-groups is not well managed, the pupils' opportunities to the same quality provision is compromised. Teachers are given too much choice on what is taught and so some pupils miss valuable experiences. This is especially the case in Year 6. This is a real weakness in the management of the curriculum.
35. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities that are available to all pupils as they progress through the school. This too is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Competitive football for boys and girls and a wide range of cultural activities support

the curriculum very well. Cultural activities include a soul choir, an ensemble, African drumming, Indian music, dance and an art club. All clubs are very well attended. Lessons are also provided for recorders, flute and clarinet. The school has made a successful bid for a Creative Partnership, which is a pilot for a national arts initiative. Work connected with this will start next term and is planned to enhance the provision for pupils' creative development and for improving their speaking and listening skills.

36. Many areas of the curriculum are enhanced by a very good variety of visits planned for different year groups. In age-ascending order, they include visits to Tatton Park followed by investigation of the local area and the Blue Planet Aquarium. Pupils in Year 2 study coastline features at Formby in Lancashire and the Stockport Air-Raid Shelter Museum. In lower junior classes, pupils experience Egyptology at the Manchester Museum before developing knowledge and understanding of the Victorian era at Lark Hill Place. As upper junior pupils they visit the Tudor, Bramall Hall and develop a good understanding of the problems facing immigrants and refugees when they are taken to the local Pump House Museum. The school took part in the local education authority Arts Education Festival last year and have used the work on the Congo successfully in the curriculum this year. Manchester City Football Club is well used for teaching and this extends pupils' experience. All these out-of-class activities do much to extend pupils' personal and social development.
37. There are very good links with the community. Local police support includes a 'stranger danger' programme and road safety instruction. They supply free transport to take Year 5 pupils to a half day, 'Crucial Crew' session of practical work. Demonstrations identify the positive action that pupils can undertake in giving emergency first aid in a variety of situations. The school nurse undertakes regular health assessments and talks to Year 6 pupils on a number of health and personal hygiene topics. She is well supported by the school doctor when responding to requests for help from teachers who have identified health problems related to individual pupils. Invited parents and grandparents of pupils come into school to talk to classes about their experiences of life in the early part of the last century. An international sports goods firm provides sports skills coaching sessions for Key Stage 2 pupils and teachers. These activities enrich the curriculum and add significantly to pupils' personal and social development.
38. Very good relationships exist with partner institutions. A good number of teacher and nursery training students from local universities gain valuable work experience in the school. Older pupils from local secondary schools get the feel of what it is like to work with young children when they help in classrooms over a planned period of time. The transfer of pupils to their secondary school is very well guided and supported. Pupils in Year 6 experience whole day induction courses at their next school. Their near-future teachers come to Birchfield School, to discuss the particular needs of individual pupils. Relationships are very well supported, when secondary students and their teachers visit and set up scientific investigation situations for hands-on experience. The staffs of other nearby primary schools usually meet each half term, to discuss the overall consistency of provision for all primary pupils involved.
39. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. The previous inspection judged that the school provided well for pupils in these areas, and this continues to be the case.
40. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Children in reception are given some good opportunities in lessons to pause and reflect on the wonder of the world. For example, in a literacy lesson they looked with amazement at a picture of things that could be under the ground beneath their feet. Pupils in Year 3 learn about the beliefs that other people hold and how these can affect their views. For example, in a history lesson about life in Britain during the Second World War, they learnt that some Jewish people were treated with prejudice, because of their faith. This gave pupils good opportunity to empathise with the evacuees portrayed in the story, and to think about their experiences compassionately. Assemblies make an appropriate contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils enter and leave the hall to the accompaniment

of taped music. They are given suitable opportunities to reflect and to pray. In all aspects of the life and work of Birchfields School racial and religious understanding is very successfully encouraged. The school offers pupils a very harmonious community. However, there is too little contribution to pupils' spiritual development in religious education lessons. The emphasis is on learning the facts of an event and pupils have too few, planned opportunities to reflect, to interpret what might have happened or to evaluate how they might behave in certain situations. The programme of collective worship and celebrating religious festivals make a vital contribution to pupils' satisfactory spiritual development and very good cultural awareness, and pupils' respect for the faiths and cultures of their local community. These features support the teaching of religious education in the curriculum, but they do not compensate for it.

41. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school has a clear moral code, which is promoted at all times. Teachers have appropriately high expectations of pupils' behaviour, which are consistently applied throughout the school. There are good policies to encourage appropriate behaviour and to prevent oppressive or intimidating actions, and these are implemented well in all classes and at lunch and playtimes. From the nursery to Year 6, pupils are effectively taught right from wrong. All staff effectively model the principles the school wishes to promote, through the good quality of relationships with pupils and each other, and the consideration and fairness they demonstrate in their actions. Pupils are taught to respect the views of others and to think about other people and to consider their views before they act in social situations. Racial and religious equality is rigorously promoted. Pupils are effectively taught about the differing attitudes, values and traditions of different cultures and that it is important to remember these in decisions for actions in everyday life. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to use the library or information technology room independently, and this inhibits opportunities for the older pupils to practise moral decision-making and to take responsibility for their own actions in unsupervised situations.
42. The provision for pupils' social development is good. The aims of the school and its values are represented effectively in all activities. The school develops a good a sense of community with common inclusive values that transcend the individual differences of pupils' age, gender, achievement and background. All pupils are effectively encouraged to work together co-operatively and to respect each other for who they are. Children in the nursery are given very good opportunities to initiate activities, such as developing games in the playground or to take responsibility for clearing away at the end of a session. Assemblies make a positive contribution to pupils' social development. For example certificates are awarded to pupils who have made especially good effort in improving their behaviour. This constant reinforcement of the importance of moral principles and respect and the acknowledgement and reward of appropriate behaviour occurs throughout the school. It helps pupils of all levels of ability and from all groups to make good progress in their social development. An example of this was when a pupil who had recently been awarded a certificate for citizenship by the local education authority, was applauded during a school assembly. Another example of the care taken by all staff to encourage and reward positive progress in social development is the "staff dinner" initiative, whereby any pupil who has school lunches and who has been particularly well behaved is provided with a very attractively presented lunch at the end of the week, laid out with serviette and garnish, in the style of a restaurant meal. Pupils are given good opportunities to participate in the community life of the school and also are given good opportunities to work with the wider community in social and sporting events, such as singing at the opening ceremony for the Commonwealth Games. However, there are fewer opportunities to exercise leadership and responsibility. The school does not have a 'school council' and older pupils do not have many opportunities to assist formally in the running of the school, such as being library monitors or prefects, for example.
43. The provision for pupils' cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils are given very good opportunities to learn about the different cultures and traditions of every day Britain and from around the world and to take part in a wide range of activities. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn about Japanese children's day and how it is celebrated. There are very good opportunities for pupils to learn to appreciate music in a range of styles, including playing traditional Indian

instruments. Children in the nursery learn simple rhymes in English and Urdu. Throughout the school, pupils learn about art in the styles of a range of artists, including those from Western European cultures and also from Australia and Africa. In art and design pupils in Year 2 look at Islamic architecture, for example. Literature makes a positive contribution to pupils' cultural development and they study writing in a range of styles, including descriptive writing and poetry. There are good opportunities for pupils to hear stories from other cultures and to see script other than just English. Pupils have very good opportunities to participate in drama, music and other cultural events, particularly in one class in Year 6, and there are very good links with other schools and agencies that effectively promote their cultural development. There are very good opportunities for pupils to listen to a range of speakers and to take part in a wide variety of visits to places of interest. Pupils' particular talents are effectively nurtured, for example, those who have particular skill in music have good opportunities to develop this further. All of this has a very positive effect on developing pupils' understanding of cultural diversity and richness, and has a positive effect on standards throughout the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school cares for its pupils well, as it did at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers and support staff are committed to doing their best for the pupils, whatever their individual needs. They are caring, they know their pupils and families well and by a range of actions raise pupils' self-esteem and make them feel valued. The school follows the local authority procedures and guidelines for child protection and the two deputy headteachers are identified as the designated reference points. One of the deputies has had recent training in connection with pupils who are in the care of the local authority. The school is aware that the rest of the staff needs to have training or updated guidance, in view of the number of recently appointed staff. There is a particular need to ensure that lunchtime organisers are given guidance on the signs that might alert them to a child who may be being abused. There are appropriate links with the relevant support agencies and the school nurse visits weekly to undertake health checks.
45. There are well established procedures in place to deal with the needs of pupils who fall ill during the day. Three members of staff are currently qualified in first aid and the school has plans to train more. Health and safety issues are generally quickly identified and attended to, but during the inspection the headteacher's attention was drawn to faulty light fittings in two classrooms that could have caused injury to a child or a member of staff. There are regular checks on electrical appliances, fire-fighting equipment and physical education apparatus.
46. The school operates good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and these have successfully raised attendance levels over the past two or three years. They have fallen again in the latest reporting year, but the school believes that this is due in no small part to a virus outbreak in the spring of 2002. The school does its best to convince parents of the importance to their children's education of regular attendance. It tries to contact parents by telephone on the first day of absence for an explanation but has great difficulty in achieving this because many parents are evasive. There are some incentives for pupils in the form of rewards and certificates but despite this a significant minority of pupils have their education severely interrupted by long absences. The school works closely with the local education authority's welfare service. The education welfare officer reports that he has the same difficulties as the school in contacting many parents about their children's absences. A breakfast club now operates each morning and this has had some success in improving attendance and punctuality. However, only around 15 pupils attend regularly at the present time. The school monitors attendance well and is aware of all the difficulties. Unfortunately its efforts are having only a modest success in improving attendance levels and this situation is likely to continue whilst some parents are not prepared to ensure that their children attend school regularly.
47. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are effective and reflected in the orderly atmosphere in school and the good and often very good behaviour seen in lessons

during the inspection. There is a good behaviour policy designed to encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour and which expects staff to give positive encouragement to pupils, which they do. There is a range of rewards for good or improved behaviour and the majority of pupils are keen to earn them. One of these, much sought after, is the “teacher’s tray” in the dining room each Friday where four pupils are selected to have a special meal on an adult tray similar to that provided for staff. There are class rules agreed by the pupils themselves and those interviewed said that they respected their teachers and that teachers respected them. Pupils do not consider bullying to be an issue. One or two parents at the meeting said that the school did all it could to deal with the unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of pupils, but that some parents are not prepared to support the school’s actions.

48. Very good procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour have ensured that the school is a happy place for pupils where children from a range of cultural heritages play together well in peace and harmony. Teachers know their pupils well and effective informal monitoring of pupils’ personal development takes place. For those pupils where personal development is of particular concern, a more formal system is operated, involving the learning mentors. Pupils are given targets for improvement and their progress towards these targets is monitored and regularly reviewed.
49. The previous inspection identified weaknesses in assessment procedures. Sound improvement has been made. Overall systems for assessing pupils’ attainment and progress are now satisfactory in English and mathematics, clearly reflecting the improving picture of standards in these subjects. Baseline assessments are carried out effectively in the Foundation Stage and good records are kept of the children’s’ achievements. Nevertheless, day-to-day assessments of what children know and can do are not always recorded or used well enough to target individuals and groups of children to particular activities in order to develop specific knowledge and understanding. Assessments in English and mathematics are suitably focused on the National Curriculum outcomes. As a result, detailed findings help set clear, measurable targets for improving groups and individual pupil’s achievements, for example in mathematics where additional tasks have involved the answering of problems incorporated within a sentence linked to a real life situation. Pupils are made aware of their own personal targets for learning in English and mathematics, and this has a positive effect on helping pupils to work hard on what they need to improve. Assessments at the end of each unit of work in science do not, however, focus clearly enough on pupils’ scientific enquiry skills.
50. The assessments of the needs of pupils with special educational needs, and of those using English as an additional language is generally good and this is one factor in these pupils’ good progress in learning. However, the individual learning plans for pupils with are not as well used by their class teachers as they might be, and this is an area for improvement.
51. There is still a relative overall weakness in the way in which teachers use assessment information to highlight the next step for planning that securely builds on previous learning, developing the next step firmly. Apart from English and mathematics, records of what has been taught lack detail, and, as a result, work set does not always meet the needs of all pupils, especially those who are higher attaining. The school is aware of the need to develop still further its assessment procedures to more rigorously track pupils’ achievements as they move through the school. As such, many aspects of assessment remain incomplete and are issues for the school to continue to address to raise standards to higher levels.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. Parents are very supportive of the school and what it does for their children. All parents who returned the questionnaire said that their child enjoyed school. Almost all felt their child was making good progress, and said that they felt comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. The views of these parents are supported by inspection findings. A few

parents at the meeting complained about the standard of the mid-day meals. Inspectors tried them during the inspection and found them to be amongst the best school meals they had tasted. One or two parents at the meeting said that they didn't think their complaints to the headteacher had been dealt with satisfactorily. Having raised these with the school arrangements have been made for these parents to meet with the headteacher and the chair of governors.

53. The school provides a satisfactory quality of information to parents. The prospectus is informative and attractively produced including illustrations, some of which have been done by the pupils. There are regular letters and newsletters, including 'Birchfields News' - a regular publication, well written and produced by the pupils using desktop publishing software. These keep parents well informed about things that are happening in school. Some teachers provide written information for parents which outlines the work that their children will be doing during the term. Some parents felt that this practice should be more uniform so that they could become more informed and involved in their children's education.
54. Annual reports to parents are satisfactory and comply with requirements. They are written in a parent-friendly style, free from jargon, and demonstrate that teachers know the pupils well. However, they do not consistently point out pupils' strengths and areas for improvement, neither do they show targets for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Parents have two formal opportunities each year to meet their child's teacher. These take place in the autumn and summer terms and there is a high attendance rate. In addition there are half-termly opportunities for parents to talk to teachers after school, together with informal discussions as they collect their children on a daily basis. Reports and letters are translated if necessary and translators are available for meetings.
55. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to their children's learning at home and at school. Reading records show that a significant number of parents hear their children read at home on a regular basis, and as a result these pupils make better progress in learning to read. Unfortunately some parents are not able to do this because their knowledge of the English language is not good enough. However, the vast majority of parents want their children to do well at school and support what the school does.
56. The school has good links with parents, a similar situation to that found at the previous inspection, and these help to raise standards. The school works with parents prior to admission and offers a weekly "drop-in" session in the nursery. Workshops and courses have been provided for parents, such as the family literacy and numeracy courses and a numeracy assembly where the co-ordinator taught a maths lesson in the hall for the benefit of parents. Few parents help in school, but there is good support for school trips and the summer fair is well supported. Two parents who were the "driving force" behind the parents' group have resigned and this group is not currently operating due to lack of leadership.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. Leadership overall is good and management is satisfactory. The management and efficiency of the school are of the same quality as was found at the previous inspection. The headteacher is an effective leader. She has established, and maintained over many years, an ethos of care and support and has steered the school through a period of extended change in education with success. Pupils' achievement is improving and the headteacher has managed to retain and recruit quality staff in a difficult area, set in motion a large-scale building project, and acquire considerable extra money for projects to extend pupils' experience. She manages by being around and having an open door. She works well with the chair of governors, and these two are key to the good leadership of the school.
58. However, the headteacher's 'light touch' management has meant that few systems and structures have been set up which are necessary to ensure compliance and conformity with set procedures.

This means that there are things that are not done, or not done well enough. There is too little proper delegation to the senior management team and to subject co-ordinators; for instance, they all refer to the headteacher for all finance and resource implications. Even minor decisions are taken jointly or by the headteacher; this is inefficient as it does not lead to accountability and the headteacher has too much to do.

59. Although there is good practice evident in the leadership and management of aspects of the school, this is fragmented. There is too much individualism and staff are allowed to make choices about important issues, such as what is taught and when, which should be decisions taken by the senior management team. There is not a sense of teamwork which would ensure high performance, and staff are not used to self-evaluation or constructive peer evaluation. Very little monitoring takes place, and that which does is supportive rather than evaluative. The senior management team is not an effective management body, as it lacks coherence and has not ensured conformity and good communication. Some members do not have whole-school responsibilities. As the school has grown in complexity it has not evolved appropriate management systems to cope with this growth.
60. The deputy headteachers are heavily loaded as they both teach classes at the end of each key stage. They are also responsible for co-ordination of their key stage, including curriculum management, assessment, special educational needs, staffing rotas and pastoral work. They have very little time allocated to undertake all these essential tasks, and as a result, they are generally not done. This means that the management of key aspects of the school, such as the management of the curriculum, is unsatisfactory. This is frustrating for other staff who know what needs to be done but have no authority to do it. The deficiencies in planning of the timetable are due to this lack of overview by the deputy headteachers. This lack of management is affecting pupils' standards of attainment.
61. The Foundation Stage has no overall co-ordinator and, although things are going well, procedures would be more effective if the whole phase of education were managed as a whole; plans are in hand to do this when the new Foundation Stage building is in use, but this is a bit late, as better co-ordination should improve the reception classes to the high quality of the nursery. There are no named co-ordinators for key aspects of the school's work, such as personal, social and health education, social inclusion, pupils in public care, or pupils who are gifted or talented. This essential work is carried out, but on an unstructured basis.
62. Most subjects of the curriculum are not well managed as the co-ordinators are not given time to oversee their subjects, nor the means to develop better practice. Mostly co-ordinators do not know what is going on in their subjects. They do not have a say in the planning of lessons; they do not look at pupils' work; they do not talk to pupils about what they have learnt, nor do they monitor teaching. Many of the subject co-ordinators have specific skills that need to be shared with other staff, but they have no time for such training. Subjects that have suffered due to lack of effective management include science, music, geography and religious education, and in these subjects, pupils' achievements are lower than they should be. When subjects are well managed, such as in English and information and communication technology, the results are clear to see; standards of attainment are rising. There is inadequate accountability. Subject action plans are devised without reference to finance, and all decisions about spending are made by the headteacher. There is better liaison between key stages about subjects than there was at the previous inspection, but this is due to individual teachers rather than to the school's systems. Part of the problem stems from staff changes and the headteacher is aware that better management should make life easier for teachers; she has active plans to improve this.
63. Too much individualism by teachers does not ensure equal opportunities in curricular provision for all pupils. Teachers' ability to select that which they will teach means that many subjects are not taught systematically. This means that very high quality work done in the different Year 6 classes, for example in history, is not also given to all the classes.

64. The management of special educational needs is effective, but not as effective as it could be as the management is shared between three people, which is inefficient. The official rôle of special educational needs co-ordinator is shared by the two deputy headteachers, who have too much to do. In reality, another member of staff who is a teacher employed just to teach pupils with special educational needs, does the management. She manages the paperwork well. However, the rôle, in a school like this, is complex and demanding. It really requires a well-qualified and very experienced senior member of staff who is aware of all the factors concerned with pupils with special educational needs. It is not sound management to give the job to two teachers who are involved in many other important issues. There have been some wrong classifications of pupils and the management of the teacher and support staff's time is, although satisfactory, not as efficient as it could be. This is because there has been little whole-school planning for the provision. The school has quickly moved to comply with the recommendations of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs and systems are in place to ensure that pupils who are covered have appropriate individual education plans and personal education plans.
65. The management of the provision for pupils who use English as an additional language is good. The staff and governors work well together with the officers of the local education authority for the great benefit of pupils.
66. The school has appropriate aims that are clearly reflected in all of its work. There is a clear commitment to giving all pupils the best and to creating a comfortable but challenging ethos in which boys and girls of all ethnic origins, of all faiths, whatever their home language, and with any sort of difficulty, can thrive. The school provides equal opportunities for pupils of both genders, of all abilities, of all backgrounds and of all religious faiths. This is a strength of the school and parents testify to it. This is due to the good leadership of the headteacher and governors. The governing body is effective. Led by a chair who is very involved and knowledgeable, governors are involved in shaping the school and holding staff to account for standards of attainment and care given to pupils. They have improved pupils' education and the environment for staff and pupils. This is a creative school that sets itself in the heart of the community and looks, successfully, to outsiders for help and funds, which benefit pupils. There are too few governors at present, as is often the case nationally, but most are involved at an appropriate level. They are mostly aware of their statutory requirements but have not agreed a policy on restraint, which is required by law, as they did not know that one was needed. They visit the school regularly but, as in many aspects of the school, the information gained from these visits is not formally recorded.
67. The school has an adequate number of teachers and plenty of support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum and the learning needs of the pupils, including those with special educational needs. There are few support staff to help pupils with some of the languages spoken, such as Syhleti, and too few to support all those pupils using English as an additional language who need help. For the most part, classroom assistants give valuable support to pupils with special educational needs, prompting them to answer questions during class discussions or helping them with their written work. This boosts the pupils' confidence because they feel included in the lessons, and they try harder as a result. However, on too many occasions, classroom assistants are not used efficiently, as they sit passively during lesson introductions. As a very large sum is spent on these staff, it is unsatisfactory that their skills are not always well used and that the school has not measured their effectiveness.
68. Satisfactory arrangements are in place for performance management. However, although all the teachers have personal objectives, the systems are not all in place to help them to succeed in these. Teachers' job descriptions are all the same. They are not tied tightly enough to what each individual teacher should be doing to raise standards, and they are not reviewed regularly. Arrangements for the induction of staff new to the school are satisfactory overall. However, because of staff absences, newly qualified teachers do not always receive the regular time they are entitled to for preparation and to observe experienced teachers.

69. The school has maintained the overall efficiency in the standards of financial controls and administration together with ensuring pertinent support for appropriate priorities, which was reported at the time of the previous inspection. The chair of governors gives strong leadership to the finance committee in working effectively with the headteacher to develop policies, to identify priorities and to allocate expenditure, which will enhance both pupils' welfare and support for their learning. The school improvement plan drives priorities in the school's expenditure appropriately, but management aspects of this process are unsatisfactory. The 'big picture' is appropriate, but the detail is less so. For example, the standard of accommodation is planned to be improved by investment in a new nursery unit and classroom complex. In the context of an old and often inefficient building this is a positive initiative to improve the quality of pupils' learning experiences. However, the management of the detail of planning prior to the formulation of the budget and the forward projection of future circumstances is insufficiently developed for the governing body to feel secure in its decisions. The time-scale for much planning is too short.
70. In the development of curriculum support, co-ordinators undertake only a limited management rôle in contributing to the school improvement plan and the associated budget. They do not identify expenditure elements of their priorities in their action plans, which may then be considered by the headteacher and governing body in developing an overall budget plan. Consequently, monies are allocated for subjects on a relatively informal basis and best use of resources is not projected at the planning stage. The component elements of budget expenditure are not explicit and consequently there are no obvious links between the school improvement plan, income sources and the resultant budget headings, to give clarity as to where expenditure is to be located. This restricts the opportunity for easy monitoring by the governing body. The monitoring of the impact of spending decisions sometimes relies on anecdotal evidence, which does not ensure that best value is achieved. For example, while teachers will state that they value the presence of learning support assistants, there is insufficient monitoring to ensure that their contribution is put to best effect. Therefore, best value will not be assured. Governors are aware of the principles of best value, but they do not sufficiently challenge existing routines by stepping back and questioning their practices. Although good husbandry has been applied to build up reserves for future priorities, the governing body has no provisional projections to anticipate the impact of current expenditure on future balances. There is a confidence that incidental monies accrued from additional pupils and grants will provide for any shortfall.
71. The governing body uses the available funding well. A very high level of resource has been invested in providing learning support assistants at all stages within the school to give appropriate support to pupils with special educational needs, to pupils with English as an additional language and to assist teachers in managing their classes. Grants for these purposes are well applied. Significant investment has been made in an attractive and well-resourced new library, the full use of which is currently compromised by the need to limit access for reasons of security. Good use has been made of grants to create a high quality computer suite, which is used to the capacity of the timetable. To complement this innovation, funding for the training of teachers in the use of information and communication technology has been effectively applied, but these initiatives will need time to impact fully upon pupils' learning.
72. The accommodation is satisfactory overall but a lot of the building is in poor condition and the majority of the internal decoration is drab. Exceptions are the relatively new dining hall and the recently refurbished library, which stand out in stark contrast to most of the rest of the building. New classrooms have been built recently to replace the prefabs and a new computer suite is making a difference to pupils' learning in information and communication technology. The school has obtained funding to carry out further building improvements including a new nursery, two new classrooms and replacement of the roof. In the meantime the new caretaker appointed earlier this year has already made a significant improvement to the cleanliness of the accommodation and has plans to continue in this direction until his high standards are satisfied. He also takes on board a wider rôle in the day-to-day life of the school such as helping to reduce the congestion and risks to pupils' safety that result from very large numbers of children being dropped off and collected by car at the start and end of the school day.

73. Staff brighten up their classrooms by arranging vibrant and colourful displays of children's work, and this helps to raise pupils' self esteem. The previous report stated that a closed-circuit television system was to be installed in order to reduce the high incidence of vandalism, and this had been done. Unfortunately, regular incidents of vandalism continue to take place and contribute to the poor appearance of much of the building. During the inspection, inspectors were able to see at first hand the severe flooding of the corridors which occurs during heavy rain as a result of vandalism to the roof.
74. There are good resources for English, mathematics, history, art and design, design and technology, the Foundation stage and for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language. However, resources for science and geography are unsatisfactory. There are not enough resources to meet the demands of the curriculum in these subjects and this is reducing the progress that pupils make. The resources for information and communication technology, religious education, music and physical education are satisfactory. The school has spent a lot of money on books since the previous inspection and a bright, cheerful and spacious new library has been created. However, it remains locked during the school day except when adults are there and this, together with the lack of a computer with a CD-Rom facility, means that pupils cannot use the library for independent research and study and this reduces the progress that they make and their development of these skills.
75. The school is doing well, but not as well as it could do, and sometimes at great cost to individual members of staff. There is the sort of family atmosphere that is often seen in a small rural primary school; this is good and much appreciated by parents and pupils. A supportive ethos has been set. However, the systems and structures of management have not developed, over time, to cope with the increasing complexity of modern primary education and, especially, to ensure the efficient running of a very large school working in a difficult context. The management is not as effective as it should be, and does not ensure smooth running of the school nor the ability to cope with change. Apart from attendance, which is a major issue for parents to accept, all the weaknesses of the school are due to deficiencies in management. Wholehearted acceptance of this is vital for senior staff and governors.
76. Taking into account the socio-economic circumstances of the school, the low level of attainment of pupils on entry to the school and the improvement they achieve, pupils' very positive attitudes and good behaviour, together with funding which, although above the national average, is not dissimilar to comparable areas, the school provides good value for money.

THE SCHOOL'S PROVISION FOR ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

77. In January of this year over 300 pupils (nearly 50 per cent) were designated as being in need of additional support for language learning on the basis of an assessment of their oracy skills. Nearly 15 per cent were reported to be at an early stage of language acquisition. That is, their attainment was judged to be below level one of the National Curriculum attainment categories for speaking and listening. While the majority of these were in the nursery and reception classes and Key Stage 1, early stage learners are to be found in most classes.
78. Specialised instruction and assistance is provided for a number of pupils needing additional support by staff linked to the Ethnic Minority and Achievement Service (EMAS). The school values the contribution of these staff and supports the service, financially and otherwise. The English as an additional language co-ordinator is a respected member of the senior management team.
79. As there are insufficient staff to cater for the language needs of all the pupils on the EMAS register, the decision has been taken to provide support in classes composed of pupils of middle-level attainment, on the grounds that these are often under-achieving and capable of making rapid improvement. One consequence of this is that there is insufficient specialised support for early

stage learners in lower level literacy groups. The school is aware of this deficiency and puts extra money towards the provision of support staff for pupils with English as an additional language.

80. However, the school's overall provision for pupils using English as an additional language is good, because the majority of staff are aware of the need to plan their lessons to take account of the specific needs of pupils with different levels of attainment in the subject concerned and in the language of instruction. For example, very good teaching was observed in a Year 4 literacy class for lower attainers. The class included nine pupils who were on the special educational needs register and seven pupils who had received extra support until the EMAS teacher responsible for them went on extended sick leave. The class teacher's very good lesson planning and classroom management ensured that all pupils were involved actively in the lesson and that they have tasks to complete that they were able to cope with and finish. The lower attaining group within the class, which in this case included both pupils with special educational needs and those with limited English, was supported very well by the experienced classroom assistant. The pupils were eager to complete the work assigned and all made very good progress in meeting the objectives of the lesson. Good teaching and good collaboration between a classroom teacher and a support teacher, a special needs specialist, was also observed in a lower stage literacy class in Year 5 where all pupils made good progress in interpreting a story. The class teacher gave good guidance to pupils with limited language attainment to help them to develop reading skills, which would normally have been acquired in Years 1 and 2.
81. Members of the EMAS team collaborate well with other teachers. For example, a very good instance of partnership teaching was observed in a Year 6 middle attainment literacy class. In this case, the EMAS teacher plans jointly with the class teacher for each lesson. Very good teaching was also observed when an EMAS teacher took a class for drama in Year 1. Teaching is less effective when these specialised teachers operate in a supporting rôle for a small group of pupils at an early stage of language acquisition in a context in which they have not participated in detailed planning of the lesson and where the lesson plan does not allow for a time of sustained interaction between the EMAS teacher and the targeted group, as was the case in a Year 6 information and communication technology lesson, and for much of a Year 1 literacy lesson.
82. Bilingual members of the EMAS team provide good support for pupils in the nursery and Key Stage 1, and assist with contacts with parents; but no specialised support can be given at present to pupils speaking Bengali/Syhleti, of whom there are a substantial minority. Successful efforts are made by the school to familiarise parents of younger children with school procedures and requirements, and parents are appreciative of these initiatives.
83. The pupils given additional help with the use of English are eager to succeed and work hard. They are keen to contribute to lessons, although limited language skills make it difficult for them to express complex ideas. A group of pupils in Year 6 who joined the school in the between Years 3 and 6 and had therefore spent less than four years at the school, were happy and well adjusted to school life. Most had acquired fluent spoken English for social purposes and were no longer receiving specialised language assistance, but they were conscious of their need to develop further their literacy skills.
84. In order to make it possible to track the progress of such pupils in developing English language skills, it would be advantageous if all staff were familiarised with the English as an additional language assessment scheme and if the record of assessment stages (or steps) of English language acquisition was entered on the pupil profile records that show progress through National Curriculum attainment levels. It would also be informative if each pupil's attendance record and the length of time he or she had been at the school was included in the analyses of results.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

1. Raise pupils' standards of attainment in science by:
 - providing further training for some staff;
 - planning the curriculum better so that investigations are more effectively built in to the work;
 - improving the systems for assessment and ensuring that these are used;
 - enabling the co-ordinators to manage the subject more effectively.(Paragraph No. 4, 5, 127, 131)

2. Improve the rates of attendance by:
 - continuing to liaise with parents so that they know how important it is not to keep their children away from school;
 - ensuring that the effect of children's absences are recorded in great detail, so that parents know the implications of keeping their children away from school; tracking of pupils' attainment should ensure that rates of absence are related to how well pupils are doing.(Paragraph No. 2, 4, 8, 13, 20, 46, 96, 102, 109, 116)

3. Improve the management of the curriculum by:
 - accepting that there is a need to improve, and for the governors and senior management team to sustain a genuine commitment for continuous improvement;
 - establishing procedures so that there is an effective overview of the whole curriculum;
 - increasing the teaching time each week for pupils at Key Stage 2;
 - planning the timetables so that all subjects have an appropriate length of time allocated;
 - ensuring that pupils receive the same curriculum, appropriate for their age, within each class catering for that year-group; for this it may be beneficial to establish year-group leaders;
 - increasing the amount of teaching time for non-core subjects;
 - improving the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the curriculum so that co-ordinators have a clear idea about what is going on in their subjects;
 - giving all subject co-ordinators the authority to lead their subjects, and making them accountable for standards.(Paragraph No. 5, 6, 24, 31, 32, 34, 60, 62, 63, 68, 70, 127, 131, 133, 139, 150, 156, 170, 177, 179, 180, 182)

4. Improve the efficiency in the use of staff by:
 - revising the job descriptions of the deputy headteachers so that they have more time available for management;
 - delegating more of the deputy headteachers' tasks to other experienced staff;
 - giving some other experienced teachers whole-school responsibilities such as the co-ordination of assessment;
 - ensuring that classroom support staff are suitably employed during the whole lesson;
 - making sure that support staff for special educational needs and English as an additional language have appropriate time to work with pupils, and that time is not too long.(Paragraph No. 59, 64, 67, 70, 121)

5. Ensure that there are satisfactory procedures to assess pupils' attainment in non-core subjects and religious education by:
 - devising appropriate methods of measuring attainment and progress;
 - ensuring that these are used consistently;
 - establishing a system for checking that assessment is being used, for this the appointment of a named co-ordinator may be considered.(Paragraph No. 51, 131, 144, 161, 170, 177, 182)

In addition governors should:

- devise and agree a policy on the use of restraint to comply with statutory requirements;
 - ensure that information and communication technology is used more systematically across the curriculum;
 - devise systems to allow more efficient use of the library.
- (Paragraph No. 32, 41, 74, 113, 121, 153, 159)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	97
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	108

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	21	46	26	3	0	0
Percentage	1	22	48	26	3	0	0

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

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)	45	589
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	11	208

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	57

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	555

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	65
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	76

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.4
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	43	40	83

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	24	26
	Girls	26	23	27
	Total	51	47	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	61 (63)	57 (65)	64 (70)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	27	20
	Girls	26	27	21
	Total	52	54	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	63 (62)	65 (65)	49 (65)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2000

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	41	39	80

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	22	29
	Girls	21	20	23
	Total	39	42	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	49 (52)	53 (53)	65 (68)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	21	20
	Girls	22	19	17

	Total	41	40	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	52 (34)	51 (46)	47 (43)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

Percentages in brackets refer 2000.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	9
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	25
Indian	14
Pakistani	379
Bangladeshi	66
Chinese	1
White	57
Any other minority ethnic group	33

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	
Black – African heritage	0	
Black – other	0	
Indian	0	
Pakistani	3	
Bangladeshi	0	
Chinese	0	
White	1	
Other minority ethnic groups	0	

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, 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)	27.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.8
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	538.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	45
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65
Number of pupils per FTE adult	15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	1520106
Total expenditure	1424382
Expenditure per pupil	2233
Balance brought forward from previous year	249712
Balance carried forward to next year	345476

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	633
Number of questionnaires returned	138

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	77	23	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	42	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	30	2	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	30	8	7	9
The teaching is good.	66	27	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	33	6	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	32	1	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	23	3	1	7
The school works closely with parents.	52	33	8	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	59	30	3	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	31	1	2	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	23	12	4	12

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

85. There are 45 children in the nursery class, most of whom attend full time. Most children start school in the nursery class in September, and transfer to one of the three reception classes in January. These children have one term in the nursery class. Children who have a birthday between August and January start in the nursery in the January before that; they transfer to reception in September and consequently have two terms of nursery provision. During the week of inspection most children had been in nursery since January and were very well settled into the routines of the classroom. The majority of the children have not had any other pre-school educational experience and are not used to meeting children from different groups. Before they transfer to main school they are given good opportunities to meet their new teachers and to get to know them. They attend assemblies in the main school, and care is taken to ensure that parents can support them in managing new experiences, such as changing for physical education lessons in the hall. This helps them to start in reception with confidence, as they are familiar with the environment and know what to expect. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, which reported teaching and learning as good in the nursery and satisfactory in reception. Teaching is currently very good in the nursery and children make very good progress in all areas of learning, especially in their personal and social development. In reception it is good overall and the teachers effectively build upon the very good start nursery children are given. As a consequence, boys and girls of all levels of attainment and from all groups, including those with English as an additional language, make good progress overall.
86. Attainment on entry was judged to be well below the levels expected at the time of the previous inspection, and this continues to be the case. In addition there are high levels of mobility as children move away from the school and new children arrive. Learning is also affected by high numbers of families who take extended holidays during term time or who regularly bring and collect their children later than the start and end of the school day.
87. The children in the nursery are provided with a very good range of well planned opportunities which are securely based in structured play activities; these enable them to make very good progress. A major strength of the curriculum for nursery children is the high quality of staff's planning and the consequent provision of highly meaningful experiences. The curriculum for children in reception is good overall and includes all of the aspects of learning for children of this age. Consequently, by the end of the reception year many children are close to attaining the early learning goals in the mathematical, communication, language and literacy skills. In knowledge and understanding of the world and in creative development, personal and social development and physical development the early learning goals are met. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection, when children only attained the expected levels in mathematics and creative development.
88. Assessment procedures in the nursery class are good and they are used well. Careful assessments are made when children start school and again before they transfer to the reception. Detailed day-to-day records are kept and regularly discussed by the nursery staff. They are used effectively when planning lessons. Regular assessments are made of the children's work and the information is used well to match work to individual levels of attainment. The records passed on to reception are analysed carefully for communication, language and literacy skills, but their format does not allow easy analysis of overall progress in other areas of the curriculum for young children. Children for whom English is an additional language are provided with good levels of support in the nursery and in the reception classes. Children with special educational needs are identified and appropriate support is put into place.

Personal, social and emotional development

89. There are very good opportunities for children to develop their personal, social and emotional skills in the nursery. The children start school with below average personal development, due to the lack of opportunities to meet and play with a wide range of other children. They develop these skills very effectively due to the good quality of opportunities they are given and very good teaching. By the end of their time in the nursery, children are confident and interact with ease. They take responsibility for their actions and become very involved in their tasks. All adults working in the nursery provide very good rôle models and work very well together to provide opportunities for the children to develop their social skills. The children are developing good levels of independence. They eat lunch happily with and alongside older pupils. They express their feelings in appropriate ways and initiate friendships with other children. They are aware of what they should do and often help by taking responsibility. For example, if their teacher is delayed in another part of the room one child in each group will sit on the teacher's chair and initiate the singing of songs or the telling of a story.
90. Children in the reception classes make good progress in this aspect of learning, although there are fewer opportunities for them to take initiative. Teaching is, however, good overall. By the end of the reception year virtually all attain the early learning goals and many children exceed these. They follow the school rules sensibly when returning to the classroom from play and assemblies, for example. They are gently reminded to put their hand up to answer a question or to take turns so that they remain keen and continue to take a full part in lessons. However, the children are not always given enough opportunity to think for themselves about how they should approach a task or complete a particular activity. Resources are often provided for them and there is too little opportunity for them to decide for themselves which resources they need to complete a particular task.

Communication, language and literacy

91. Children enter school with communication, language and literacy skills, especially in English, which are well below those normally expected overall, although some individual children have higher skills. Due to the very good teaching in the nursery they make very good gains in their learning, although standards are below those expected overall when they move to reception. Children in the nursery are encouraged to develop their vocabulary and to speak as part of a group. Many of them confidently take an active part in class discussions and speak clearly and with enthusiasm about their experiences. *"I went to the zoo and we saw some birds!" "I've got a new mega-drive for my play station!" "I played on my scooter!" "I did play on a bike."* Some children are not so confident and listen quietly and attentively to the discussions. In the nursery there is a high emphasis on the development of language. Teaching of this area of the curriculum is very good and all staff work together to reinforce the vocabulary of the week. They make very good use of questioning and repetition, and songs and rhymes. This good work is built upon effectively in the reception classes. Teachers plan lessons well to develop language. However there are some missed opportunities for learning support assistants to question children and reinforce vocabulary. Early writing skills are below average on entry but, due to good teaching, the children in the nursery make very good progress in this aspect. They learn to hold a pencil correctly and many make a good attempt at forming their letters before they transfer to the reception class. In reception they continue to develop these skills well and many write simple sentences confidently by the time they move to Year 1.
92. Early reading skills are developed effectively in the nursery. Children learn to enjoy listening to stories and join in with telling them. They learn to get pleasure from books and often look through well-known tales 'reading' them out loud to their friends. This is continued very effectively in the reception classes. The children develop a good sight vocabulary and many read short stories with expression and clear understanding of content by the time they transfer to Year 1. They recall significant detail and can talk confidently about the characters and plot. All children, whatever their first language make at least good progress in language and literacy and most make very good progress due to the good provision.

Mathematical development

93. Teaching in this area is good overall. It is very good in the nursery and good in the reception classes. Children of all abilities make at least good progress, and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in learning the vocabulary of mathematics. Children in the nursery make very good progress in their mathematical development. They show confidence in handling numbers and count confidently to five, recognising the numerals. They know the basic geometric shapes and, due to consistently very good teaching, are confident in their description of the features of some regular shapes. They know that the figure with three sides and three angles is a triangle and that a shape with two long sides and two short sides and four corners is a rectangle or an oblong. They use the terms accurately in their daily work and discussion. For example, one child was heard to say “*I’ve made an oblong sunbeam*” and another “*I need a circle. I need a red circle!*” or “*This is an oval shape!*” Due to the particular emphasis placed on counting rhymes and games, the children make good progress in counting and number recognition.
94. Teaching in the reception classes is good overall and effectively builds upon the children’s early learning. Children in reception take part in a daily numeracy lesson and follow the objectives outlined in the National Numeracy Strategy. The activities are practical and help the children to develop a sound understanding of the order and conservation of numbers to 10 and beyond. Children are able to order objects in order of size and count with confidence. However, there is sometimes too little difference in the tasks that children of different abilities are asked to do. Sometimes opportunities are missed for children to use the computer to help them in their number work. Children use their numeracy skills effectively in other areas of the curriculum.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

95. The curriculum to develop the children’s knowledge and understanding of the world is sufficiently varied and, coupled with overall good teaching through the Foundation Stage, ensures that the children make good progress in this area of learning. By the end of their time in the nursery, children have a good knowledge of materials and their properties. They play in sand and with water, clay and dough, examining the materials to find out more about them. They sort objects, for example sorting coins with a magnet to discover which are attracted and which are not. They learn to use a range of simple tools safely to build models with reclaimed materials or construction kits. They learn how to operate equipment confidently, such as the computer and the listening centre. They describe significant events in their own lives and listen carefully to the accounts of others. Teaching of this area is very good and provides children with a suitably wide range of activities.
96. This work is effectively developed in the reception classes by a combination of good teaching and appropriate curriculum. Children in reception learn to use the computer to draw and illustrate their work. They use the mouse with developing skill and some confidently print their pictures. The progress that some children make in this is inhibited by their late arrival to school in the morning, since they miss activities that been planned for them. Children who are present at the start of the day make significantly better progress and are more confident than those who arrive later and only have minutes to settle to their tasks before the end of their class time in the computer suite. By the end of the reception year the great majority of the children attain the early learning goals in this area of learning.

Physical development

97. The teaching of physical development is good overall. Children make very good progress in their physical development in the nursery and good progress in reception. By the end of the reception year the majority attain the early learning goals in this area of learning. Children in the nursery have good regular opportunities to use large wheeled toys and climb and balance. Teaching is very good and encourages children to try their hardest. They have good opportunity to think about

their own and others' safety. They ride along the pathways sensibly and manage to keep on the track successfully, avoiding obstacles, parking tricycles neatly before moving on to other activities. They climb with agility and confidence and throw bean-bags with high levels of accuracy. They play in the large sand pit and teachers make very good use of this opportunity to reinforce work in mathematics and development of vocabulary, for example.

98. The teaching in reception is good and teachers work well to extend children's learning experiences. They take dance and gymnastic lessons in the large halls, widening the range of children's physical skills effectively. They pay good attention to health and safety and encourage children to listen to their heart rate after strenuous exercise, for example. The majority of the children develop appropriate pencil grips and have suitable control to colour between the lines of pictures. Many can write their own names unaided by the end of the nursery but, although they can all copy to a satisfactory standard, many still do not always form their letters correctly by the end of the reception class, and have not yet developed a fluent handwriting style. During playtimes, children show suitable skills in running, jumping and skipping, and that they have a good sense of space. They move with appropriate thought for their own and others' safety.

Creative development

99. Very good teaching in the nursery and good teaching in reception ensures that the children make good progress overall and, by the end of the reception year, most attain the early learning goals for their creative development. There are good opportunities in the nursery and reception for the children to paint and use other materials imaginatively. They explore what happens when they mix colours and understand that different media can be combined in different ways to achieve different effects. There is a good level of adult involvement in the form of questioning and discussion, when children are painting. The teachers and the nursery nurses draw children's attention to what they are doing and the names of the shapes, colours and textures of the materials they are using. As a consequence most children know the common colours and can describe materials effectively. These sessions therefore also make a very positive contribution to the development of the children's mathematical and language skills, as well as their knowledge and understanding of the world. Activities in the nursery are linked to an overall theme, such as shape, and this makes the learning more meaningful and relevant. The children learn a wide range of songs, some of which they sing in English and also Urdu, which they enjoy singing. Children often sing quietly to themselves as they work in other parts of the nursery. In the reception classes children often make pictures and patterns linked to their work in other areas of the curriculum. These are tastefully displayed and brighten the walls and windows.

ENGLISH

100. Approximately nine out of ten pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL) and, for this reason, the overall level of attainment in English at both key stages is below the national average. This reflects the attainment of the majority of pupils nationally who speak English as a first and only language. However, the *achievement* of the pupils in terms of the progress they make in learning English from the time they enter school to the time they leave is satisfactory overall, and good in the case of higher attainers. This is an improvement over the situation at the last inspection.
101. The sustained progress in learning and using English made by the majority of pupils is primarily the result of two factors: namely, that the quality of the teaching of English is generally good and the pupils are eager to learn. In over two-thirds of the lessons observed the quality of the teaching was judged to be good or very good and it was never less than satisfactory. Teachers and support staff have a good understanding of the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy. Their classroom management is good, as is the relationship they have with their pupils.

102. Two other factors significantly affect the levels of attainment in English negatively. One is the regular influx of pupils who have not previously been educated through the medium of English and who have limited knowledge of the language. The second is poor attendance on the part of a significant minority of pupils, a substantial number of whom accompany their parents on extended visits to their countries of origin. If pupils are not at school they cannot learn. The average attendance record for pupils in primary schools is approximately 93 per cent. In Year 3, for example, the lower literacy set of 24 pupils included four whose record of attendance was between 60-70 per cent, another five whose attendance record was between 70-80% and three whose record was less than 85 per cent. The majority of these pupils had been on extended holidays in their family's country of origin.
103. From the time pupils enter school they are encouraged to express themselves clearly and audibly and to ask questions. The good relationships that prevail between teachers and pupils encourage the free exchange of views and opinions. Pupils listen carefully to what their teachers say in literacy lessons, and respond enthusiastically to their questions. Plenary sessions and review sessions are often used well by teachers to provide pupils with the opportunity to share what they have learnt with the rest of the class. In guided reading activities, which are often part of the literacy lesson, pupils are encouraged to read clearly and to express their opinions coherently.
104. Most teachers provide good rôle models for clear articulation and provide good opportunities for pupils to communicate ideas and opinions. For example, pupils in Year 1 re-enacted parts in a "play", devised in the previous term by a pupil. This provided very good opportunities for them to develop both their listening and speaking skills. In a Year 5 lesson, in which the objective was to help pupils to create vivid detail when writing a description of India, pupils were given the opportunity to read aloud what they had written and comment on the work of others, which they did with confidence and clarity. In a Year 5 literacy class for lower attainers, the pupils were very keen to express their interpretation of the main points of the story even though their speaking skills were in several cases too limited to express complex ideas clearly. However, their listening skills were in advance of their ability to speak and they clearly enjoyed the opportunity to read the story with the teacher and they understood the gist of what was read.
105. In a mid-level literacy class in Year 6, the majority of pupils were using and applying skills of speaking and listening which were in line with national expectations. The pupils were observed to listen attentively to what was read and to contribute enthusiastically but thoughtfully in response to questions knowing that their ideas are valued. Some pupils in Year 6 have had good opportunities to develop their skills in the performing arts and parents value the encouragement that pupils are given. In a literacy class in Year 6, higher-attaining pupils were able to express their interpretation of a poem by James Agard with clarity and subtlety.
106. Pupils throughout the school make sustained progress in learning to write and higher-attaining pupils make good progress. In the early years and at Key Stage 1, pupils receive systematic instruction in activities that contribute to accurate letter and word formation. They learn to write in continuous prose through a variety of effective procedures, beginning with copy writing. Most significantly, the pupils are given many opportunities to produce different types of writing for sensible purposes. Topic work in other subjects, such as religious education, also provides good opportunities for extended writing. The 'Mini-Beast' booklet prepared by the pupils in Year 2 is a good example of an attractively illustrated piece of writing.
107. At Key Stage 2 pupils make steady progress through the literacy programme in classes that are grouped in terms of their attainment in English. Handwriting and spelling are also taught throughout the school, generally well and systematically. In most classes throughout the school, pupils are given the opportunity to write in A4 size booklets and they are taught, to good effect, to pay attention to the layout and presentation of what they write. When this is not the case, as in Year 4, the standard of presentation deteriorates. Additional time is allowed each week for further writing activities, and this has a good impact on pupils' developing writing skills. With a few exceptions, staff mark written work in English conscientiously and constructively.

108. Pupils in Year 6 are given the opportunity to produce an excellent range of well-presented written work. They are given very good guidance about matters such as planning, drafting and redrafting what they write. They also receive very good teaching relating to higher-order skills such as the production of summaries and paraphrases. There is a good link between what pupils read and what they write, for example with regard to poetry. Good use is made of word-processing to present final drafts, such as literary writing on "My Loving Home". Higher-attaining pupils in Year 6 are challenged to produce their best, for example, in writing extended stories in several chapters. Very good support is also given to other pupils, for example, by providing them with a structure or scaffold for the writing of ghost stories. Consequently, all pupils in the final year make steady progress in the development of writing skills. Higher-attaining pupils respond well to the challenges given them and make good progress. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs also make appropriate progress due to the good support that they receive.
109. A good basis for pupils to learn to read is also provided in the early years. Pupils are taught phonics systematically. They learn to decode words and to recognise appropriate sight-vocabulary. By the end of Year 1, pupils have learnt an appropriate range of letter-sounds so that they can decode unfamiliar words. All pupils have access to a good variety of reading materials in addition to the reading schemes used by the school. Teachers keep class records of what is read and pupils also have reading diaries in which what they read at home and at school is recorded. These diaries show that some pupils in each class receive little support for reading at home. The effect of absenteeism is also apparent in the records that are kept. In several instances in the books that were examined, no reading was recorded over a period of several weeks. In other cases, the pupils' reading records provide a context for positive exchanges between the class teacher and parents. Pupils sometimes choose books for voluntary reading that are too difficult for them and they would benefit from regular discussion with teachers about their choice of books. Some teachers make a great effort to hear pupils read. One, for example, listened to pupils read at lunchtime to make up for time spent on a school trip.
110. Almost all the pupils who were heard to read did so accurately. However, several instances occurred where a pupil who read aloud clearly and accurately did not fully understand the meaning of the passage. One inspector recording evidence about the reading skills of a pupil in Year 3 remarked that the pupil "*does not always understand what is read or question what has not been understood*". Many pupils have difficulty interpreting the meaning of words and idioms, particularly if these would not be normally encountered in everyday contexts. For example, in reading a story about pirates, a pupil in Year 2 who read fluently did not know the meaning of the words "lantern", "scuttling" or "thick-set". Likewise, a pupil in Year 4 read expressively, but could not interpret what it meant for a ship to be "tossed about" in the water which "broke over it".
111. By the end of Year 2, pupils have learnt to use a Contents Page when using information books and they are familiar with the difference between fiction and non-fiction. While a number of pupils in Years 3 and 4 did not make efficient use of an index in order to locate references, by Year 6 all the pupils who were heard to read had developed good skills in information-gathering and in using reference materials.
112. A wide range of reading materials have been purchased to support pupils' reading. Classrooms are well-supplied with a range of fiction and non-fiction which pupils are encouraged to read, for example before assemblies. Such un-guided reading sessions are not necessarily the most efficient use of reading time and the co-ordinators are considering the need for the introduction of individual reading targets. This would be a positive step.
113. At the time of the inspection the school library, which has been newly-stocked, was not being used as a regular resource for learning or research, although earlier in the school year classes at Key Stage 2 did have access to the library once a week. The school's intention is to make the library more available to pupils, for example, during lunchtime periods. Regular book fairs are organised

during lunchtimes and after school to coincide with parents' evenings, and this is having a positive impact on raising standards of attainment.

114. Pupils' attitudes to learning English are very positive. In all classes there was a good working atmosphere and the pupils concentrated on completing the work they had been given. In several classes, pupils of different levels of attainment were seen to enjoy completing tasks that were well-adapted to their particular language needs, for example, in a lesson in a Year 2 class that involved understanding non-fiction texts, such as a fact-sheet on the red squirrel. In a Year 5 lower literacy group, the enthusiastic pupils were reported to have "concentrated well and tried hard". Higher-attaining pupils in particular respond very well to being challenged, even on technical matters such as understanding the relationship between sounds and spellings. Pupils also enjoy activities in which they are given the opportunity to share what they have written. The subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, especially with regard to the range of literature studied.
115. The two English co-ordinators have not been long in post, but they have vigorously and successfully pursued a number of initiatives, which are having a positive effect on pupils' attainment. They have monitored planning for literacy lessons on a half-termly basis and they have begun to monitor teaching in the lower Key Stage 2 classes, where there is some cause for concern about pupils' sustained progress. A scheme for the regular assessment of unaided writing has been undertaken. Samples of writing and a tracking sheet for each class are collated and available to staff. This initiative will provide a sound basis for continued improvement in the teaching and learning of writing, especially if the inconsistencies in the way that some work is marked and moderated are addressed. The school has organised several training courses on raising attainment in literacy, with a focus on writing, and the majority of staff have responded very well to the skilled advice given by local education authority officers; this has had a very positive effect on standards of attainment in writing. The school has also made good use of the additional programmes that have been developed to support the National Literacy Strategy.

MATHEMATICS

116. Most pupils' achievement in mathematics shows an improving picture. In the 2001 national tests, the school's results were well below the national average for pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. The prolonged illness of an inexperienced Year 2 teacher had a negative effect on pupils' progress during 2001. This problem has now been remedied. This year (2002) grades in the National Curriculum tests are well up. For instance, 87 per cent of pupils attained the expected grade in mathematics at Key Stage 1 this year compared with 54 per cent last year. Standards are not as good as they were at the time of the previous inspection, when they were judged to be average compared with schools nationally, but achievement over time is good for the majority of pupils, with examples of very good achievement in the upper ability group in Year 6. Pupils now start from a lower base on entry than judged previously. The delayed acquisition of English language for many pupils has a direct influence on their achievement in mathematics over time. Many pupils take extended holidays, which interrupt continuous schooling. For example, in a lower Year 3 mathematics group, 16 per cent of pupils had taken an extended holiday during the present academic year, four per cent of pupils were frequently absent from school, and 12 per cent of pupils were new to the group, arriving with very limited spoken English and needing additional language support. All these factors have a negative effect on standards.
117. Scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of teaching show an improving trend in attainment of pupils, with standards broadly in line with national averages by the end of Year 2, and just below by the end of Year 6, with the capacity to improve still further. The attainment by pupils in the current Year 5 is broadly in line with national averages, for example. This improvement is securely based on the good implementation of government guidelines regarding the teaching of mathematics, good teaching overall, the provision of booster groups targeting pupils' needing additional language support, and much closer analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the

subject in the school. Pupils at Key Stage 2, including pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils, are well provided for by the use of ability sets, which cater for individual needs and ensure these pupils make good progress overall. Test results show that boys attain higher grades than girls, but during the inspection there appeared to be no significant difference in the work or response of boys and girls. All pupils are fully included in all aspects of mathematics. Although teaching is generally good, overall progress in learning is only satisfactory over time, clearly reflecting the negative effect of extended holidays taken during school time. Nevertheless, learning accelerates to very good in the higher attaining group in Year 6, supported by well-focused and challenging teaching. Pupils who attend the school continuously make good progress in their learning.

118. Recently introduced government guidelines provide a good framework for planning. The mental quick-thinking oral sessions introducing each numeracy lesson are generally well taught, using a good range of practical resources including white boards, clock faces and overhead projector. These strategies keep most pupils alert and interested, aiding their quick, accurate calculations. Nevertheless, the sharing of strategies that pupils use to find their answers is not common practice, with missed opportunities to consolidate and enhance learning to higher levels. Pupils are given good opportunities to apply mathematics to everyday problems, using number systems in their own mother language, as observed in a Year 2 lesson involving the counting of 5p coins. Nevertheless, activities that included careful estimation and measurement, often in the form of practical activities involving measurement, graphical representation and interpretation of results, are not always a part of pupils' weekly experience in investigational work.
119. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good overall. In Year 1 problems with the understanding of mathematical language associated with the ordering of crayons by placing them in order of size by selecting the longest first, needed very careful and thoughtful explanation and consolidation by the teacher. Again, this highlights some pupils' problem with the understanding of written and spoken language. In a Year 2 lesson observed after returning from an educational trip the day before, pupils enjoyed sorting decimal coins, giving respective values as they purchased selected goods from the teacher-manufactured worksheets. Pupils worked very well, maintaining very good levels of sustained concentration. However, it was very obvious that understanding for lower attaining pupils was well below age-related expectations as they attempted to count beyond twenty. The reporting back at the end of the lesson provided a good opportunity to enhance and consolidate pupils' speaking and listening skills when asked to give answers. An outstanding feature of the lesson was the effective use of additional adult support working very effectively with groups of differing ability. Teachers indicate the appropriate mathematical vocabulary in their planning, however in reality it is seldom used to extend or consolidate pupils' learning. This is also true of well displayed mathematical vocabulary that often forms part of the mathematics corner in each classroom. Overall, displays fail to reflect a range of pupils' work, especially the use of information and communication technology. Few classrooms have displays that encourage pupils to 'pick up and play' in a constructive learning manner. This is an area for improvement. Teachers' expectations are high and clearly reflect the significant upward trend in standards being achieved by all pupils by the end of Year 2.
120. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is good. Most lessons observed were of generally good quality and led to pupils learning effectively, including those with special educational needs, more able pupils and those from all ethnic groups. Teachers displayed confident subject knowledge in most lessons, enabling lessons to proceed at a fairly brisk pace. The use of practical resources, often in the form of a dart board displayed via an overhead projector, enhanced good learning, where pupils were required to add given numbers together before taking them away from a given total. As a result of this effective method of teaching, pupils appeared enthusiastic, displaying a very positive attitude to learning. During a carefully structured lesson in Year 6, pupils confidently placed given numbers into a formula to predict future patterns. Higher attaining pupils very quickly and confidently predicted the number pattern being created. This work was directly linked to shape and area, reflecting a recent project involving the furnishing, including carpeting, of a bedroom. Work set by the class teacher was clearly targeted at differing ability groups, challenging the

higher attaining pupils and supporting lower attaining pupils. The target of the day's lesson was displayed and referred to during the final part of the lesson, thus enabling the learning that had taken place to clearly inform the content of the next lesson. As a result of this very good teaching, pupils' behaviour was very good, most working with the minimum of supervision and producing accurate work. In a lesson observed in Year 4, which was judged satisfactory overall, the weaknesses stemmed from the teacher's rather hesitant mental session which was followed by a slowing of pace and a lack of sustained challenge for higher attaining pupils, who undertook the same tasks as others before moving on to the planned extension work.

121. The planned use of information and communication technology to support ongoing numeracy skills is very patchy, and is unsatisfactory overall. This is very evident when reviewing pupils' work and examining class displays relating to data handling. In most lessons the use of additional adult support has a positive effect on learning, as adults have appropriate expectations both of the ways pupils respond, and their ability to think and speak in clear terms. Very effective use of additional supporting adults was observed in Year 3 during a session involving telling the time. However, during a small number of lessons, additional supporting adults are not effectively used during mental warm up sessions.
122. The subject is soundly managed by two recently appointed co-ordinators responsible for each key stage. The capacity to improve standards is satisfactory and there is a good shared commitment from all staff to achieve this. The school is successfully using the data it has to track pupils' progress from Year 1 to Year 6. The effective use of assessment is having a direct impact on raising standards. The sharing of individual targets with pupils to move their learning forward, however, requires greater clarity and focus. The school is aware of the need to develop more rigorous systems in the monitoring of teaching and pupils' written work.

SCIENCE

123. There has not been any improvement in standards since the previous inspection. They are well below average at the end of both key stages. This is reflected in the results of the national tests and assessments, which indicate consistently low standards since 1998.
124. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. However, there are many problems. Some pupils enter Year 1 with low skills, and a significant number of others have problems with language, there are high levels of mobility, and also many pupils slip back in their knowledge and understanding of science as they have been away so much. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make similar progress to the rest. Pupils in Year 2 can talk about simple forces in terms of pushing and pulling and can identify where these occur in everyday life. In one class they have been taught the word 'friction' in relation to cars travelling across different surfaces, but only a very small minority of girls have any understanding of its effect.
125. Sixty per cent of the pupils have a secure enough grasp of the knowledge that is needed to reach the expected level in the national tests, by the end of Year 6 this year. Only a small percentage of pupils reached the higher level. A higher percentage of boys than girls reach the expected level, but girls perform better at the higher level. There is no significant difference in the performance of ethnic minority pupils and those of white United Kingdom origin. Pupils know, for example, that the human skeleton protects organs such as the heart, lungs and brain. They have a good understanding of evaporation and condensation, and can describe examples, such as windows steaming up in the bathroom and water running down the walls. They explain that day and night occur because the Earth spins on its axis.
126. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress because of significant weaknesses in the curriculum provided which is constraining the development of their understanding. All the lessons seen were at least satisfactory and half were good. The teachers work hard at preparing their lessons with a clear focus on what they want pupils to know. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers usually adopt a lively approach that keeps the pupils interested. The good relationships between teachers and pupils create a secure learning environment. As a result, the pupils are keen to learn and they work conscientiously. Most teachers make sure that all the pupils are fully included in lessons. Sometimes they do this by tailoring questions to the specific needs of different ability groups. When support is available, teachers use the extra staff judiciously to help pupils with special educational needs or those who speak English as an additional language.
127. Despite the satisfactory teaching in lessons, the pupils' learning over time in Key Stage 2 is unsatisfactory because of the unsatisfactory delivery of the curriculum. Although the school has adopted the latest national guidance, this has not been adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. Although teachers plan in year groups, provision is patchy, with some classes covering a lot more work than others. This means that the work is not taught consistently in sufficient depth to make sure that pupils have grasped one idea before moving on to new work. As a result, although pupils learn scientific facts, they do not always understand or remember what they have been taught. In addition there is too little emphasis on investigational skills.
128. Throughout the school, boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds do not achieve as well as they might because of some weaknesses in teaching that need to be addressed if standards are to rise. Some teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge to teach confidently. As a result, the work is often undemanding, particularly for average and more able pupils. Although there are more opportunities for practical work than at the time of the previous inspection, the tasks are very controlled and pupils are not encouraged to think for themselves or plan their own investigations. In a lesson in Year 6, for example, the pupils were learning about the effect of air resistance on different sizes and shapes of parachute. The teacher took away all the fun and challenge by choosing the materials and telling the pupils what they were going to do, how they

were going to do it and how they would record their results. As a result of such teaching, pupils are very dependent on adult support. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is variable, but unsatisfactory overall. Only in a very few instances does it point the way forward for pupils to improve their work; this was highlighted in the previous inspection report. There was a significant discrepancy in the grades given by teachers for pupils in Year 6 last year, and the grades attained in the national tests; this would indicate that staff do not really know what they are looking for.

129. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social development. Pupils have many opportunities to work in groups or pairs while carrying out practical activities. During such activities they co-operate well and value the ideas and expertise of others. Boys and girls of different cultural backgrounds get on well together. This was very marked when a girl in a mixed group in Year 6 was asked by the rest to take the lead in using a computer program.
130. Science is used well as a vehicle for developing pupils' writing skills, as they are encouraged to write about what they have done in a logical order. However, teachers could do more to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills when pupils are presenting their findings to the rest of the class. As the work is very directed by teachers, pupils are not encouraged to find information for themselves. Thus, opportunities to develop research skills are missed. Suitable opportunities are taken to develop pupils' numeracy skills, such as presenting their findings in graphs and charts. However, as practical work is undertaken as a whole class activity, pupils do not have enough opportunities to collect their own data. Satisfactory use is made of computers to enable the pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills.
131. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory. The leadership of science has been the subject of considerable changes over the past few years. For a long time there was no co-ordinator. This has made it difficult for the school to get a firm grip on moving the subject forward. The current co-ordinator has only been at the school for two terms. She does not have an overall view of what happens in other classes because she has not yet had the opportunity to observe other teachers. Although the senior managers monitor planning, they have not yet monitored learning through talking to pupils and examining their books. Therefore they have not picked up that the provision is so variable between classes. The headteacher, however, is aware of what needs to be done to raise standards. Active plans include the introduction of end-of-year assessment procedures and formal monitoring of teaching and learning.

ART AND DESIGN

132. Art has been maintained, overall, as a strength of the school, as it was judged to be at the time of the previous inspection. Although the quality of work by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 is in line with the national expectation and this judgement is below that of the previous inspection, pupils make good progress to attain high standards by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils achieve well overall and often produce work that is arresting in its impact on the viewer. The underpinning strength of the work are the plentiful opportunities which pupils have to express themselves through symbol, pattern and colour, in line with their cultural heritage. Teachers value the home influences that pupils bring to art and design.
133. Pupils in Year 1 begin to explore the effects of different implements to create lines of varying qualities, textures and patterns. This experimentation, which sometimes takes place in their sketchbooks, leads appropriately to the effective skills of the blending of colour in the media of paint and pastel. Pupils in Year 2 begin to recognise the power of pattern through, for example, the extension of small Aboriginal designs to a larger scale. This work in a cultural pattern is contrasted with the fair attempts they make to work in the style of William Morris. However, pupils in parallel classes in both Year 1 and 2 do not always have similar curricular experiences and this is a weakness. By the end of Year 2 pupils begin to have an appreciation of the human form through simple portraiture and experiments to draw figures in action.

134. The quality of pupils' work at Key Stage 2 develops significantly, but not always consistently across all classes. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 draw on the work of Klimt, Ton Schulten, Miro, Kandinsky and other designers and artists to develop work with subtle colour and tone, imaginative line, strong patterns and symbolic images. Pupils extend their skills through the effective use of digitally generated graphic design. The latter skills are also applied well to the illustration of poems and prayers. Pupils are confident to work in non-representational mode, which is conducive to the expression of the cultural heritage of the majority. Pupils in Year 4 demonstrate a good understanding of the Western European tradition through experimentation in the impressionist style and create expressive pictures applying pointillism. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 develop powerful designs and artefacts through work in textiles. Having studied the Bayeux Tapestry, pupils in Year 5 use the idiom of sewn images very effectively to imitate African stories. This is a significant link to their heritage for some pupils and reflects the manner in which art and design is used in the school to generate an inclusive community.
135. Pupils in their final year respond very well to the opportunities to refine their skills and apply art and design to wider dimensions. Pupils in one Year 6 class, in following a project in close association with the Manchester Arts Festival, have developed an evocative film interpretation, with a sound track, of the feelings of poor people living in the Congo. Beginning with storyboards which define the script, actions and a guide to a director, pupils developed ingenious and sometimes subtle sketches, including some from observation, to illustrate their message. The full impact of this graphically inspired work was dramatically illustrated when pupils came to review their work in a plenary session. The pupils' response to the challenge of this project demonstrates the high quality of the work that they are able to achieve. A similar high level of response is also well illustrated by the quality of interpretation, the design, and accurate scale which all pupils achieved in creating model sets for a scene in Macbeth. Pupils' overall achievement is very good, when set against their initial skills.
136. Pupils obviously feel very comfortable with the tasks they are given and this is reflected in their positive attitudes. They often identify the subject as their favourite. In class they are well behaved and work with involvement and independence. They select media well and are brave in blending different techniques. For example, pupils in Year 4 were happy to switch from crayon to paint or from a brush to a finger-tip to gain the effect they required. The care with which pupils in Year 6 explore different interpretations of feather patterns and use sensitive shading in delicate tones pays tribute to the concentration they must have expended. These positive and flexible attitudes are well established in pupils by the end of Year 6 and prepare them well for their future.
137. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and of good quality overall at Key Stage 2. Teaching however, is of inconsistent quality across the classes in both key stages. Examples of good and very good teaching, respectively, were observed at both key stages. In classes in which teaching is a strength, teachers have a good knowledge of and empathy for the subject, work is well planned to offer pupils opportunities to use a wide range of media, and good use is made of resources of expertise from outside the school. A lack of self-confidence in knowledge of the subject prevents some teachers from developing their work further. In some year-groups this issue is overcome by exchanging classes to teach to strengths.
138. The selection of artists and ideas from a wide range of cultures and traditions, including primitive work, gives breadth and richness to the curriculum. The subject contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Only a lack of balance between classes in the provision for observational work, and wider exploration of three-dimensional media, narrows an otherwise good curriculum. The recent introduction of the government-approved guidelines is beginning to support the planning for the subject, but teachers are rightly not straight-jacketed in their choices of activity. Classroom displays are generally well presented. Work from pupils in current classes and from recent years fills the communal areas. Although the range of past work celebrates achievement and gives pupils ideas, it is sometimes rather old and tired looking, and detracts from the vital work which pupils are currently producing.

139. The two co-ordinators, one of whom is designate in the post, recognise appropriate future directions for the subject and the potential of sharing the good and often very good practice within the school, but have insufficient opportunity to monitor planning, teaching and learning to have a significant impact. It is of note that all pupils, of whatever background and cultural heritage, have worthwhile opportunities for communicating through the graphic arts, and for extending these studies constructively into film and the performing arts.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

140. Standards at the end of both key stages are as expected for pupils of the same age. This is in line with the findings of the previous inspection. Boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds achieve satisfactorily as they move through the school. This includes pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, who are supported well in lessons.
141. Pupils are introduced to the design process in Year 1, and this is built upon steadily as they move through the school. A criticism in the last report was that pupils did not have enough opportunities to generate their own ideas. This is still the case in a minority of classes, but where teachers have more confidence, pupils produce their own designs. In Year 3, for example, pupils have made a wide variety of models using air to make them move. Although they have all used the same equipment for the movement mechanism, i.e. syringes, plastic tubing and balloons, they have shown good levels of creativity and imagination. In so doing they have learnt about the many uses of pneumatic power in everyday life.
142. Only one lesson was observed, but the evidence from pupils' work is that teaching is satisfactory with some strengths. Teachers provide interesting contexts for the work and this motivates the pupils to try hard. In Year 4, for example, pupils make pop up books linked to the shared reading text in literacy. As they enjoy the text, they are very keen to produce their own versions. Teachers are good at teaching the basic skills of measuring and cutting, and handling tools safely. This means that the pupils derive a lot of pleasure from their work because their products usually turn out the way they have planned.
143. Discussion with pupils indicates that they are very enthusiastic and really enjoy their lessons. They talk eagerly about work they have done in the past and what they would change to make their products better. A group of boys and girls in Year 6 also spoke of the challenge presented by some of the tasks. When they made scale models of theatres, for example, they found a lot of the calculations and measuring quite difficult, but worthwhile in the end.
144. The subject leader is very enthusiastic and well qualified to lead the subject forward. However, although she provides good informal support for colleagues, the school does not make the most of her expertise by allowing her to work alongside other teachers who are less secure in their teaching. There are no formal assessment procedures, so work is not necessarily planned to build on previous learning. The co-ordinator is aware that this weakness needs to be addressed in order to raise standards further.

GEOGRAPHY

145. Standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. This judgement is the same as that of the previous inspection. At Key Stage 2 standards are below those judged by the previous inspection and pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory. Pupils do not experience the full breadth of the National Curriculum and are therefore unable to attain the appropriate standards. Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils, by the end of Year 6, to begin to make constructive judgements on the impact of human activities on the physical world in which they live. This is the key weakness of their work and is the case for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds.
146. Pupils at Key Stage 1 make sound progress in their geographical understanding. Pupils in Year 1 make excursions into the immediate environment of the school and its surrounding area to record journeys and the positions of places of interest, such as leisure centres and shops. Through these experiences pupils are beginning to recognise features of the environment and their significance to their lives. Pupils in Year 2 are enjoying extending this knowledge, appropriately, to the wider world through the medium of Barnaby Bear, a toy character who oversees the visits of pupils and friends. Pupils have satisfactory understanding of maps and a globe. They use lists effectively to

- describe and compare the features of a mainland area, an island and a seaside. They make suitable conclusions of the effect of these localities on the needs for different forms of transport.
147. By the end of Year 6 pupils have a core of factual knowledge, but insufficient understanding of the relationship between land features, climate and human activity. The subject, therefore, makes an unsatisfactory contribution to pupils' social development. Many pupils in Year 3 could not identify Manchester on a map of the British Isles. By the end of Year 4 pupils use resource books successfully to identify and locate cities and countries around the world. Pupils in Year 5 can identify countries and continents from an atlas. More able pupils in Year 6 use terms such as "temperate climate", "hemisphere" and "plateau" with confidence. However, while pupils in Year 6 can describe the water cycle in simple terms, they have no effective understanding of how this process relates to rivers. Nor do they know how rivers form and shape valleys.
148. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory but at Key Stage 2 it is unsatisfactory. Pupils' attitudes, however, are good. They are interested in the work which is offered to them. They concentrate and co-operate well in sharing information and resources. In a Year 4 class studying features of countries pupils worked independently, but were confident to pursue aspects they did not understand with the teacher. The teaching at Key Stage 1 enables pupils to attain appropriate standards. At Key Stage 2 teachers do not plan sufficiently to ensure that the essence of the subject is taught in sufficient depth. For example, in studies of 'What's in the news?', selections of items are made and places located on maps. But insufficient attention is paid to news items that have a geographical context. The planning of lessons is generally appropriate and the management of pupils is good. Where teaching is better, pupils are given good opportunities to apply their writing skills to the work. In some classes teachers rely too heavily on work sheets that often lack challenge.
149. The school is in the process of introducing the government recommended curriculum plans. As they are not fully in place, particularly at Key Stage 2, the curriculum falls between the two stools of the old and the new, and does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Consequently, significant elements are missed out in pupils' experiences or not taught in sufficient depth. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 do not have the opportunity of appropriate fieldwork and insufficient attention is paid to environmental issues. Pupils' knowledge, in aspects such as mapping skills is not fully developed and many do not understand the use of keys to help interpret maps. However, the curriculum successfully uses pupils' own cultural heritage. Pupils are able, for example, to make close comparisons of life in the Indian sub-continent to that in the United Kingdom. Too little information and communication technology is used to develop pupils' understanding of geography.
150. Provision for the subject and consequently the appropriate quality of teaching and learning is restricted by several factors. Some teachers have had insufficient opportunity to understand and develop the new curriculum and its relationship to the requirements of the National Curriculum. The two co-ordinators, who are new to the rôle, have had insufficient opportunity to monitor the planning and teaching of the subject and thereby to contribute to its development; management is therefore unsatisfactory. Due to this lack of monitoring the co-ordinators are not aware that pupils in parallel classes in the same year-group do not have the same curriculum, which does not promote equal opportunities. There is a disproportionately small amount of time given to the study of the geography in Years 5 and 6. In these year-groups only one term out of three in each school year is given to studying the subject. There are inadequate resources for some aspects of the planned curriculum. For example, at Key Stage 2, there is no opportunity provided for pupils to develop their fieldwork skills by comparing another locality such as Blackpool with their own. Both the teachers and the co-ordinators are keen to develop their work and recognise areas of inadequacy.

HISTORY

151. Standards by the end of Year 6 are similar to those found nationally. Standards at the end of Year 2 are in line with national expectations, but a large numbers of younger pupils have under-

- developed language skills and find it difficult to understand vocabulary, discuss and write about what they have learned. As they move through Key Stage 2, pupils become much more proficient in reading and writing and consequently they make better progress. The 1998 report stated that pupils' attainment in history was below expectations at Key Stage 1 and in line with expectations at Key Stage 2; the differences were due to the planning of the curriculum and teachers' ways of recording attainment.
152. A nationally recognised scheme of work has been implemented and is proving to be beneficial in supporting teachers' planning. In Year 6, however, while pupils in two of the three classes follow an in-depth study of modern developments in the history of Britain, the third class looks at life in Anglo-Saxons times. Although both topics are useful for the development of skills and interesting for pupils, this is inequality of provision.
153. The curriculum is very well supplemented by a good use of visits. The quality of work produced as a result of these visits witnesses how much pupils learn and understand from first hand experiences. Visits to the Stockport Air-Raid Shelter Museum and to the Egyptology section of Manchester Museum, represent very good provision. Real insight into life in Tudor and Victorian times is provided through visits to Bramall Hall and Lark Hill Place. The study of the problems of emigrants and refugees at the Local Pump House Museum is particularly appropriate and highly relevant for the Year 6 pupils of Birchfield School. There are good links with other subjects. For example, history supports literacy very well, particularly in Years 5 and 6, with much practice in extended writing. Art and design, and design and technology support history well when pupils draw and make artefacts appropriate to the topics being taught. There is very little evidence of the use of information and communication technology to support the development of pupils' research skills, and this is unsatisfactory.
154. Pupils show a good appreciation of change over time. For example, pupils in Year 1 consider the changes that have taken place over the years in toys and homes. Pupils at Key Stage 2 consider changes in the times of Ancient Greece and Egypt when compared with Tudor times, as well as life at the time of Queen Victoria. They know about important historical people, such as Henry VIII and Florence Nightingale. They are able to construct appropriate time-lines, developing their understanding of chronology.
155. History is taught in term blocks, alternating with the teaching of geography. The differing length of terms each year means that these two curriculum areas have unequal timetable allocation. It was not possible to inspect any lessons at Key Stage 1 because it was the term for geography. Judgement relating to standards is made by scrutiny of displays and of pupils' work, and discussion with staff. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection; it is satisfactory overall. However, at Key Stage 2 some good and very good teaching was seen; in a lesson with pupils in Year 6 it was very good. In preparation for what turned out to be the very good lesson, pupils had sought the opinions of parents and grandparents with regard to the changing rôle of women. They made links and connections between the changes in rôle expectation from the time of World War II. Sensitive discussion enabled the pupils to understand how these changes had a knock-on effect relating to a number of areas including employment and religious expectations. This shows history being brought alive and being highly relevant. Pupils were given opportunity to share opinions confidently. The lesson was made possible by very good relationships between the teacher and pupils. The behaviour of pupils in lessons is good and they demonstrate good attitudes towards the subject, due to these relationships. Good quality displays in classrooms and in open areas of the school promote the subject well. The subjects makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and this is good in Year 6.
156. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory. This is because co-ordinators are not empowered to either monitor teachers' planning or to scrutinise the workbooks of pupils throughout the school. Two very recently appointed co-ordinators are responsible for both history and geography. Therefore there is no overall single subject responsibility. Resources to support

teaching are good. The internet and CD Roms are insufficiently used to motivate and support the development of historical knowledge and understanding.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

157. There have been considerable improvements since the previous inspection when standards and provision were unsatisfactory. Provision is now good, so that pupils achieve well in specific lessons in information and communication technology throughout the school. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make the same good progress. Pupils' attainment meets the expected standards at the end of Year 2, although it is still below expectations at the end of Year 6. The rising standards have come about because of vastly improved equipment, effective training for all staff resulting in improved teaching, a better-organised curriculum and very good leadership from the co-ordinators. Staff have worked together very effectively to put the improvements into place.
158. In the majority of classes standards meet national expectations in all aspects of the curriculum, and are improving. For example, in a good lesson in Year 2 pupils showed secure skills in searching a database. Pupils in Year 4 have a sound understanding of Logo, and type in commands accurately to move a "screen turtle" to make required shapes. Throughout the school pupils use word processing programs to write about a variety of topics with increasing expertise. The exception to the sound standards is in Years 5 and 6, where standards still lag behind because pupils have not had the benefit of the good provision throughout their school career. They are making up lost ground and make good progress in lessons in the computer suite. In those topics they have studied recently, they show good understanding, but in other areas their knowledge is very shaky. For example, pupils in Year 6 have little understanding of the complexities of spreadsheets or of the use of Logo, although they have a good understanding of word-processing and of a range of graphics programs. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are making the same progress.
159. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In lessons in the computer suite, teaching is generally good, reflecting good subject knowledge, very good management of pupils, and clear explanations, combined with good opportunities for pupils to have hands-on experience with computers. However, many teachers are still insecure about how they can most effectively use information and communication technology to support work in other subjects. During the inspection, although some good use was seen of computers in some lessons, these were infrequent. Pupils' work shows relatively few examples of the use of computers to support work across the curriculum. Practice is inconsistent between different classes.
160. Pupils have very positive attitudes to lessons and particularly enjoy using the computers in the suite. They work hard, concentrate well and their behaviour is very good. They collaborate well in pairs, sharing ideas and the equipment amicably. When they meet problems, they show persistence and patience in attempting to solve them, and all pupils show increasing confidence in using computers. All this supports their improving standards in the subject.
161. The leadership from the co-ordinators is very good and they have achieved a lot in a short time. They have worked closely together to help their colleagues. They have organised effective training and provided a clear framework for the curriculum, which meets National Curriculum requirements. They have ensured that the equipment available, particularly the new computer suite, is of a good quality, and have provided help and advice to help colleagues to use it well. However, management of the subject, while good overall, has need for improvement in several important areas. As yet, there is no system to monitor standards and teaching in the subject, so that disparities in provision between classes are not identified. An example of this was seen in Year 5, when two classes learned about procedures in Logo. Although both lessons were effective, the focus was different in each and the two groups of pupils learned different things during the lessons. In addition, there are no systems in place to assess and record pupils'

attainment. As a result, teachers do not have enough information to help them match work closely to the needs of different pupils.

162. Resources for the subject are satisfactory, a major improvement since the last inspection. The equipment in the suite is used very effectively, by all teachers, to provide a weekly lesson when all pupils can get hands-on experience. This is a major factor in the improved standards. However, not enough use is made of computers in the classroom to support work in other subjects or to give pupils extra practice in the skills they learn in the suite. There is no systematic planning of how information and communication technology should be used in each year-group to support in different subjects. As a result, use is somewhat haphazard, and there is no guarantee that pupils will receive a balanced provision during their time in school. The co-ordinators are considering how the various shortcoming can be remedied. The school intends to improve pupils' access to computers by buying extra equipment, both in classrooms and in a second suite.

MUSIC

163. Pupils' standards of attainment are below expectations in some aspects of music by the time they leave the school, as they have not been given the full range of work to develop all their skills. This is doubly a shame as, in some aspects of music such as singing and playing instruments, their performance is at least in line with national expectations and sometimes higher. The previous report stated that pupils' standards of attainment were in line with national expectations at both key stages. The decline is due to the planning of the curriculum and the low profile some important aspects of music have had over the last few years. However, the deficiencies in the curriculum noted at that inspection are essentially the same as those noted now, and so the subject has not improved substantially in four years.
164. Only communal singing was seen at Key Stage 1, but records of teaching show that pupils have been given an appropriate range of experiences that suggest that their achievements are satisfactory. Few music lessons were seen at Key Stage 2, but discussion with pupils, and the few records of teaching, combined with a total lack of records of pupils' achievement, show that overall attainment is below that expected in listening and appraising music, and in composing. There is no difference in the attainment of pupils that can be attributed to their abilities or their backgrounds. It is the amount of teaching that makes the most difference to pupils' attainment.
165. In the aspects of music that are given high priority, such as singing and playing percussion instruments, pupils' attainment is at least as expected and often higher. Pupils enjoy the lessons and concentrate well. They relish the chance to take part in learning Indian instruments and African drumming, and to sing in the Soul Choir. The school has a culture of performance that is helping pupils to develop confidence and which enhances their self-esteem. A good range of non-Western music is taught, but insufficient emphasis is given to the classical Western tradition. The subject plays an important part in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
166. The teaching, when it takes place, is at least satisfactory and, when music is taught by specialists, pupils' learning is good as the teaching is often of high quality. The attainment of pupils in performance is usually good. In the lessons seen pupils were well behaved and this helped their controlled performances. In singing and playing instruments pupils of all abilities and from all cultural backgrounds made similar good, and sometimes very good, progress in their learning. Pupils in Year 3, when taught by the co-ordinator, can create an ostinato rhythm pattern and respond carefully to the signals from the conductor. Most can read simple musical notation and time a crochet rest accurately. The co-ordinator has identified a pupil with musical talents and these are being well fostered.
167. The school has arranged for visiting teachers of recorder, flute, clarinet, and African drumming, and pupils' learning during these sessions is at least good. It would be better if the woodwind players practised more between sessions. Parents do not have to pay for these extra lessons. The teaching of Indian music by a visiting specialist is very good and this aspect of music does much to

foster pupils' spiritual and cultural development. The pupils in Year 5 have valuable experiences learning to play Indian instruments. They play the instruments, especially the santors, with sensitivity and are able to improve their playing of the claves after discussion and thought. The atmosphere established by the teacher is influential in pupils' approach to the lesson, and they concentrate well for a long time. Pupils play from memory and are aware of their own contribution to the piece.

168. A visiting teacher takes the Soul Choir as an extra-curricular activity one dinner-time. Pupils sing with gusto during these sessions, although there is a tendency to shout. Pupils can sing very sweetly when they perform quietly. They display a confidence and enthusiasm when performing which suggests thorough work by staff in the past. An ensemble for older pupils during the dinner break is well attended and pupils play from music. The atmosphere is fun, but purposeful, and gives pupils plenty of opportunities for choices and to work together. Older Birchfields pupils are due to sing at the opening of the Commonwealth Games ceremony two weeks after the inspection. They are very excited about this and have been practising assiduously. Such experiences also contribute very well to their social development.
169. In aspects of the curriculum, other than singing and performance, the picture is much less positive. Pupils in Year 6 could remember few songs that they had learned as they went through the school. Neither could they remember listening to much music other than African music this year. Most of them could not read music as well as the pupils in Year 3 observed two days before. They had done some composing and remembered a song about Three Witches that they had written, but are unfamiliar with many technical terms that should be known by the end of Year 6. It is clear that, in some aspects, they have had a restricted curriculum and this means that they have made insufficient progress though Key Stage 2. Some teachers' lack of skill in the subject, and a tendency to reduce the time for music in individual classes, means that unsatisfactory progress has been made.
170. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory and the co-ordinator knows it. She is aware of the deficiencies in the curriculum and teaching, and also in the lack of confidence of some staff to teach music. It is a source of disappointment to her that she does not have the time to help staff, or the authority to ensure that all the programmes of study are covered. This is unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator is a well-qualified specialist who has devised a suitable, but very basic, policy and tried to ensure that there is an appropriate scheme of work to help non-specialist staff. The policy does not specify, in sufficient detail, how the work should be taught. However music, as an academic National Curriculum subject, has had such a low priority that her efforts have come to little. Other teachers have been free to select what they teach and how much time they devote to some aspects of music. The subject has only two per cent of the timetable at the top end of Key Stage 2 and this is not enough. There is no assessment of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills and so senior management is not aware of the deficiencies. The lack of organisation and time to teach all aspects of music has led to a decline in pupils' attainment over the last four years. This is unsatisfactory and is an overall curriculum planning issue for senior management to address.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

171. Standards in physical education are in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. The position is unchanged since the school was previously inspected. Consistently at least sound, and often good, teaching together with a balanced curriculum that includes good swimming provision, ensure that all pupils, whatever their background or ability, make satisfactory progress.
172. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall throughout the school, although some good teaching was observed, and two lessons were judged to be very good. This is good improvement when compared with the previous inspection. Most teachers dress appropriately to allow free demonstration and to motivate pupils to dress correctly themselves. They are given the

opportunity to use a good range of apparatus to practise and develop their skills of travelling and balancing. Pupils are used well to demonstrate good quality movements to the rest of the class. As a result most pupils improve their control, rhythm and speed of movement. In all lessons, teaching is supported by relaxed, friendly but purposeful relationships.

173. A very good Year 6 lesson showed a class totally involved in preparing a dance sequence. They practise individual and paired routines in preparation for class choreography of the African 'high life' style of dancing. Boys and girls took the lesson seriously and made good efforts to refine their performances. During a very good games skills lesson with pupils in Year 4, the teacher changed her long-term planning to develop work demonstrated recently by representatives from a professional sports equipment firm. Activities were promoted at good pace with high expectations of individual performance. The teacher's very good class management skills ensured that a very active lesson was conducted safely. The same activities were very well coached during a very effective lunchtime football club for large numbers of older girls and boys.
174. Pupils have sound knowledge and understanding of the effect of exercise on their bodies. They can explain the importance of warming up and cooling down. They enjoy gymnastic, dance and games activities and many pupils perform at good levels. Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes in lessons and during club activities. The standard of behaviour in lessons reflects directly the quality of teaching. A pupil observed being rather disruptive in a classroom-based lesson was seen later in the day, working physically in an extremely hard, well-behaved and effective manner. Most pupils respond well and enjoy their lessons. They co-operate happily in paired activities and also in small, team game situations.
175. The school modifies a nationally recommended scheme of work to suit the needs and direction of the school, using the local authority model. All required strands of physical education are included in teachers' planning. Arrangements for swimming are good. Pupils have lessons for three consecutive terms between Years 3 and 4. Discussions with pupils and teachers confirm that a large majority meet the minimum expectations of the National Curriculum for swimming before the end of Year 4.
176. The physical education programme is supported through the very well attended football club. Inter-school matches for boys and girls take place. Good attack and defence techniques are demonstrated during these games and pupils demonstrate a developing knowledge and understanding of working together as a team. At the time of the inspection there were no opportunities for pupils to be involved in competitive athletic and swimming events. The school has done much to persuade parents that the inclusion of girls in all aspects of physical education, including swimming and playing football with the boys, will not compromise their religious and cultural beliefs; appropriate adaptations to dress have been made and all pupils benefit from the range of the provision.
177. The management of physical education is unsatisfactory. Very limited monitoring of teachers' planning takes place, nor is there opportunity to give demonstration lessons to develop teachers' confidence. However a recently appointed co-ordinator is very keen to develop the subject. She is involved in competitive games playing and, with standards already in line with what is expected nationally, there is good capacity to improve. Resources to teach all elements of physical education are satisfactory. Outdoor hard-surface playing areas are well maintained, but the extensive grassed areas are badly drained and the surface is not level enough for the effective development of skills. Improvement could be made by developing the rôle of the co-ordinator, by extending the range of opportunities for boys and girls to practise learned skills in competitive team games, and devising appropriate assessment procedures for all aspects of physical education.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

178. The school has adopted the locally Agreed Syllabus as a basis for its teaching of religious education. The programmes of work are designed to assist pupils to understand that there are different faiths and to learn more about the ideas and signs of God in these faiths. Family feelings, friendship, concern for the natural world, praise, prayer, courage and sacrifice are among the topics covered. Pupils of all faiths, or none, take part in religious education lessons and make similar progress in learning.
179. However, by the end of Year 6 standards in religious education are not in line with those expected in the locally Agreed Syllabus, and have declined since the previous inspection. Insufficient time and attention is given to the teaching of the subject, particularly at Key Stage 2 and especially in Year 6. For example, pupils' learning is impeded in Year 6 by the lack of regular religious education lessons, none taking place between January and April; hence their entitlement for a whole term is missed as pupils undertake additional work in literacy and numeracy in preparation for national tests. This is totally unsatisfactory and gives pupils the wrong message about the importance of religious education in the curriculum.
180. Overall, scrutiny of pupils' work shows that too much emphasis is placed on the use of worksheets, which are failing to support pupils' individual needs. In most lessons pupils are only required to retell a story or sequence events, and the written task does not extend their ability to think, reflect or interpret. In most classes too much time is spent on low level drawing and colouring in tasks. There is some confusion amongst staff about the amounts of time to be given to the teaching of religious education within the weekly timetable.
181. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but insufficient time is given to the subject, which results in pupils making insufficient progress in gaining knowledge of different religions and their effect on people's daily lives. There is clearly very good practice in the school as observed in Year 6. Very good teaching is characterised by a very clear knowledge of the subject matched to the use of appropriate artefacts, lesson plans with clear targets shared with pupils, successfully building upon pupils' prior learning levels. Pupils knowledgeably discussed The Life Cycle of Hinduism and the notion of life as being a continual cycle of creation, preservation, destruction and recreation. Pupils were clearly aware of the karma and understand that for Hindus the way they live their lives affects the status and form in which they are reincarnated. For all pupils learning was enjoyable and well focused. Pupils' worked in groups collectively illustrating the consequences that good or bad actions might bring. Higher attaining pupils were suitably challenged to prepare an explanation for a piece of dialogue about Hinduism to reflect how Hindus live a good life to achieve a good karma – *'I live a good life by'* As a result of this very good teaching, pupils' behaviour was excellent, most working with the minimum of supervision. In the unsatisfactory lesson observed in Year 2, learning failed to take place due to pupils' inability to understand words used such as 'repentance' and 'reconciliation'. The adult language used in the reading of the story about the 'Lost Sheep' in which Jesus clearly indicated that all people matter and that God knows each one of us individually, was completely above most pupils' understanding, therefore learning was unsatisfactory.
182. There is clearly good practice within the school which has not been identified and shared. Religious education has not been the focus of the school's improvement plan for some time, as higher priority has been given to literacy and numeracy. There are no procedures for assessing pupils' attainment in the subject, and a lack of monitoring of either teaching or pupils' learning has ultimately resulted in a falling of standards. The management of the subject is ineffective; nevertheless the co-ordinator in Key Stage 1 is aware of the need to monitor the amount of time allocated to the subject each week more closely, and that staff training is now needed if the teaching of religious education is to play its full part in the curriculum. Currently the subject does not do enough to foster pupils' spiritual development.