

INSPECTION REPORT

BHYLLS ACRE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wolverhampton

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124139

Headteacher: Mr Anthony Noall

Lead inspector: Dr Colin Lee

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 24th March 2004

Inspection number: 255502

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	201
School address:	Bhylls Lane Castlecroft Wolverhampton West Midlands
Postcode:	WV3 8DZ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr N Cox
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd June 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bhylls Acre is a smaller than average primary school, with 201 pupils on roll, serving a community on the outskirts of Wolverhampton. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage, with 22 per cent coming from a range of minority ethnic groups. All pupils have English as their first language. The socio-economic backgrounds of the pupils' families are broadly average. A small number of pupils join or leave the school during the course of a school year and this level of this mobility is lower than is found in most primary schools. Proportions of pupils with special educational needs are below average. The special needs cover a spectrum of general and specific learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and one pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Attainment on entry is average, overall, but this has been falling in recent years and the children in the reception class and those in Years 1 and 2 began school with their overall attainment being slightly below the county average. Pupils are taught in seven single-age classes.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21854	Dr Colin Lee	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education
9146	Mr Mark Brennand	Lay inspector	
20230	Mrs Jenny Clayphan	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education The Foundation Stage curriculum Special educational needs English as an additional language
22397	Mr Stuart Fowler	Team inspector	English Science Geography History Personal, social and health education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bhylls Acre Primary School is a good school that provides good value for money. By the end of Year 6, pupils' standards are above average, overall, and well above average in several key areas. This is very good achievement in relation to their past attainment. All staff work well together to provide a good quality of education and good pastoral care for all pupils.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are¹:

- Very good teaching in Years 4 to 6 has significant impact on pupils' achievement and standards.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils' standards are well above average in English, mathematics and information and communication technology.
- Very good provision for pupils' moral and social development leads to attitudes and behaviour that are good, overall, and outstanding amongst the pupils currently in Year 6.
- Governors and senior managers do not monitor or evaluate school development planning with sufficient rigour.
- There is a very good partnership with parents and carers.
- Subject co-ordinators are inconsistent in their approaches to planning developments in their subjects and this reflects lack of clarity in past expectations of senior management.
- The balance of the curriculum is adversely affected by how time is allocated to some subjects.

The school was previously inspected in June 1997. The main weaknesses identified at that time have now been fully rectified, particularly in the good improvement in provision for children in the Foundation Stage². Pupils' standards have risen since the last inspection, notably in mathematics, throughout the school, and in English, science, information and communication technology and art and design by the end of Year 6. Results in the national tests for pupils in Year 6 confirm this picture of rising standards. There have also been improvements in pupils' personal development as a result of better support and guidance and the increased attention to moral and social development. The improved quality of teaching and learning is at the heart of this good improvement in the overall effectiveness of the school. Beyond key issues addressed by the school following the last inspection, there has been insufficient improvement in the process of school development planning. Progress towards the achievement of the school's priority targets is not being evaluated sufficiently by governors or key staff. Although this weakness was quickly recognised by the new headteacher on his appointment, it has yet to be addressed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	B	D	A	A
Mathematics	B	A	A	A
Science	B	C	C	C

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Pupils' achievement is very good overall. Results in the 2003 national tests reflect the gradual rise in recent years in standards by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. The pupils concerned exceeded the challenging targets that had been set for them in the tests. The picture is similar for pupils currently in Year 6. Their targets are also very challenging, particularly in relation to the proportion achieving the higher Level 5. However, such is the effect of the very good quality of teaching that pupils in Year 6 experience, that they are not only achieving very well, but are also on

¹ The strengths and weaknesses are listed in order of significance.

² The Foundation Stage caters for children from the age of three to the end of the reception year.

track to attain standards that are well above average in English, mathematics and information and communication technology by the end of the year, and standards that are above average in science. By the end of Year 2, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards are above average in mathematics and average in reading, writing, science and information and communication technology. Throughout the school, the pupils' standards are above those found in other schools in art and design and match those seen in other schools in geography, history, physical education and religious education. There is insufficient evidence to judge standards in design and technology and music. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. The high quality of the support for these pupils given by an excellent group of teaching assistants is a major reason for the pupils' good progress. Children in the Foundation Stage are also making good progress. They are on track to attain all the goals children are expected to reach by the end of the reception year, and this is good achievement because the attainment of these children was below average when they started school.

The quality of pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good. By the time they leave the school, pupils are admirably mature and responsible.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good, reflecting good teaching by teachers and teaching assistants, and a satisfactory breadth of learning opportunities in the curriculum. The balance of the curriculum is adversely affected by how time is allocated to history and swimming and very long afternoon lessons have a negative impact on the quality of pupils' learning. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. It now results in good quality learning by pupils.

The school shows good concern for the care, health and safety of pupils. There is a high level of quality support for pupils with special educational needs. The school works very well with parents, providing good information about their children's education and how they can help. Links with the community, and with other schools and colleges, are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. In his short time at the school the headteacher has maintained a strong focus on raising standards through improved quality of teaching and most of all through a commitment to teamwork involving all members of teaching and non-teaching staff. However, the strategies for school development planning and subject co-ordination are inconsistent and the role of staff and governors in monitoring progress towards targets is unclear. Governance is satisfactory and the governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are being met. Management is satisfactory overall but financial management is good and administrative staff make an excellent contribution to day-to-day management of the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents particularly appreciate the high expectations that the school has of its pupils. They are pleased with levels of progress, the standard of behaviour and the fairness with which all pupils are treated. Pupils are very positive about the school and enjoy their learning.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Revise approaches to school development planning to ensure that targets for school improvement are prioritised and that there is clear identification of governors and key staff responsible for monitoring and evaluating the progress towards achievement of each target.
- Establish consistent expectations of subject co-ordinators in respect of their responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating pupils' standards and the quality of teaching, and the action planning that is necessary for raising pupils' standards and the quality of provision.

- Review the allocation and use of time in planning the curriculum in order to achieve a balance that best suits pupils' learning needs. Focus particularly on gaps between history topics, afternoon timetabling and the total time allocation to swimming.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The standards being achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 reflect very good achievement, overall, in relation to their levels of attainment when they start school. Standards in all the core subjects³ are at least above average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good achievement by the end of Year 6 is reflected in standards that are well above average in English, mathematics and information and communication technology.
- Standards in Year 2 are not as high as those achieved in national tests in the past but are above average in mathematics.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school but the achievement of other pupils is more variable.
- The listening skills of pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not as good as they should be.

Commentary

1. Recent years have seen a downward trend in the general ability level of the children when they start school in the Foundation Stage. The attainment on entry of a majority of pupils in the school, that is those in Years 3 to 6, was average, but attainment on entry of the children currently in the reception class, like that in the previous two years, is below average overall, with particular weaknesses in communication, language and literacy. However, the children are making good progress, due to the good improvement in provision in the Foundation Stage since the last inspection. Children are on track to meet the early learning goals⁴ in their personal, social and emotional development, mathematical, creative and physical development, as well as in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Such progress is a sign of good achievement. This good level of achievement is continuing in Year 1, but is lower amongst the pupils currently in Year 2 and their achievement is only satisfactory overall. Pupils then make very significant progress in Years 3 to 6 due to high quality teaching and, by Year 6, their achievement is very good and their standards are high when they leave the school. In contrast with the variability in achievement across the school, which reflects the varying quality of teaching, achievement by pupils with special educational needs is consistently good because the quality of their support is equally consistent and this support is coordinated well.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores⁵ in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.0 (17.6)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	15.0 (15.5)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	18.1 (18.0)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In recent years, the school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 have been well above average. The 2003 results were well above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. The picture is similar when the results are compared with those attained in

³ The core subjects are English, mathematics and science.

⁴ The early learning goals set out what children should achieve by the time they reach the end of the reception year in primary school.

⁵ **Average Point Scores.** The average point scores table compares the school's performance with the national results. The calculations are arrived at by using the total of all test scores gained by pupils, and dividing the total by the number of pupils with a test result. This calculation is carried out for each subject tested.

schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. In 2003, the teachers' assessments of science were also well above the national average and the average for similar schools. The school has also done well with the percentages of pupils gaining the higher-than-expected Level 3. In comparison with schools nationally in 2003, these percentages were well above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. The percentage assessed at Level 3 in science was very high, placing the school in the top five per cent of schools.

3. The pupils now in Year 2 are not performing at the level of the 2003 national tests and this is due, in part, to their generally lower levels of ability. Standards are above average in mathematics, but average in reading, writing and science. Only a small proportion of pupils are on track to achieve the higher than expected Level 3 in these subjects, which contrasts significantly with the school's predictions of the percentages likely reach this level. Pupils achieve well in art and design, and standards are above expected levels, while in geography, history, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education the standards are typical of the age group. There is insufficient evidence to judge standards in either design and technology or music. In comparison with their attainment when they commenced Year 1, the pupils' current standards represent satisfactory achievement overall. However, they share with pupils in Year 1, but to a greater extent, the characteristic of generally poor listening skills. This has an adverse effect on quality of learning and, ultimately, on standards, but it is something that teachers are working hard to improve.
4. The results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 have reflected the school's constructive analysis of past performance that has led to successful strategies for raising standards. If results have dropped in one year, there has been an immediate focus on that subject that has generally secured improvement. This was the case in 2003 in English, where the test results rose to being well above the national average after having been below average the previous year. Mathematics has been a continuous priority for several years and, again, the success of the emphasis is confirmed by test results being well above average in 2003. Results in science have been maintained at similar levels for several years and this reflects the fact that more attention has been paid to English and mathematics. In science the 2003 test results were average.
5. Following the 2003 results, the school placed priority on increasing the proportions of pupils working at the higher Level 5. This has been successful. Overall, the standards of the pupils now in Year 6 are well above the national average in English and mathematics and above average in science. In all three subjects there are more pupils on track to achieve Level 5 by the end of the year than in the past. Very good teaching means that the challenging targets set for the pupils in the 2004 national tests are now within their capabilities. The very good achievement of pupils in Year 6 is also evident in information and communication technology, and personal, social and health education, in which standards are well above the levels found in other schools. Standards in art and design are also above those typically found and they match the expected levels in geography, history and religious education. There is insufficient evidence to judge standards in design and technology or music.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.4 (26.0)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	29.0 (28.7)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	29.0 (29.1)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils' personal development is good, overall, with their moral and social development being very good. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of Year 6, pupils are admirably mature and responsible.
- There is very good provision for pupils' moral and social development.
- Pupils have a high opinion of their school.
- Pupils' good behaviour reflects the high expectations shown by staff.
- There are lost opportunities for making pupils aware of cultures other than their own.

Commentary

6. This school provides a happy and stable environment in which pupils are encouraged to build good relationships and are given every opportunity to develop responsible attitudes. From the time they enter the Foundation Stage, the school makes a great effort to teach pupils to show respect for others and they are successful in this. In the early years pupils are taught to be polite to one another. Paired and group activities also encourage them to share resources and as a result they develop very good relationships. Parents identified the comradeship between children as a particular strength. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils demonstrate a high degree of maturity, particularly in terms of collaboration and initiative; for example, the school regularly supports charities and good causes and a number of these are suggested and driven by the pupils. Pupils are also keen to accept the responsibilities which the school provides, for example, by filling roles on the school council, as 'Squabble Busters', house captains, librarians, or as part of the Photo Force. Many have high aspirations, indicating confident attitudes and an enjoyment of contributing to the day-to-day running of the school.
7. Pupils have positive views about their school, and much of these result from the way in which the school promotes good attitudes both informally and also through the taught programme of personal, social and health education. Across the age ranges, pupils say that they like their school and speak highly of it, and particularly of their teachers. In lessons where the teaching was good, pupils showed very high levels of enthusiasm.
8. Interviews with pupils also confirm that behaviour is managed well and they consider that the way in which rewards and sanctions are applied is very fair. This is most evident in lessons where clear expectations are set and, as a consequence, in the vast majority of those lessons that were observed, behaviour was good or better. The behaviour of the pupils in Year 6 is consistently very good and reflects the commendably mature and friendly relationships that these pupils have with adults. Their class teacher's absence during the inspection resulted in them being taught by three different teachers in three days. The pupils' frequent assistance to these teachers and very positive attitudes to learning created a mutually-supportive atmosphere in the classroom with no interruptions to the continuity in pupils' learning. Outside classrooms, pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and wait patiently in line to have lunch. They play well together at break and lunchtime in the playground despite the lack of stimulus for creative or structured play. There were no instances of bullying during the inspection, with pupils confirming that such incidents are very rare.
9. Although cultural provision is satisfactory there are some weaknesses specifically relating to the awareness amongst pupils concerning other religions and cultures. Whilst religious education is used to study a range of religions, there are very few visits to places or worship of non-Christian beliefs or to schools with a greater ethnic mix than that at Bhylls Acre. The lack of such visits limits pupils' ability to appreciate fully what it is like growing up in a multi cultural society.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.0
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	135	2	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6		
Mixed – White and Asian	3		
Mixed – any other mixed background	2		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	9		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	15		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Chinese	2		
No ethnic group recorded	1		

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

10. Over the last two years the rate of attendance has improved from the rate shown in the table above to its current level of 94.6 per cent for the year 2003/04, which is satisfactory. The improvement has resulted from two initiatives. First, the school has improved procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality, which includes a first day telephone call to check up on absent pupils. Second, good attendance is encouraged through the award of certificates and prizes. There were two exclusions in the year leading up to inspection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education through good teaching and a broad curriculum. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. There is a very good partnership with parents and carers and good links have been established with the community and with other schools.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality of teaching in Years 4 to 6 has significant impact on pupils' achievement and standards.
- Teachers match learning activities carefully to the needs of groups of pupils of different ages and abilities.
- Information from assessment is used well in the planning of the next stage in pupils' learning.
- Teaching assistants have good levels of expertise and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

- Pupils' levels of interest and concentration are reduced by too long a time allocation to lessons in a single subject in the afternoons.

Commentary

11. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall but varies between year groups. The highest quality is evident in Years 4 and 5, where, in both cases, the teaching was very good or better in three-quarters of lessons. However, the supply teachers in Year 6 during the inspection successfully maintained a similar quality and their teaching was very good or better in a third of their lessons. This has the impact of accelerating the rate of pupils' progress as they get older so that by the end of Year 6, pupils' achievement is very good compared with attainment when they started school.
12. Common features of the very good teaching are the lively pace, interesting learning activities and high expectations. The teachers carefully match their expectations to the ability levels of pupils. This means that there is just the right amount of challenge to motivate pupils to want to do better and, by providing learning activities that are planned to meet pupils' differing needs, pupils are helped to do better. The result is pupils who are keen to learn, enjoy their work, and make rapid gains in acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding. Two examples of excellent teaching exemplified all these qualities. In both a Year 6 drama lesson and a Year 4 design and technology lesson, the teachers communicated their own enthusiasm for their subject and their appreciation of the pupils' work very effectively. Each learning activity built very successfully on the previous stage of learning and the pupils always knew what a learning activity was intended to achieve. Thus the pupils were constantly able to measure their own progress and had repeated experiences of being successful. A major difference between these and the very good lessons and those that were satisfactory and, on one occasion unsatisfactory, was the detail with which the teachers set out what it was that the pupils were intended to learn. The better the teaching, the more specific these were both in teachers' planning and in explanations during a lesson. In the less successful teaching the lessons usually started with a very general statement of what was to be learned by the end of a lesson but failed to indicate, for example to different groups, the purpose of specific tasks that they were being given. As a consequence, pupils' understanding of their own learning, or of how they could improve, was limited.
13. The good procedures for assessment ensure that teachers are constantly checking the pupils' progress and using this information to guide future planning. This is particularly effective for three groups of pupils. In the Foundation Stage, the good learning and the consistently good teaching are firmly based on thorough monitoring of children's responses to tasks by both the teacher and the teaching assistant. In Year 1, the very successful job-share arrangement owes much to the good communication of the constant assessment of what individuals and groups have learned. For pupils with special educational needs, the good teaching by teachers and teaching assistants includes good attention to the specific targets that have been set for the pupils. Teachers ensure that the targets are included in their general planning which helps pupils to make good progress and to achieve well. Pupils know what their targets are and that they are regularly updated in the light of the ongoing assessment of pupils' progress towards each target. Teaching assistants play an important role in this respect. They are briefed well by class teachers and, thus, know exactly what the pupils with whom they work are intended to learn. They form very effective working relationships with teachers and pupils.
14. Pupils are conscientious learners who, by the time they reach Year 4 and above are acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills very successfully across the curriculum. Nevertheless, even these pupils find it hard to sustain interest in those sessions where the whole of an afternoon is devoted to one subject. This is an ineffective use of time that occurs several times a week in each class throughout the school. It is also inefficient use of time because in the majority of these lessons the rate of pupils' learning slows down as their enthusiasm wanes.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 33 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (6%)	6 (18%)	16 (49%)	8 (24%)	1 (3%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

The curriculum

Although the curriculum is broad and satisfactory overall, it is not sufficiently balanced. There are a good range visits and visitors that enrich the curriculum. Accommodation is good, although the spacious external areas are under-used. Resources provided by the school are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although the curriculum is broad, it does not have sufficient balance, due to how time is allocated.
- The curriculum is enriched by a good range of clubs, educational visits and visitors.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Accommodation is good, although the spacious external areas are not used effectively.

Commentary

15. Although the school's curriculum is broad and meets all of the requirements of the National Curriculum, it is not sufficiently balanced. During the past two years, the school has concentrated on ensuring that provision in the core areas of English, mathematics and science is good and this has been achieved successfully. However, it now recognises the need to carry out a comprehensive review of curricular planning in order to ensure that all subjects receive appropriate coverage and this will take place in the autumn term. At present, there is an imbalance in the provision for some subjects. For example, pupils in Year 4 experience a history focus in the spring term, but do not have planned opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of this subject area again until the spring term of the following Year 5. In addition, pupils receive weekly swimming lessons for two terms a year, throughout Years 3 to 6, and this significantly reduces the curriculum time available to other subjects. The school also needs to review timetabling arrangements to ensure effective curricular delivery. Some lessons, particularly those for science in Years 2 to 6, are timetabled for the whole of an afternoon and this is too long for pupils to sustain concentration, especially when they do not have the benefit of an afternoon break. There is a noticeable decline in pupils' interest that ultimately has an adverse effect on their levels of achievement.
16. An effective programme of clubs, visits and visitors enriches the curriculum. Extra-curricular provision includes clubs for football, netball, cricket, art and computers and pupils regularly participate in sporting competitions against other schools. A good range of visits is made to enrich the curriculum. For example, pupils visit Southport, as part of their geographical studies, the 'Think Tank' in Birmingham, as part of their work in science, and Shugborough Hall to help them develop their historical awareness. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy a residential experience at Chasewater Sailing Centre. Visitors to the school include dance and drama teachers, local police officers, the Staffordshire Life Caravan and performers, such as the 'Viking' theatre group. The school also organise special focus weeks such as those for history, science and safety awareness. All of these experiences enrich the curriculum and provide pupils with good opportunities for learning.
17. Provision and support for pupils with special educational needs are good. The curriculum provided for the pupils is carefully tailored to their needs by the use of targets which are regularly referred to in teachers' planning. There is a strong commitment to broadening the expertise within the school for meeting educational needs and this is seen in the extensive work done to achieve the accredited status of a 'Dyslexia Friendly School'.

18. There have been improvements to the school accommodation since the time of the previous inspection, such as the provision of a new computer suite. Accommodation within the school, though a little cramped, is sufficient to enable the curriculum to be taught effectively. Displays in most classrooms and in the corridor are attractively presented and contribute positively to the learning environment. The school is well maintained and kept very clean by the site manager and cleaners. The school grounds are extensive, comprising a large playground and school field. However, the nature area is under developed and playtimes are not particularly interesting because of the lack of play resources and additional playground furniture.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for the care, safety and welfare of pupils are good. Advice and guidance to pupils based on the monitoring of their personal development are good. The way in which the school seeks and acts upon pupils' views is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The use of pupil profiles and involvement in the school council provide pupils with good opportunities to air their views.
- There is a high level of pastoral care.
- The arrangements for health and safety are good.

Commentary

19. There are good procedures for seeking pupils' views so that they can have an influence on how the school is run. Pupils' personal development is very much at the centre of education in this school and, to that end, pupils have recently been involved in contributing to their pupil profiles. This work required them to assess their own strengths and weaknesses and to set the most appropriate targets to help them improve. Included in this assessment were elements of personal development and behaviour. This is good practice because it allows pupils to have a say in their own learning. Further opportunities to have their views heard are provided by a fully elected school council. Their suggestions have been implemented in a number of areas including trousers for girls, playground 'Squabble Busters', an additional break time, and the shortly to be established 'Helpful Gang'.
20. Those parents who attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting regarded pastoral care to be a strength of the school and the inspection findings confirm this view. Arrangements begin at the start of the school day, with a member of staff who is permanently assigned to meet pupils as they enter school. Discussions with parents confirmed that they like this policy because, once their children are inside the school grounds, parents know that they are safe. The secretary was also praised for her role in keeping an eye out for pupils whose parents may be concerned about them. Pupils provided further evidence of the good level of care, citing as particular strengths, the friendly atmosphere, the understanding that teachers show towards them and that staff listen to them when they have a concern.
21. Since his arrival the headteacher has devoted a lot of time to improving the systems for managing health and safety so that they are now good. The health and safety policy has been re-written. Both policy and practice work well because clear roles and responsibilities have been established and the overall profile of health and safety has been raised by making it a standing item at both staff and governor meetings. Audits of the premises are regularly conducted to ensure compliance and there are good arrangements for first-aid, fire safety and the administering of medicines. Similarly, the arrangements for child protection are also good.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has established very good links with parents. Links with the community and other schools are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The many ways in which the school interacts with parents foster very positive views of the school about provision and pupils' achievement.
- The links with local charities are good.
- There are good curriculum links with local secondary schools.
- Links with businesses and ethnically diverse schools are limited.

Commentary

22. Bhylls Acres School recognises the need to maintain very good relationships with its parents and it is successful in this. Each morning a member of staff meets parents at the school gates and this provides a welcome start to the day and an opportunity to pass on information. The headteacher maintains an open door policy and staff are available to meet with parents at the end of the school day. This contributes well to the good communication between school and home. Parents feel that the school is receptive to their suggestions and they confirm that their concerns are listened to and acted upon. Newsletters are now a regular means of informing parents about what is happening in school and to these are added termly curriculum information sheets which are considered to be good. Parents are regularly asked to volunteer help, and many do, supporting a range of activities including reading, art, library and football. Attendance by parents at performances and consultation evenings is also very good.
23. The school regularly supports charities and good causes. Not only do these provide pupils with an opportunity to show initiative and to take on responsibilities, but they also provide a good link with the local community. Of particular note has been the work with Acorns Children's Hospice and Compton Hospice. In addition to this work there are regular links with the two local churches, whose vicars come in to deliver assemblies as well as visits from the community police and the fire service, who, respectively, give talks on drugs awareness and fire safety.
24. The school is a member of various local clusters, all of which allow it to share information and to benefit from an exchange of ideas and views. This is particularly beneficial in the area of special educational needs. As part of the small schools' cluster, the information and communication technology suite has been used as a venue for staff training and this has had good impact on the staff's levels of expertise. Also, a member of staff is a leading mathematics teacher and he has led sessions on mathematics teaching that have similarly developed teachers' knowledge and skills. Good links are being forged with Smestow High School to develop physical education and Bhylls Acres is using it as part of its Schools Sports Partnership. There are also good links with Ounsdale High School to ensure the smooth transition of pupils from Year 6 to secondary school.
25. There are few if any links with schools which are ethnically diverse, or with local businesses, which would give pupils a greater appreciation of cultures other than their own, as well as a better appreciation of life in the working world.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are satisfactory. The governance of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has quickly gained good insight into the priorities for school development.
- The governing body monitors school development satisfactorily but has not identified precisely the monitoring role of individual governors.
- Subject co-ordinators lack guidance on the procedures to be followed for monitoring and evaluating subject performance and for planning the action necessary for subject development.
- There has been good improvement in the overall effectiveness of the school since the last inspection.

Commentary

26. Since taking up responsibility in January 2003, the headteacher's initial period of leadership has focused on addressing priorities relating to staffing and personnel. He has benefited from the good support of the acting deputy headteacher during this period. His audit of the school's strengths and weaknesses has identified the appropriate key areas for development. Central to these is the need to change the strategies for school improvement so that there is greater cohesion between the work of the governing body, the senior management team and the subject co-ordinators. In order to achieve this, the headteacher recognises the need for clearer expectations of the role to be played by governors and key staff in establishing future priorities and then monitoring the progress towards accomplishing these priorities.
27. The governing body has been reconstituted and a new chairperson has recently been elected. His relationship with senior managers is developing into a sound foundation for co-operative management. Individual governors are linked to classes in the school but not to specific subjects, such as literacy or numeracy. The one well-established link is that of a governor to the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs, and this is very successful due to the governor's enthusiasm and expertise. This is a good blueprint for subject links that, in turn, allows a more specific and focused monitoring and evaluation of the school's work than occurs at present. The governing body reviews constructively the school's performance in national tests and has a good awareness of recent trends and immediate targets for raising standards. Such targets are prominent in the school development plan but there is insufficient involvement of individual governors in formulating the plan as a whole or monitoring the plan's other priorities and targets. The governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met.
28. Subject co-ordinators are conscientious and have good levels of expertise in their areas of responsibility. Their leadership and management of their areas of responsibility are satisfactory overall. However, until recently they have largely carried out their roles without clear guidance or expectations from senior management. Thus, there is no standardisation in approaches to action planning for the future, or the procedures for monitoring pupils' standards or the quality of teaching. However, there are good models of co-ordination for the several new co-ordinators to aspire to, notably in the very conscientious, purposeful management of English, mathematics, information and communication technology, special educational needs and the Foundation Stage.
29. The school is more effective than at the time of the last inspection, because there is a better quality of teaching, pupils' standards have risen significantly and their attitudes and behaviour have improved. This is now a school that provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	507,157
Total expenditure	489,741
Expenditure per pupil	2,424

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	16,460
Balance carried forward to the next	24,795

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. Children are prepared well for their transfer to Year 1. The children enter the reception class in the September before they are five, and, this year, one third of the class had not attended a nursery. All the children achieve well in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, and in their mathematical development, because the teaching is good and the curriculum is planned carefully, with an interesting and appropriate range of activities. Adults are very good role models for the children and work as a strong team well aware of each child's progress. Children with special educational needs are clearly identified and provision for them is good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of the good teaching and the high expectations shown by adults.

Commentary

30. The personal, social and emotional development of the children this year was below average in September. Teaching and learning are good and adults provide a warm, secure environment with clear rules and well established routines which help the children to make good progress in becoming more mature. The children are quiet and attentive when adults speak to them and are proud to be given small responsibilities. They co-operate sensibly when working in small independent groups and concentrate well. However, they still find it hard to organise themselves in activities that are usually adult led such as during group mathematical work. They form trusting relationships with each other and with adults. Most children will attain the early learning goals that have been set for the end of the reception year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and activities are interesting.
- Some opportunities are missed to extend children's speaking skills through the use of talking to partners.

Commentary

31. Children's communication, language and literacy skills were below average at the start of this year. Some children have well developed speech but many use short sentences and very simple vocabulary. The teacher makes topics interesting which encourages children to listen intently, and she constantly provides opportunities for children to answer questions. However, the full range of available techniques is not used to develop their skills, for example, by giving children opportunities to talk to a partner which ensures that all children are involved in thinking and speaking. The nursery nurse also discreetly asks children questions, so that more children are actively involved.

32. There are many interesting activities which promote children's early reading and writing skills. They visit the writing table daily in groups for tasks which are carefully suited to their abilities. There are numerous examples of children developing early attempts at writing which only they

can understand, interspersed with clearly legible words and letters as they use their knowledge of phonics and simple words. Reading activities are well led and develop children's understanding of books well in addition to encouraging the recognition of words and phrases. Nearly all children are on course to attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and activities are interesting and appropriate.
- Children achieve well.

Commentary

33. Children enter reception with average levels of mathematical knowledge. The teacher has high expectations and challenges children to think clearly and quickly. Higher-attaining children swiftly recognise odd and even numbers and also which ones are 'doubles', while all children count confidently to ten on the number line, and many know numbers in the teens. Activities are well chosen to ensure that children of differing abilities progress at their own levels and remain confident and accurate. By the end of the reception year most children are likely to attain the early learning goals and a significant minority are on track exceed these goals.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

34. There was insufficient evidence available to make a firm judgement on this area of learning. Teaching and learning were good in the aspects that were observed. During a session in the computer suite, for instance, children showed average skills as they manipulated the mouse accurately to enlarge, change or delete colour and shapes to make patterns but they did not print their work independently. Teaching was good and some children helped each other to use newly learned techniques, for example when they made bread and churned their own butter!

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching of skills indoors is good.
- Not enough use is made of the outdoor facilities.

Commentary

35. The teacher is well organised and has high expectations. During a session in the hall, which showed that many children reach standards above those expected for their age, the teacher encouraged children to try hard and to improve their skills still further. Children's hand control is developing well through the many opportunities provided for them to use brushes, scissors and pencils. The outside area is not used during the winter and children go into the main playground at playtimes. These arrangements reduce their opportunities to play with wheeled toys, large equipment and to investigate the outdoor environment. Overall, most children are on course to attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

There are no particular strengths or weaknesses.

Commentary

36. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The play area is well resourced and, during the inspection, was a 'baker's shop', which provided good opportunities for children's mathematical development. Children experiment with paint, using different implements, such as brushes, balls and straws to achieve a variety of effects. They enjoy singing familiar songs and love learning new ones. However, there is more regular emphasis on using construction kits and puzzles, rather than paint, glue and clay. Most children should attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in Years 3 to 6 and standards are well above average by the end of Year 6.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and consistently very good in Years 3 to 6.
- In Years 1 and 2, the pupils' listening skills are not as good as their speaking skills.
- The co-ordinator provides good leadership.
- The progress of pupils is carefully monitored.

Commentary

37. Standards in all aspects of English have risen since the time of the previous inspection because of the school's focus on improvement in this subject. By the end of Year 2, standards are similar to the national average in reading, writing and speaking and listening and the achievement of pupils is satisfactory. The attainment of pupils in Year 6 is well above the national average in writing, reading and speaking and listening and this represents very good achievement over time as these pupils joined the school with standards that were average, overall. Standards are similar to those attained in the 2003 national tests for pupils in Years 2 and 6, with the exception of reading at the end of Year 2 in which standards were well above average.

38. Teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 are consistently very good and this is an improvement since the time of the previous inspection. Teachers place emphasis on helping pupils to develop their literacy skills, through purposeful and enjoyable activities that enable them to achieve very well. For example, in an excellent drama lesson in Year 6, the class teacher provided pupils with increasingly challenging role-play situations that encouraged them to think carefully and respond with increasing maturity. A strong feature of teaching in these classes is that teachers use questioning effectively to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Lessons also have a good balance between direct teaching and pupils practising what they have learned through written work. There are attractive displays to celebrate pupils' work in classrooms and other areas of the school. Teachers accurately plan work for pupils of different abilities and pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because of the very good support that they receive from their effective teaching assistants. Pupils in all Years 3 to 6 concentrate well and work hard in lessons. Their written work is presented very well and they obviously take pride in their achievements. They write for a range of purposes

and for differing audiences, and there are regular opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in other curricular areas, particularly in science, geography and history.

39. Pupils achieve well in reading, with the development of their knowledge and enjoyment of books going hand in hand with the development of their reading skills. Standards are well above the national average by the end of Year 6 and most pupils are developing preferences for the work of different authors. The school teaches library skills effectively and pupils in Years 5 and 6 take responsibility for managing the computerised library system. They enter information efficiently and know how to find books and information by using alphabetical order and the Dewey system. The library is centrally situated and there are plenty of books that are well suited to the needs of all pupils.
40. Standards in speaking and listening are well above the national average in Years 3 to 6 and, by the time that they reach Year 6, the majority of pupils speak confidently and listen attentively. All adults, including teachers, teaching assistants and non-teaching staff make a positive contribution to the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils are encouraged to talk to and listen to adults and their classmates in virtually every lesson. For example, in a lesson in Year 6, pupils expressed opinions about the success of a recent charity day in a very mature manner, showing respect for the views of others.
41. While teaching and learning are good overall, there is variation between year groups with the best teaching occurring with older pupils. Although some good teaching occurs in Years 1 and 2, teachers do not consistently challenge and motivate pupils. This is particularly evident in writing. Although there are a number of pupils in Year 2, for example, who speak confidently and have a good range of vocabulary, this is not reflected in their written work. There are missed opportunities for pupils to write regularly in a range of subjects and the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to develop structured, imaginative writing for a range of different purposes and audiences. Although most pupils in Years 1 and 2 speak with confidence, many have poor listening skills. In a well taught lesson in Year 1, the class teacher employed a number of positive strategies designed to encourage pupils to listen carefully, to respect the views of others and to take turns. These met with some success but the teachers in Years 1 and 2 do not use this effective approach consistently. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading are similar to the national average, although pupils receive some good support from teaching assistants. A group of pupils in Year 2, for example, made very good progress because of the skilful questioning of their teaching assistant. She encouraged them to think carefully about the text and to discuss what had happened, and what might now happen in their story.
42. The co-ordinator for English gives good leadership. She has a clear view of standards within her subject and works closely with other members of the staff to ensure continued improvement. She has good subject knowledge and has done much to secure improvements since the last inspection. There is now a good policy and scheme of work that take account of the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy and the co-ordinator regularly monitors planning and moderates work throughout the school. At the time of the last inspection, data was not sufficiently analysed, but this is no longer the case, as there is an assessment policy for English that includes data analysis and effective systems for tracking the progress of individual pupils. The co-ordinator has not yet monitored teaching on a regular basis but this forms part of her action plan.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

43. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop their language and literacy skills across other areas of the curriculum and this contributes significantly to their very good achievement. The school has a well-equipped computer suite and accessible central library that enable independent research to take place. For example, in an art and design lesson, pupils in Year 5 carried out research into the life of William Morris, whilst pupils in Year 4 had used the library to find out about their topic on 'The Victorians'. These planned opportunities usually result in pupils writing about their research and this helps to promote the very good writing standards that seen in Years 3 to 6.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved well since the last inspection.
- Pupils achieve very well because teaching is very good in Years 4, 5 and 6.
- A good range of activities provides appropriate work for all pupils.
- Assessment is good and is used well.

Commentary

44. For the past few years pupils have entered Year 1 with attainment that is average for their age. Overall, they make good progress through Years 1, 2, 3 and 4. In Years 5 and 6, pupils' progress accelerates and they achieve very well, attaining results in the national tests for pupils in Year 6 that have been consistently well above the national average for several years. Test results for pupils in Year 2 have also been high and were well above the national average in 2003. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and achieve well.
45. Since the last inspection much work has been done to successfully raise standards in mathematics throughout the school. In a lesson in Year 1, for instance, pupils displayed good knowledge of early mathematical concepts and responded enthusiastically to the challenge of working with a number line without numbers on it. In Year 2 pupils are able to think quickly and flexibly, and enjoy being challenged to add or subtract ten from any number within a hundred. They start to understand simple fractions and to recognise shapes and describe their properties. As pupils move up the school, the speed and range of mental calculations increase. This aids their other work so that in Year 6 many pupils habitually attain above the national average.
46. The teaching is nearly always good and for the older pupils it is often very good. Its strengths include carefully planned lessons, with clearly explained learning objectives, so that pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Tasks are prepared on the same topic at levels carefully matched to ability, so that all pupils are fully challenged, but also remain confident. Teachers maintain a brisk pace which retains pupils' interest, concentration and also good standards of behaviour. As a consequence, pupils' learning is good. The pupils respond well to the teachers' high expectations because they have been taught well throughout the school, overall, and are excited by the subject. However, there were some weaknesses in the teaching. In one lesson, for example, there was a lack of pace, and an unexciting activity which lowered pupils' interest and performance. Not all teachers finished lessons by ensuring that pupils knew clearly what they had learned.
47. The subject is led well by a very knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator who inspires his colleagues. He has monitored teaching in the past, but not this year. Planning is seen regularly and often. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection. Assessment is now good and is used effectively. Marking is often good, particularly towards the top of the school. However, there is scope for some teachers to make clearer to pupils how they could improve.

Mathematics across the curriculum

48. Pupils have a good understanding of the practical use of mathematics and use it as part of their work in other subjects. For example, they use graphs and tables to record data in science or to measure materials in design technology, and refer to detailed historical time lines.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well at the end of Year 6.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 is good.
- Insufficient use is made of assessment and data analysis.
- Work is presented well, with effective use of literacy and numeracy skills.
- Science lessons are often too long.

Commentary

49. Standards of attainment are above average by the end of Year 6 and this reflects good achievement over time as pupils enter school with average standards, overall. This also represents an improvement since the last inspection when standards at the end of Year 6 were average. In the 2003 national tests in science, the standards achieved were close to the national average. However, pupils in the current Year 6 are working at above the national average because of the good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from teaching assistants and consequently also make good progress. The standards attained by pupils currently in Year 2 are similar to the national average and their achievement is satisfactory.
50. The overall quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 is good with some very good teaching for older pupils. In the very best lessons, teachers use questioning skills well to probe and to enhance pupils' understanding. They plan activities that provide appropriate challenge. In a lesson in Year 5, for example, pupils were expected to develop fair tests in order to monitor the links between light and shadow. Pupils discussed the need for constants and variables and articulated their ideas with confidence. Teachers consistently encourage pupils to use scientific vocabulary, and higher-attaining pupils in Year 3 could explain the meaning of terms such as 'transparent', 'translucent' and 'opaque'. Pupils enjoy the practical activities that form an important part of the science curriculum. They work enthusiastically, share resources, and co-operate effectively in pairs and in group situations.
51. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 usually provide good opportunities for pupils to record data in various ways, such as tables, graphs and charts, and this enables pupils to make good use of their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils' presentation of work is very good. They are encouraged to write about their experiments and pictures, charts and labels are recorded with care. Science experiments usually begin with an opportunity to predict likely outcomes and conclude with an opportunity for pupils to compare their results with their predictions and to explain possible differences. Pupils use the Internet to research the life and works of Edward Jenner, for example, but the use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning in science is generally under developed.
52. The co-ordinator has implemented a policy and a scheme of work, based on government recommendations, and has monitored planning and curriculum delivery throughout the school. He is aware of the need to increase data analysis, and assessment procedures are being developed. The school has set an appropriate priority of increasing the percentage of pupils achieving higher grades in national tests. However, at present, there is no clear overview of attainment throughout the school that enables teachers to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils effectively and to target support accordingly.
53. In Years 2 to 6, most science lessons are timetabled for the whole of an afternoon and this is too long for pupils to sustain concentration, especially when they do not have the benefit of an afternoon break.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is very good and, by the end of Year 6, standards are well above those found in other schools.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject well.
- Information and communication technology already makes a good contribution to pupils' learning in other subjects.

Commentary

54. By the end of Year 2, many pupils are achieving well and standards are at least in line with those found in other schools. By the time they get to Years 5 and 6, pupils' standards reflect very good achievement overall. The work of these older pupils is well above that seen in other schools. They display high levels of confidence and very good understanding of the use of computers as a tool to extend their learning in many subjects. Skill levels are high by Year 6, with pupils across the ability range using a wide variety of computer programs very knowledgeably. Current work on multi-media presentations by pupils in Year 6 reflects these high standards. Pupils are currently designing web pages and, in only the second lesson using the program, they demonstrated very good understanding of the features and use of this program. When explaining their work, pupils use technical vocabulary knowledgeably and this is particularly impressive in the pupils with special educational needs whose responses to questioning show that they have a confidence as high as that of their classmates. Those pupils in Years 5 and 6, who act as library monitors, get a good opportunity to use their skills when operating the very good computerised system that has been designed specifically for the school library. They process returns and issues with impressive speed and accuracy.
55. The actual teaching observed was good in Year 2 and very good overall in Years 4 to 6 and further evidence demonstrates that teaching throughout the school has many very good features. Particular strengths are the levels of subject expertise, the planning of a very wide range of learning opportunities, the use of teaching assistants and other adults to support pupils' learning, and the very good organisation of lessons. These factors contribute to the very good learning evident in lessons and over time. The quality of learning is influenced very positively by pupils' very good concentration levels and ability to work well with one another. Teachers' good use of resources aids pupils' learning well, for example, the prompt cards that provide step-by-step guidelines for pupils at computers enable pupils to work with a good degree of independence and understanding. Teachers assess the learning of individual pupils well and this is used well to plan the next stage in their learning. Any difficulties in acquiring specific skills or a need for a pupil to be challenged by a more difficult task are recorded and appropriate work is provided.
56. While the subject co-ordinator was not in school at the time of the inspection, there is ample evidence to indicate the good quality of her leadership and management. She has very good impact on subject development, through a broad range of actions that support teachers' planning and extend their subject knowledge so that they, in turn, are constantly working towards raising pupils' standards. She has successfully managed the incorporation of a new computer suite into the provision for the subject. By monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and the standards being achieved by pupils throughout the school, she has a clear picture of priorities in subject development. These are recorded in a well-structured action plan. The school has invested well in resources and the recent addition of software to support literacy, special educational needs, and multimedia work has had good impact on pupils' achievement and standards in these areas. There has been good improvement in the subject since the last inspection, due to improved resources, better teaching and higher standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

57. Provision is good. Each class uses the computer suite for weekly literacy and numeracy lessons. These lessons have a clear focus on the subject concerned while the planning also incorporates clear learning intentions for developing pupils' computing skills. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 4 lesson, where the literacy focus was writing for a specific audience in the form of visitors to a restaurant. The very good teaching resulted, not only in a good standard of pupils' writing, but also rapid gains in their information and communication technology learning through the opportunities provided to experiment with design formats, the use of colour, font, transparency, location of text boxes and justification in the layout of the text. Teaching of a similarly high quality was seen in a Year 5 literacy lesson in which pupils successfully used the Internet for research on William Morris. This fast-moving lesson included computer-based work on punctuation, clauses and organisation of facts that resulted in pupils' very good achievement in their learning in both literacy and information and communication technology. There is a very good range of evidence of information and communication technology work related to different subjects in every class. In Year 2 the science work on a frog's life cycle and that on geographical features of an island is related well to the pupils' needs in their computer skill development. Pupils in Year 6 have produced a high standard of geographical work in their 'Africa' topic that combines text and photographs. The potential for use of information and communication technology is fully recognised and implemented across much of the curriculum and this is to be extended even further when the co-ordinator focuses on this as the next priority in her action plan.

HUMANITIES

In humanities, work was sampled in **history, geography and religious education**. Class timetables during the inspection made it possible only to observe one geography lesson in Year 2, no history lessons, and two lessons in religious education; one in Year 1 and one in Year 2. It is, therefore, not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in these subjects.

58. In **geography and history**, there is every indication from a scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and co-ordinator files that standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. In the one geography lesson seen in Year 2, teaching was satisfactory. Samples of work show a good coverage of the programmes of study and in both subjects, the curriculum is enriched by a range of visits and visitors. For example, pupils visit Southport as part of their geographical studies and Shugborough Hall to help them develop their historical awareness. Literacy skills are promoted effectively. Pupils in Year 6, for instance, had carried out independent research as part of their African studies and pupils in Year 3 had written about the main features of villages and cities as part of their topic on 'Settlements'. Subject co-ordinators have begun to develop profiles of pupils' work but have yet to regularly monitor teaching and learning or implement assessment procedures. At present, there is an imbalance in the provision for history as pupils in Year 4 experience a history focus in the spring term but do not have planned opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of this subject area again until the spring term of the following Year 5.
59. In **religious education**, teaching and learning were satisfactory in both lessons seen, and the pupils attained at similar levels to others of their age. Achievement was satisfactory. Planning follows the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Parents from different religions are welcomed into school to talk about their beliefs and experiences, but visits are not arranged to a wide variety of places of worship for different faiths. Assessment of pupils' understanding is an area being developed at present.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design, design and technology, music and physical education were not a focus of the inspection, due to few lessons in these subjects being taught during the inspection period.

60. In **art and design** a good evidence base was provided in the form of samples of pupils' work, teachers' planning and an interview with the subject co-ordinator. All pupils use sketchbooks

well to experiment with their ideas and the books show that teachers provide a very good range of learning opportunities for pupils to develop technical skills, such as shading and proportion in drawings, printing and batik work. Pupils also experience working with a variety of media such as charcoal, watercolour, fabric paint, textiles and clay. They learn effectively about the processes involved in art making and this knowledge, combined with good technical ability, results in confident, creative artists producing work that is often of a very high quality. Such quality work is evident in all year groups and is above the standards normally seen at the corresponding age in other schools. Typical of this standard is the large collage interpreting 'The Lady of Shalot' by pupils in Year 4, the African batik work in Year 6, and the charcoal leaf studies in Year 1. Much of this work is carefully and attractively displayed in classrooms and around the school. Visitors to the school get immediate insight into the standards being achieved from the current display in the entrance of relief work on clay tablets made by Year 6 pupils as part of their history project on the Egyptians.

61. Strengths in teaching include the very constructive marking in Year 6 that indicates to pupils how they can improve their work. Pupils are given good encouragement to extend their learning through homework and additional study in school. For example, very detailed and informative projects on sculpture have been produced by pupils in Years 3 and 4.
62. Since being appointed, in September 2003, the co-ordinator has quickly had good impact on subject development. Despite a lack of opportunities to monitor and evaluate either pupils' standards, or the quality of teaching, the co-ordinator has created time for meetings with all teachers to discuss planning and the use of art and design in other subjects. Priorities for action include the extension of opportunities for pupils to work with visiting artists or to visit art galleries, as such experiences are very limited at present.
63. In **design and technology**, samples of pupils' work in Years 4 to 6 indicate a good quality of learning. Learning opportunities are well balanced between designing and making, and pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work and identify how it can be improved. In many projects, pupils record their designs in step-by-step plans, with well-labelled diagrams and details of materials to be used. Such tasks, plus written evaluations, mean that pupils have good opportunities to apply and extend their numeracy and literacy skills. There is a good standard of presentation in design books, indicating that teachers have high expectations. The final products are also of a high standard, and this was particularly evident in Egyptian jewellery made by pupils in Year 6, and the money containers made by pupils in Year 4. Two lessons were observed and teaching and learning were good in the one seen in Year 5, and excellent in lesson seen in Year 4. The latter lesson, the last in a series investigating the use of lever mechanisms to create a moving feature in a greeting card, was an example of how a teacher's own expertise and enthusiasm can inspire pupils to high levels of achievement. Throughout the process of design, pupils had constantly refined their work in previous lessons to a point where they finally had to decide which of two designs they were to make. Pupils were totally absorbed in their work, modifying placement of the lever mechanism until exactly the desired effect was created. By the time the final, evaluative discussion was reached, both teacher and pupils showed genuine appreciation of the high quality of the products yet even then the pupils were still talking about how they could make still further improvements.
64. There is little evidence of work in **music**, other than teachers' planning that shows that the required programme of study is being covered. A specialist teacher works with pupils in Years 3 to 6, and those in Years 1 and 2 are taught by their class teachers. Teachers in Year 1 provide a good, broad range of musical experience for pupils and knowledge is extended successfully by informative displays. Pupils have opportunities to receive instrumental tuition, and to join a choir, and the school has a good reputation for the quality of its musical productions.
65. In **physical education**, two gymnastic lessons were observed but this is insufficient to make an overall judgement on provision. These lessons, in Year 6 and Year 1, were characterised by satisfactory teaching and learning that incorporated good attention to health and safety factors, sound organisation and levels of performance that were typical of their respective ages. Pupils in Year 6 showed a satisfactory ability to evaluate one another's performance when working in pairs, giving constructive guidance on how performance could be improved. Planning shows full coverage of the required programme of study. In Years 3 to 6, each year group has two

terms of swimming lessons and this generous time allocation results in the majority of pupils achieving far beyond the expected standards by the end of Year 6. The school travels a good distance to the pool and this results in most of an afternoon being taken up for the sake of 20 minutes water time. The co-ordinator is aware of this inefficient use of time and its impact, not only on the reduced time available for other aspects of physical education, but also on the total teaching time available for the whole curriculum. As a consequence, the school plans to review the arrangements. Outside the school day there is a typical range of clubs for pupils that includes a popular football training session on Saturday mornings.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' personal, social and health education is planned in a consistent manner.
- Skills in citizenship are promoted through the school council.

Commentary

66. The school has made improvement in pupils' personal education by developing a policy and schemes of work, which include attention to healthy living, sex, drugs and race awareness. Personal, social and health education is taught effectively as a discrete subject and is also firmly embedded into the curriculum in subjects such as science and religious education. This area contributes well to the good attitudes and behaviour seen throughout most of the school. Pupils are very confident and have well developed speaking skills, although listening skills in Years 1 and 2 are not developed to the same level all classes experience regular 'circle time'⁶ sessions in which issues are discussed. Pupils are given good opportunities to take responsibility within school, such as when they manage the overhead projector in assemblies, carry out corridor duty or act as 'Squabble Busters' when in the playground. Pupils have planned and organised their own charity work, such as the recent charity day to raise money for the support of Leukaemia sufferers. The co-ordinator leads the subject effectively and has brought about recent improvements, which include the purchase of new resources and regular access to the Staffordshire Life Skills Caravan.
67. Pupils are given opportunities to influence their own learning through involvement in the school council, although this is restricted to pupils from Years 3 to 6. This provides opportunities for elected representatives from different classes to share their ideas and to experience democracy at first hand.

⁶ 'Circle time' is a session provided for pupils to discuss a wide range of personal issues as a class, following strict rules about listening to others and taking turns to speak.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).