

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ST THOMAS' CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY  
AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103419

Headteacher: Mrs E M Richardson

Lead inspector: Olga Cooper

Dates of inspection: 9-11 February 2004

Inspection number: 257974

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:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	117
School address:	Great Colmore Street Attwood Green Birmingham West Midlands
Postcode:	B15 2AT
Telephone number:	0121 622 2151
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev C Bonsall
Date of previous inspection:	13/7/1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

This small, multi-cultural, Voluntary Aided school serves an area, which previously had many high rise blocks of flats. The number of pupils has declined significantly with the demolition of these buildings, but the high level of socio-economic deprivation remains. The proportion of pupils transferring in and out of the school, other than at the normal admission date is high. Pupils come from a wide range of home backgrounds and ethnic groups. Just over one quarter of the pupils are White British. Over half the pupils are Black or Black British and of Caribbean origin. A small proportion is of Black African, Chinese or Asian origin. Consequently, the proportion speaking English as an additional language is high. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is well above the national average, with all having speech and communication difficulties and some having emotional and behavioural difficulties as well. Children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is well below that expected for their age, particularly in their language and social skills. The school was in the top twenty schools nationally for its improvement in standards in 2003.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10859	O Cooper	Lead inspector	Mathematics English Information and communication technology Art and design Music Physical education Special educational needs English as an additional language
11450	L Kuraishi	Lay inspector	
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a sound, improving and caring school with some significant strengths.** The leadership and management of the school are good and standards are rising, but as yet remain below the national average overall. This is partly due to the high level of mobility of pupils and the high proportion learning to speak English. Teaching is satisfactory overall and helps most pupils to achieve satisfactorily, others make good progress and achieve well. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in Years 2 and 6 are rising faster than the national trend, but with further work to be done.
- Leadership and management of the school are good, with a clear focus on raising standards.
- Procedures for checking the work of the school have improved and are leading to more rapid development.
- Overall teaching in Years 3, 4 and 6 is good and occasionally very good but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to work independently or collaboratively in small groups.
- Punctuality is unsatisfactory.
- The school has no regular procedures for taking pupils' views into account.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The areas for improvement, identified in the last report, have been largely overcome. Standards have risen year on year and, pupils' behaviour and value for money have improved. However, there has been insufficient improvement in pupils' punctuality. In addition, the management of the school and the teaching in Years 3 to 6 have improved. The school readily acknowledges that despite this good improvement there is further work to be done in raising standards and enabling all pupils to achieve well.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

The table below shows the school's results of national tests in English and mathematics in 2001 and 2002 were in the lowest five percent of schools nationally. In 2003, standards rose enough to take them out of the lowest five per cent of schools, but were still well below the national average. The table also shows that pupils who left the school in July 2003 did not make as much progress as in other schools, which achieved similar results at the end of Year 2. This indicates some of these pupils underachieved.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	All schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	E*	E*	E	D
Mathematics	E*	E*	E	D
Science	E	E	E	D

*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.*

**Achievement is now satisfactory.** Most children in the Nursery and Reception, Years 1, 2 and 5 are achieving satisfactorily. In Years 3, 4 and 6 pupils' achieve well because of the good teaching in many lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress due to the effective support and encouragement they receive. There is a

high proportion of boys with learning or behavioural difficulties and this is why girls appear to do better. Standards on entry to the nursery are well below those expected for the children's ages, especially in speech, language and social skills. The children make satisfactory progress overall, and good progress in their social development. Few children are likely to reach the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the year in Reception and standards remain well below the expected level. By Year 2, standards are below average in reading and mathematics and well below average in writing. Standards in science are well below average because the provision is unsatisfactory. Standards in Year 6 are broadly average in English, but below average in mathematics and science. The recent emphasis on improving pupils' literacy skills is beginning to show in standards attained. Standards in information and communication technology have improved and are now as expected for pupils' ages. In art and design and design and technology, the improved provision has enabled standards to rise above the levels expected for eleven year olds.

**Pupils' personal development is satisfactory, including their spiritual, moral and social development.** Their cultural development is good. Pupils arriving late disrupt the learning of others. Pupils' attitudes to their work and school in general are satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory. In the latest reporting period, attendance was well below the national average but good improvement has been made this academic year and it is currently average.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory.** Overall, **teaching and learning are satisfactory** and are good in Years 3, 4 and 6. The teaching of literacy skills has improved since the last inspection. Teaching assistants provide good support for teachers and pupils, and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and progress. Assessment procedures have developed well and are now good. Pupils' capacity to work independently or in small groups is underdeveloped. Pupils are well cared for. Links with other schools have a positive effect on pupils' learning.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management of the school are good.** The headteacher provides strong educational direction, which is successfully raising standards. The school has good procedures for checking its effectiveness. Governance of the school is very good. All statutory requirements are met.

### **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Pupils and parents are satisfied with the school's provision. The school has responded to parents' concerns about behaviour.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Continue to raise standards in English in Years 1 and 2 and in mathematics and science throughout the school.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively.
- Improve punctuality.
- Implement formal procedures for taking pupils' views into account.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **satisfactory** overall, although standards are below average. In the Nursery, Reception, Years 1, 2 and 5 achievement is satisfactory. In Years 3, 4 and 6 pupils achieve well because of the good teaching and higher expectations. There is an improving trend in standards at the end of Year 6 in the last four years. Standards at the end of Year 2 show some fluctuation.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising faster than the national trend in Years 2 and 6, but with further work to be done in English in Years 1 and 2 and in mathematics and science throughout.
- Standards in information and communication technology have improved since the previous inspection and are in line with national expectations for pupils' ages.
- Standards in art and design are above those expected for pupils in Years 2 and 6.
- Standards in design and technology are above those expected in Year 6.
- Achievement is good in Years 3, 4 and 6.

#### Commentary

1. The small numbers of pupils in year groups leads to apparent fluctuations in standards from year to year. Between 1999 and 2001, standards in reading, writing and mathematics rose each year. In 2002 standards in reading, writing and mathematics dipped. While standards improved in reading and mathematics in 2003, standards in writing declined further and were not high enough. Standards at the end of Year 2 in 2003 were well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, when compared with similar schools, the results were broadly average in reading, below average in mathematics and well below in writing. Teachers' assessment underestimated pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, indicating some low expectations of what pupils could achieve. Nevertheless, overall standards are rising despite the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language. The school volunteered to take part in the National Intensive Support Programme, which was administered by the LEA and this has had a beneficial influence on the teaching, target setting and pupils' attainment.

#### *Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003*

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	13.8 (12.2)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	11.7 (12.2)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	14.1 (12.8)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 14 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. In English, mathematics and science standards at the end of Year 6 have risen each year since 2000. Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2003, as shown in the table below, were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. This year group contained two pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs and their presence lowered the overall standards because of the small number of pupils in the year group. When compared with similar schools,

the results in science were broadly average, but in English and mathematics were below average. Between 2000 and 2002 the school's results were consistently in the lowest five percent of schools nationally. However, when compared with similar schools the results show steady improvement each year since 2000. The trend in improvement is again above the national trend. Between 2000 and 2003 standards at the expected level rose by 26 percentage points in English, 41 percentage points in mathematics and 49 percentage points in science, because teachers have raised their expectations of what these pupils can achieve. The school acknowledges standards are not yet high enough and this inspection shows the improving trend to be continuing.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	24.2 (22.9)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	24.2 (22.9)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	26.6 (26.3)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 17 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. Current standards in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) are well below those expected for children's ages in literacy and numeracy, and are below in personal and social development. The children's physical development is at the expected level for the children's ages. There is insufficient evidence to make judgements about the children's knowledge of the world or creative development. There is a lack of clear purpose to some of the play activities and this prevents children from making the progress of which some are capable at times. Children with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Early identification of children with language or learning difficulties ensures support is provided as quickly as possible, so that the children are given every opportunity to overcome their difficulties.
4. In Year 2, current standards are below average in reading and well below in writing. Until recently there has not been a cohesive programme for the development of pupils' writing skills in Years 1 and 2 and this was having a negative effect on standards. The scrutiny of work showed this to have improved this term and, teachers' expectations to have been raised further. There is no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys in lessons. The apparent difference shown in test results is due to more boys having special educational needs. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. In occasional lessons the individual behaviour plans are not applied so successfully and this affects the pace of lessons.
5. Standards in Year 6 are currently broadly average in English, but below average in mathematics and science. Pupils' investigative skills are weaker aspects in mathematics and science, also problem solving skills in mathematics. Pupils are now achieving well because of the good teaching, higher expectations, improved assessment procedures and target setting. Pupils' writing skills are actively promoted through other subjects and they have greater understanding of how to structure their writing for different purposes. Pupils who are potentially gifted work with older pupils to ensure they are sufficiently challenged and the more able Year 6 pupils visit a local high school for a mathematics lesson each week. This enables these pupils to make good progress and achieve well. Similarly, pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language are well supported and encouraged and make good progress. Girls continue to do better than boys in English and mathematics, and this is mainly due to the negative attitudes of a small number of boys of Afro-Caribbean heritage.

6. Standards in information and communication technology are at expected levels in Years 2 and 6 and have improved since the previous inspection when they were not up to the standards expected for their age. The computer suite enables pupils to be taught specific skills and then practise them independently. Teachers have undertaken further training to improve their knowledge and skills and effective deployment of the subject co-ordinator to teach other year groups has had a beneficial effect on standards. In art and design, standards have improved and risen above those expected in Years 2 and 6, again due to the influence of good teaching by a subject specialist. Standards in design and technology in Year 6 are also above those expected for pupils' ages because of the careful planning which ensures the systematic development of skills and knowledge. In physical education, standards are at expected levels in Years 2 and 6 in the aspects of the subjects seen. There is insufficient evidence for secure judgements to be made about standards in design and technology in Year 2, in history, geography or music throughout, although standards in singing are good.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are **satisfactory**. The provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **satisfactory** overall. Punctuality is unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school works hard to encourage good attendance and punctuality.
- The class room assistants promote good behaviour effectively during lunchtime.
- The school has maintained pupils' good cultural awareness since the last inspection.
- Parents do not make sufficient effort to get their children to school on time.

### **Commentary**

7. The table below shows attendance in the latest reporting year was very low in comparison with other schools and not good enough. Attendance has improved so far this academic year because of the effective monitoring systems now put in place. Current figures show attendance at 93.6 per cent, which is much closer to the national average of 94.2 per cent. The school works hard to encourage good attendance and punctuality and large numbers of pupils have a good attendance record and come to school on time. However, some children brought to school by their parents arrive late on a regular basis; this adversely affects their education.

*Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.5	School data	1.9
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

8. The school has a calm, purposeful atmosphere. Staff know their pupils well personally and help vulnerable pupils effectively. As a result, most pupils have satisfactory attitudes to school and behave satisfactorily in lessons and around school. Behaviour is often good in lessons in Years 3 to 6. The school works hard to maintain the satisfactory attitudes among the oldest pupils, as a few of Afro-Caribbean heritage tend to lose interest. The good induction procedures help Nursery children settle to school routines quickly and gain in independence. Most pupils are polite and courteous; they are ready to learn and listen attentively to their

teachers. However, when lessons are not challenging enough some pupils lose concentration and misbehave. The teaching assistants monitor pupils' behaviour well at lunchtimes and ensure consistency in expectations. There is an improvement in behaviour since the last inspection, when it was unsatisfactory. The school deals firmly with any incidents of unacceptable behaviour and five pupils were excluded for fixed periods in the last year, as shown in the table below. Such exclusions are necessary to prevent disruption to the learning of others. This is a significant reduction from the 23 exclusions noted in the previous report. Parents are confident that the school helps the children to become mature and responsible and that all pupils are fully included in lessons as far as possible.

### *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	28	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	18	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	53	2	0
Black or Black British – African	7	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0

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

9. Provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory and similar to the provision found at the time of the previous inspection. School assemblies, religious education and other lessons foster spiritual awareness among pupils. The school strongly promotes values of respect and tolerance in its aim to ensure racial harmony. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong, but a few do not always think through the consequences of their own actions on others, such as when calling out in lessons. When given the opportunity to work in small groups most do so sensibly. Occasionally Black British and Afro- Caribbean pupils do not work as collaboratively as they should, for example in sharing resources. Cultural awareness is effectively promoted through visits to places of cultural interest and through taking part in cultural activities organised by the Birmingham City Council. The school makes good use of visitors, visiting artists and promotes music, art and dance from other cultures well. There are no lessons on timetables designed to promote pupils’ personal and social skills and no school council or other formal mechanism for pupils to express their views as part of a democratic process.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall, and are good in Years 3, 4 and 6. The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of relevant experiences and opportunities for learning. The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school’s care for its pupils is good. Links with parents are **satisfactory** and with the community are **good**.

### **Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory** overall and has been maintained since the previous inspection.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching assistants are deployed well and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
- Little very good quality teaching and an example of unsatisfactory teaching was seen.
- Lessons in literacy and numeracy are well planned.
- Assessment procedures are good.
- Not enough activities are planned to develop pupils' investigative skills or their independent learning skills.

## Commentary

10. The teaching assistants have received training and are well deployed to maximise their skills for the benefit of pupils' learning. The teaching assistants moved up with the classes at the beginning of this academic year to provide continuity, particularly for pupils with special educational needs or in the early stages of learning to speak English. Some speak other languages, such as Italian and Arabic and have been able to provide very good support for individual pupils. Others have been trained in intensive language programmes and so support pupils in the early stages of learning to speak English, or in need of a boost to their attainment. They enable pupils to be fully included in lessons by checking they understand the language being used or the questions posed. They help pupils to complete tasks by encouraging and supporting them without doing the work for them. They record what pupils have achieved, so the special educational needs co-ordinator can judge the effectiveness of the individual education or behaviour plans.
11. The table below shows the proportion of very good teaching seen during the inspection was low. This is where the school needs to focus its efforts in order to raise standards further and motivate Black British Caribbean pupils. The features of the very good teaching and learning seen in mathematics in Years 3 and 4, information and communication technology in Year 5 and design and technology in Year 6 were:
- teaching methods and practical activities which made the lessons interesting;
  - secure subject knowledge and good questioning skills;
  - a brisk pace was maintained throughout ensuring all pupils were sufficiently challenged;
  - high expectations of pupils' efforts and behaviour;
  - effective use of resources available to support learning.

The example of unsatisfactory teaching in science resulted from the significant amount of time spent on managing pupils' behaviour, which slowed the pace of the lesson. Also the opportunities for pupils to contribute in the lesson were very limited as the teacher did much of the talking.

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	3 (9 %)	13 (40%)	15 (47%)	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.*

12. Lessons in literacy and numeracy are planned well and closely linked to the national strategies. This more precise planning, which includes activities for pupils at different stages in their

learning, is a key factor in the improvement found in teaching literacy skills. The purpose of lessons is clearly identified and shared with pupils to give them a focus for their learning. Different methods of teaching numeracy and writing skills are evident from the plans and activities at differing levels of complexity to meet the learning needs of pupils. Consequently, pupils are sufficiently challenged and make satisfactory progress towards the next stage in their learning.

13. Pupils' independent learning skills are slow to develop because insufficient opportunities are planned. The library is equipped as a working area, but no pupils used it during the inspection and they reported rarely researching topics using the library. Similarly, the computer suite is used for whole class lessons, but is empty for periods of time when it could be used for pupils to research information to support their learning in other subjects such as history or science.
14. The school's assessment procedures have improved significantly since the previous inspection when they were a priority for development. The assessment co-ordinator has played a key role in this improvement and the development of the current systems. The progress of each pupil is now tracked from Reception through to when they leave. This information shows quickly any pupil who has made insufficient progress over the course of a year. These pupils are highlighted and given additional support, which often helps them to catch up. The information informs the school if it is on course to meet the targets set. It is also used effectively to set targets for each pupil in English and mathematics. On-going assessment through marking pupils' work is good. Teachers inform pupils whether they have met the aim of the lesson or where there is progress towards the individual targets set. As a result, pupils have good knowledge of their learning and what they need to do to improve. Pupils who are potentially gifted or talented are identified through assessment and some work with older pupils, for example in mathematics. Equally, where pupils struggle with language and communication they may work with younger pupils to develop their skills through short periods of intensive teaching. This is effective in helping some pupils who are learning to speak English to be fully included in lessons.
15. Teachers are deployed well to make best use of the subject expertise available, for example in art and design, information and communication technology, music and physical education. Strong links have been forged with other local schools. These provide access to teaching by an Advanced Skills Teacher and technology and mathematics specialists at Selly Park Technology College. These links have been successful in improving aspects of the teaching and pupils' learning through coaching experiences. Pupils are confident their teachers will help them if they have difficulties and that the teaching is helping them to acquire knowledge and skills at a satisfactory pace.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **satisfactory** overall. It includes relevant experiences and opportunities for learning and generally meets the needs of its pupils, maintaining the position identified in the last inspection. Enrichment of the curriculum is **good**. The quality of the accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented well.
- Some activities in the Foundation Stage lack clear focus and purpose.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

- The skilled support staff are well matched to the school's needs.
- There are insufficient opportunities planned to develop investigative skills in science.
- The library and the computers in classrooms are underused.

## **Commentary**

16. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. There is a varied range of activities for all areas of learning with good emphasis on developing children's social and language skills. Children choose their own activities for a high proportion of the day, and whilst these activities are worthwhile in themselves, some lack a clear focus and so do not always distinguish between the different needs of children in the Nursery and Reception years.
17. The requirements of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been adopted well to guide teachers' planning. This is now helping to raise standards in English, though the mental mathematics sessions have not yet impacted sufficiently on pupils' problem solving skills and strategies. In science, the narrow range of topics covered in Year 2 contributes to standards that are well below average. Coverage of the science curriculum in Years 3 to 6 is more comprehensive, though scientific inquiry is still at an early stage. Consequently, fewer pupils than average achieve the higher levels in Year 6, though there are indications that this is improving. In an effort to address the lack of challenge for some more able pupils, identified in the last report, the school arranges master classes in mathematics at a partner high school. Similarly all pupils in Year 6 benefit from weekly technology lessons at the Selly Park Technology College, and this is a good enrichment of curricular provision.
18. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Early identification and intervention enables some of these pupils to make very good progress in overcoming their speech and communication difficulties and so be removed from the list. All pupils have clear, specific individual education plans and progress towards the targets is recorded by teaching assistants, so the co-ordinator has a good overview of the success of the plans implemented on pupils' progress.
19. There is a good range of activities to enhance pupils' learning within lessons and outside the school day. Pupils take part in a good range of competitive sport, musical activities such as choir and tap dancing are well attended. Pupils benefit greatly from the residential and adventurous activities and also from Bible classes and First Aid training.
20. The school has invested heavily in employing and training a generous number of skilled support staff. They work alongside teachers in class and support pupils' learning and behaviour well.
21. The accommodation is satisfactory overall, although some areas such as the swimming pool are not in use due to the need to upgrade it. There are plans for a new building. Nevertheless, the staff work hard to enhance the learning environment through good quality displays of pupils' work. Resources are satisfactory overall. The computer suite is used regularly, but the machines are outdated, they are slow to respond and this leads to some frustration for pupils. The computers in classes and the attractive library are underused, and this wastes opportunities for pupils to develop independence in learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety are **good**. The monitoring of pupils' achievements and personal development, and the advice and guidance provided are **good**. Procedures for seeking pupil's views are **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is a caring place where pupils and staff are valued.
- Parents are confident that their children are safe and well looked after by the staff.
- Pupils and adults have good personal relationships.
- There are good induction arrangements for pupils' joining the school.
- There are no formal procedures for taking pupils' views into account.

### **Commentary**

22. The school complies with local authority guidelines for child protection and has high regard for pupils' well being, health and safety. This ensures that pupils are safe and well cared for while they are at school. The school caretaker ensures that the premises are safe and free from hazards. The school takes satisfactory steps to deal with occasional vandalism. The general cleanliness of the building is good. Adults properly supervise the children arriving at the school. Sufficient numbers of staff and parents provide good support during outdoor activities. All pupils are valued and they are aware of the help and support available in case of need. There are sound procedures for dealing with any incidents of bullying and pupils do not consider this to be an issue. However, there are no formal procedures for taking pupils' views into account on a regular basis. The school council is just getting established. When pupils approach the headteacher about aspects for development, these are considered carefully. In response to such requests lunchtime play and climbing equipment has been purchased and additional residential visits organised.
23. Parents are pleased with the arrangements for settling new children in the school. Older pupils are allowed appropriate time to visit the secondary school of their choice. Staff are well aware of the pupils' medical needs and parents are confident that their children are looked after by staff qualified in first aid if they suffer a minor injury.
24. The school has improved its systems to guide and support pupils with special educational needs, through earlier identification of their difficulties. Pupils' files include a full history of the school's provision for each pupil. Clear guidance and support have enabled teachers to organise successful programmes to help pupils with speech and communication difficulties. However, plans to modify behaviour patterns are not always so successful. Although the provision recommended in statements is followed, clear expectations are not established in the classroom. Pupils with English as an additional language are supported well by class teachers and teaching assistants, often receiving short periods of intensive support daily and ensuring they understand the vocabulary being used when more proficient in speaking English. The academic support for all pupils, through monitoring and tracking their progress, is good and sets targets, which help them to move towards their next stage in learning. Support and guidance in personal development is also good. The school takes time to discuss events at home or which spill over onto the playground causing distress or anger and ensure pupils are able to cope in the classroom and able to learn.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has **satisfactory** links with parents. The local resources are used well to enhance pupils' learning. Partnerships with other schools and the community are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are pleased with the work of the school and the progress their children make.
- Some parents are actively involved in the life of the school, and provide good support for their children's learning.
- A significant proportion of parents thinks that they are not well informed about their children's progress and that their views are not invited.
- There are very good links with Selly Park Technology College.

### **Commentary**

25. The school has satisfactory links with parents. Parents are happy with the openness, professionalism and friendliness of the staff. The school listens to their views. Parents confirm that the headteacher and staff are approachable. They listen carefully to parental concerns and take the necessary action to rectify problems. However, their views are not invited on a regular, formal basis, such as through questionnaires. The school provides opportunities for Year 6 pupils to visit a local secondary school, and parents appreciate this and it enables them to make informed choices.
26. There are good opportunities for parents to meet teachers, but some parents lack sufficient confidence to establish working relationships with the school. Homework activities involve parents who co-operate satisfactorily by supporting their children. Parents are invited to activities provided by the school, including opportunities to discuss their children's progress. Teachers inform parents at an early stage if there are any concerns about a child's learning. Parents receive regular newsletters and the quality of the school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents is good. Pupils' annual reports provide parents with information about how their children are getting on but they do not mention what they have to do to improve, and are, therefore, not as helpful as they could be.
27. Parents of children identified as having special educational needs are informed regularly about their child's progress, and they are given information on how they can help develop learning at home. This contributes positively to raising pupils' attainment. Parents are invited to attend all review meetings and are actively involved in deciding the best course of action for their child. Where appropriate the children are also involved.
28. There are good links with the local community. The school has successfully established links with local agencies such as the education welfare services. This has led to improvement in pupils' attendance rates. Links with the local community police help the school to prevent truancy and vandalism in the school. Support from the Diocese of Birmingham, the local vicar and the behaviour support units are much valued by the school and help to improve the provision. The school plays a positive role in the community and local volunteer groups use the school as a learning base. This enables pupils to draw on the services of the specialist organisations such as the Bible study group, which is run by Birmingham Mission - a registered charity. Links with the family learning groups; visits to the theatre and joint sporting activities with local schools successfully promote a sense of community among pupils. The school has very good links with the Selly Park Technology College, which enables pupils to learn specialist subjects such as computer aided design ( CAD) , computer aided machining (CAM) and practical cookery. Links with other local schools provide opportunities for good in-service

training and help with staff development. The school conscientiously evaluates the impact of its liaison with the community to ensure it is having a positive effect on the school's provision.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management of the school are **good** overall. Leadership by the headteacher is good. Rigorous monitoring of the learning environment and the curriculum is clearly focussed on raising standards and this has already had a positive effect on attainment in English as pupils leave school. The governance of the school is very good, and all statutory requirements met. The governors play an active and constructive part in shaping the school's future.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The governing body has a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- The headteacher leads by example.
- The new deputy headteacher complements and supports the headteacher well.
- Despite extensive support for the school and individuals some weaknesses in teaching remain.
- Clear targets for pupils mean that class teachers are accountable for individual pupil's progress.

### **Commentary**

29. A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection and has been instrumental in setting a vision and educational direction of the school and implementing action. This shows a good improvement in the management of the school since the last report. Honest self-evaluation and the thorough analysis of data are providing relevant information to guide school improvement. The school's priorities have rightly focussed on making better provision in literacy and numeracy to raise standards and the good assessment procedures introduced indicate that this is having a positive effect on standards, particularly in English in Year 6. The school has received extensive support in literacy and numeracy, though this has not yet had the desired effect in raising standards sufficiently in Year 2 in English, or in mathematics throughout the school. Nevertheless, action taken has resulted in a greater rate of improvement overall than is being achieved nationally. The school has rightly identified some pupils' failure to arrive at school on time as a barrier to improvement and has taken steps such as amendments to the timetable to try to encourage pupils to be more punctual. There has been some improvement, but despite the school's best efforts a small core of pupils regularly arrive late and so miss part of their lessons and disturb the learning of others.
30. The appointment of a new deputy headteacher in the last year has resulted in a much strengthened senior management team; team members skills compliment each other's well. His quiet but determined approach has helped to improve standards in Year 6 and also provides a good role model for other staff, particularly in dealing with challenging behaviour assertively. Considerable staff changes over the recent past, and the fact that this is a small school, means that currently there is no subject co-ordinator to lead developments in some subjects. The school has therefore concentrated its efforts on key aspects and major areas of the curriculum to support developments. Good leadership is being demonstrated in the key areas of literacy, numeracy, science, information and communication technology, special educational needs and assessment. The effect varies between subjects, though good improvement is already evident in the increasing number of pupils who reach the expected levels in the statutory tests at the end of Year 6 and in standards in information and communication technology. The school intends to allocate all subjects to teachers in due course. The management of special educational needs

provision has improved and is also effective, and so pupils with special educational needs achieve well and some make such good progress that they are taken off the list. The school is fully committed to including all pupils in lessons and is usually successful in doing so. The only exception is where pupils with behavioural difficulties find it hard to work alongside others without disrupting their learning.

31. The clear and balanced analysis of information about the school provided for the governing body by the headteacher, and the governors' close involvement in the life of the school, enables them to be very well aware of the strengths of the school and the areas for development. The strong commitment and close co-operation with the school does not detract from the governors' role as a critical friend, checking standards and making suggestions for improvement. They provide good support for the headteacher, and have assumed a leading role in the new building development, enabling the headteacher to devote her energies to raising standards. The governors meet all their statutory responsibilities.
32. Financial control and budgetary planning are good. Spending is prudent and closely linked to strategic planning and the school improvement plan. The school is currently carrying a large amount forward, but this is earmarked for the new building project. Whilst maintaining a satisfactory supply of resources and ensuring that the building is attractive and well maintained, the governors took the view that large-scale expenditure, such as replacing the computers and re-roofing part of the building, would be more effective when the building is upgraded. Given the high expenditure per pupil, the quality of education provided and the evidence of rising standards, the school now provides satisfactory value for money. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The table below shows the financial information for the last year.

***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	767,897	Balance from previous year	59,743
Total expenditure	675,116	Balance carried forward to the next	152,524
Expenditure per pupil	5,076		

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

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

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **satisfactory** and provides a sound start to school life. However, this is a decline since the last inspection. Though the contents of the new curriculum for young children have been implemented in each area of learning, some independent activities do not have specific aims for the children's learning.

At the time of the inspection there were 10 children of Nursery age and 17 children of Reception age being educated in the Foundation Stage unit. The unit is staffed by a qualified teacher and two nursery nurses, with additional part-time support from a teacher, for one and half days each week. Children enter the nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age. In particular, the social and language skills of some children are poor and so the school rightly places great emphasis on these areas. Children have access to a secure outdoor play area, which is well equipped with adventure climbing equipment and wheeled toys. However, this is generally used for playtime activities rather than a planned extension to learning in the classroom.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and is good in the development of social and language skills, with all adults talking constantly to the children whatever the activity. This approach also forms the basis of the good provision for pupils at the early stages of learning English and they achieve well. There is a strong emphasis on children learning through play and this is reflected in the range of activities on offer. Planning for these activities does not take full account of the different needs of children in the Nursery and Reception years. Consequently, some older and more able children are not always sufficiently challenged, as the teacher's expectations of what they can achieve are not always high enough. Teaching is more effective when skills are taught systematically, for example when Reception children practise letter sounds when following the story of "The Monster's Party!" in the big book. Good teamwork between all adults in the Foundation Stage and the skilled nursery nurses play an important part in developing children's learning. Bearing in mind that children enter the Nursery with skills that are well below average, achievement is satisfactory overall. By the time the children enter Year 1, a much lower proportion of children than found in most schools is likely to achieve the goals expected nationally in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, and standards are well below those expected. Skills in personal, social and emotional development are below those expected, but their physical skills are broadly in line with those expected for their age. It is not possible to make overall judgements on standards in knowledge and understanding of the world or creative development.

There are satisfactory assessment procedures to track children's progress on an ongoing basis, for example one teacher observed children in a physical education lesson, led by a nursery nurse, to note areas of success and difficulty. Satisfactory use is made of the information gained. It is used well in areas such as reading, where children have individual books to share and read, but is used less effectively to plan work for individuals or groups in other areas of learning.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teamwork between all adults provides a good example for children.

- Children develop independence through opportunities to choose activities.
- Responses to inappropriate behaviour are not sufficiently firm.
- Circle time is used effectively.

## Commentary

33. The quality of teaching is good and children achieve well. Children are made to feel welcome and important as they come to school, with a nursery nurse greeting every child on arrival at school each day. Lunch is a pleasant occasion with adults joining children at tables to develop social skills, such as using a knife and fork. Children respond well to the good example of teamwork demonstrated by all adults and quickly settle into the secure environment in the Foundation unit. In a circle time for nursery children the sympathetic approach of the nursery nurse and the good use of a large puppet, Lolo, encouraged children to discuss their feelings in a non-threatening situation. In whole class sessions a significant minority find it difficult to concentrate and show a tendency to call out. A firmer strategy is needed to develop routines and to encourage concentration.

## COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Speaking skills are encouraged well.
- There is insufficient attention to developing listening skills.
- The teaching of writing is not systematic.
- Children make good progress in reading.

## Commentary

34. Teaching is satisfactory overall and the children achieve satisfactorily. Speaking skills are encouraged well through adults interacting with children whatever the activity, and by planned opportunities for children to speak such as predicting what will happen in the story. Listening skills are less well developed as adults do not always ensure that children are listening before giving instructions, nor are they consistent in insisting on children listening to each other, with children regularly calling out. Good assessment procedures in reading show that children are making rapid progress in recognising letter sounds and also commonly used words. Most children in Reception make a good attempt at writing their own name and the writing table has a good range of implements such as crayons and pens to encourage children to write. However, writing skills are not taught so systematically as reading. During a guided writing session for Reception children, a few were allowed to leave the carpet to go and play, with no particular purpose stated, instead of carrying out a writing task first. Consequently, the impetus of the initial teaching was lost, and some children did not want to leave the activity they had chosen when recalled to attempt to write a sentence.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good emphasis on learning through practical activities.
- Some instructions are given when children are not listening.

- Opportunities are missed to use counting skills in other areas of learning.

## **Commentary**

35. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and enables the children to achieve satisfactorily. Practical activities are used well to develop mathematical understanding. This was demonstrated when the teacher provided a good range of shapes for the children to predict and test which ones would roll. Good support is given to children at the early stages of learning English, to practise and relate the names to the actual shapes. Children quickly lose concentration when the pace of teaching drops and they are not fully involved in an activity, but their interest is renewed quickly when they are asked to sing a number rhyme. The teacher gives appropriate guidance for a range of number activities, but does not ensure children are listening. Consequently, some disappear quickly to choose what they want to do rather than what is required.
36. Children contribute to a picture graph to show how they travel to school, but counting skills are not practised regularly in daily routines or in other areas of learning.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement in this wide area of learning. Children are competent in using the computer, load their own programs and control the mouse with accuracy and skill. They learn about the needs of living things as they care for and feed a wide range of pets in the Foundation Unit. There is a good range of paintings on the wall, which show that children have learnt a lot about people who help them in school. They also illustrate the different generations present in their own families.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are given the opportunity to use a good range of large and small equipment.
- Children show a good awareness of space.
- Skills are not always developed systematically.
- Children learn to work together.

## **Commentary**

37. Teaching is satisfactory overall and the children achieve satisfactorily. Children develop sound skills in using a good range of tools, as these are readily available for use. For example a nursery nurse leads a daily painting session in which children practise using a range of brushes and printing equipment successfully. Children have daily access to the outdoor play area and learn to steer the wheeled vehicles and negotiate the adventure climbing structures skilfully and safely.
38. In a sound physical education lesson in the hall the nursery nurse laid out a series of small rubber mats for children to stand on, and this helped children to develop a good awareness of space, evident when the mats were removed. Children used a good range of small equipment though in this lesson there was no specific skill development planned. A good feature was the

way in which children were required to discuss their choice of equipment in pairs, to develop co-operation.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on this area of learning. Scrutiny of the work on the walls shows that children take part in a good range of painting and drawing activities, painting pictures and making houses from different shapes. A good feature is the interesting imaginative play areas where children dress up and take the part of the dinner ladies cooking and serving lunch, and also enjoy being the school secretary in another play area. These activities stimulate the imagination and also help to develop children's language skills. Achievement is satisfactory.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory** and has improved since the previous inspection.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The National Literacy Strategy has been adapted well to meet the pupils' learning needs, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language.
- Teaching has improved due to better lesson planning and support from the local education authority.
- Listening skills are weak for some pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils' progress from year to year is being tracked carefully and targets for improvement set.
- There are good opportunities for writing in other subjects in Years 3 to 6, but these are not built into the planning.
- Not enough use is made of the library or the computers in classrooms to develop literacy skills.

#### Commentary

39. There has been good improvement in the provision since the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and is good in Years 3 to 6. Consequently, standards in Year 6 have risen each year since 2000 when only 33 per cent of the Year 6 pupils reached the national standard. This proportion had risen to 59 per cent by 2003. Findings from this inspection show standards are continuing to improve and are broadly average in Year 6, but remain well below average in Year 2, where writing skills were slow to develop in the autumn term and listening skills are weak for a significant number of pupils. In Year 2 current standards in speaking and reading are below average and in listening and writing are well below average. In Year 6, standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing are broadly average.
40. The improvement in standards is partly due to much sharper planning which is clearly linked back to the National Literacy Strategy and shows clearly what pupils are expected to learn from each lesson. The purpose of lessons is shared with the pupils so they have a clear focus for their learning. Time towards the end of lessons is used well to check pupils' progress and understanding. The local education authority's Intensive Support Programme has supported the school well in bringing about the improvement in planning and in setting targets. Pupils in Year 6 are encouraged to assess their own work, to ask a friend to do this for them, prior to the class teacher marking the work. They have a grid with the key features they are looking for in the writing and note those included. This is effective in helping pupils to self-assess their work. Pupils reported having greater understanding of how they can improve their work in order to move on to the next stage in their learning. Pupils show good understanding of how to structure their writing for different purposes, for example, when writing a formal letter of complaint, or an informal letter to a friend. The marking of their work refers to the purpose of the writing and informs pupils of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Spelling patterns are taught well during literacy lessons throughout the school and reinforced through homework. Once learned, spelling patterns are reinforced when writing in other lessons.
41. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory and are sometimes good, which is an improvement since the previous inspection when teaching was unsatisfactory. An Advanced

Skills Teacher visits the school each week to work alongside teachers in Years 1 and 2, or to model good practice in teaching. This has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers throughout deploy teaching assistants well in supporting pupils and this again has been beneficial for pupils' learning.

42. In Year 2, the scrutiny of pupils' work showed a heavy emphasis on the completion of formal written exercises often based on spellings in the autumn term, and so creative writing skills did not develop well enough. This term there is much more emphasis on the retelling or writing of stories, or writing character profiles for example. Consequently, pupils are making better progress in understanding how to write in sentences, how to structure their writing of stories and how to attempt to write unfamiliar words.
43. Reading skills are taught outside of literacy lessons, which allows more time for writing within lessons. Because of the good pupil: adult ratio and voluntary helpers, pupils read to adults frequently and discuss the texts they are reading. This is helping them to understand the author's intentions and by Year 6 they can discuss the significance of events in a story, for example, deducing why the mirror in 'The Sandstorm' may become a central element of the story. They discuss books read by a range of children's authors and why they prefer some to others. The weaker aspect for some pupils is in their ability to sustain their concentration for a reasonable period of time when reading.
44. Teachers often provide opportunities for pupils to discuss their thoughts and ideas, usually as a whole class in Years 1 and 2, but more often with a partner or in a small group in Years 3 to 6. This helps to develop their speaking and listening skills. On entry to Year 1, listening skills are weak and teachers have to continually remind pupils of the need to listen in order to learn, and to wait for their turn to speak. Through continued encouragement, most pupils develop their skills satisfactorily and extend their range of vocabulary. By Year 6, most pupils speak with confidence and maturity. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well catered for and make good progress. Short, daily periods of intensive teaching, often working with teaching assistants, are beneficial to their progress.
45. Most pupils with special educational needs have speech and communication difficulties. The school has turned its attention to the early identification of communication difficulties and the use of diagnostic tests. This is enabling earlier intervention and support through implementing individual education plans with specific and measurable targets. These are used when planning activities in lessons and teaching assistants monitor progress towards them in lessons. The school has been successful in enabling some of these pupils to make very good progress, catch up with their peers and so be removed from the special educational needs register.
46. Another key feature in the rising standards is the way assessment procedures have developed. The progress of each pupil is tracked year on year from the time they enter the school. This information is used well to highlight pupils who have not made sufficient progress over a year and to ensure additional support is provided. Targets are set for each pupil and progress towards them checked against samples of writing which are marked against the National Curriculum criteria and the level achieved identified. The national test papers are analysed to see where pupils did not perform well. This information has also been used effectively to develop the teaching and the curriculum.
47. The school has a large and attractive library, a valuable resource, which is not used to support pupils' learning, as it should be. No pupils were seen working in the library during the

inspection and pupils reported rarely using it to research information in lessons. Similarly, the computers available in classrooms were not used in any literacy lessons seen.

48. The leadership and management of the subject are good and have been a major influence on the improvement now evident, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Training undertaken and the opportunity to work alongside the literacy consultant have enabled the subject co-ordinator to gain a good oversight of standards and provision. Monitoring of the planning and teaching have taken place and support provided to develop the teaching.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. Literacy skills are developed well through other subjects in Years 3 to 6 and satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2, where less writing is evident. In Years 3 to 6, there are good examples of literacy skills developing through history, science and religious education. Pupils had also written instructions as part of their work in art and design. At present, these opportunities to link subjects together are not built into the medium term planning.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff training has raised teachers' expectations and improved the lesson planning.
- There are not enough opportunities for independent, investigative work.
- Pupils' problem solving skills are weak.
- Assessment procedures have improved and are identifying areas for improvement.
- Not enough use is made of information and communication technology to support learning.

### Commentary

50. Current standards of work are below average in Years 2 and 6. Nevertheless, the improving trend is continuing. This is because teachers have undertaken further training, as part of the local education authority's Intensive Support Programme have raised their expectations of what these pupils can achieve and are making better use of the assessment information available to set targets. Support from a visiting Advanced Skills Teacher is successfully developing the teaching in Years 1 and 2. Overall achievement is satisfactory and is better in Years 3, 4 and 6 where good teaching leads to good learning.
51. In 2000, only 24 per cent of the Year 6 pupils reached the expected Level 4. By 2003, this had risen to 65 per cent and is expected to rise closer to the national average in 2004. The proportion likely to reach the higher Level 5 is below the national average and so overall standards are below average.
52. Throughout the school the teachers have increased the emphasis placed on developing pupils' skills in mental arithmetic, particularly the quick, accurate recall of number facts and strategies pupils can use to help them solve problems mentally. By Year 2, pupils can recall addition and subtraction facts and are beginning to understand simple multiplication and division, but with much further work to be done. By Year 6, pupils can recall multiplication and division facts, usually with speed and accuracy, but when it comes to applying that knowledge to specific situations only the more able pupils are confident in doing so. For example, they are not secure in estimating answers to number questions such as  $51 \times 47$ . When asked how much would be left if 65 centimetres were cut from a 3.5 metre length of rope, very few could give the correct answer.
53. Overall teaching is satisfactory. In Years 3, 4 and 6 teaching is good. The planning of lessons has improved and is now good. Lessons are clearly linked to the National Numeracy Strategy and identify clearly what pupils are expected to learn over the course of each week. This gives teachers a much clearer focus when marking and assessing pupils' work. Therefore, the teachers' comments inform pupils how well they have done, or what they need to do to

improve. In discussions with pupils they are clear about their progress and the levels they are aiming to achieve by the end of the year. Lesson plans include the vocabulary to be taught and this is carried through in lessons. However, not enough opportunities are planned for mathematical investigations, which interest and challenge pupils. In a lesson in the Year 3 and 4 class, where teaching was good, the pupils investigated the weight of a range of objects. They estimated the weight of each object first and placed them in order before checking if they were correct. This was followed by the use of a computer program, which reinforced how to record the weight of objects in kilograms and grams. There were tasks at different levels of complexity, well matched to the pupils' learning needs. The introductory mental session involved counting forwards and backwards in 100s, and placing weights in grams onto a number line in the correct position. The pupils enjoyed the practical activities, worked hard, co-operated well in their groups and were successful in completing their tasks. This lesson was successful because it took account of the different ways in which pupils learn. The interactive whiteboard and digital projector were used effectively in Year 6 to ensure pupils paid full attention when each question in a mental arithmetic test was displayed for eight seconds.

54. The assessment procedures have improved notably since the previous inspection. The progress of each pupil is now tracked diligently to ensure all are making the progress of which they are capable. This information is used well to identify pupils who need a boost to their attainment and to set targets for improvement. The performance of pupils in national tests has been analysed and a weakness in pupils' understanding of shape, space and measure identified. The scrutiny of work shows this to have been remedied.
55. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. There has been some monitoring of the planning and teaching and additional support provided. The school has forged good links with a local high school and some Year 6 pupils attend a Mathematics Master Class each week to develop their skills further. They enjoy these lessons and feel they are helping them to make better progress. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

56. The Advanced Skills Teacher demonstrated how mathematics can be linked effectively to learning in other subjects such as science and information and communication technology, when constructing and using a pictogram. This made learning more interesting and meaningful for the pupils. There are examples of satisfactory development of mathematical skills through other subjects, for example using graphs and charts to record data in science and measuring materials in design and technology. However, such examples are not found often enough.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is unsatisfactory in Year 2.
- Achievement is good in Years 3 to 6 and pupils show sound scientific knowledge.
- The development of pupils' independent enquiry skills is in the early stages.
- There is little use of computers to support learning in classes.

### **Commentary**

57. Standards are well below those expected for pupils' age in Year 2. The topics covered so far this year have concentrated almost exclusively on the biological aspects of the subject so pupils' knowledge is within a narrow range. Standards are below those expected of pupils in Year 6. The number of pupils attaining the required standard is close to the average, but fewer pupils than is usual achieve the higher level. This is because the enquiry aspect of science is at an early stage of development. Nevertheless, this represents a good improvement since the last inspection as the number of pupils attaining the average standard in national tests has increased from 32 per cent in 2000 to 83 per cent in 2003. The rising trend is evident in the current Year 6.
58. Achievement is unsatisfactory overall in Years 1 and 2. While achievement is satisfactory in Year 1, as the practical activities are suitable for the age of the pupils, it is unsatisfactory in Year 2. This is because of the limited range of work and also the fact that the challenging behaviour of some pupils limits the planning of more opportunities for scientific enquiry. Achievement is good in Years 3 to 6. The thrust of the curriculum is based on teaching skills to plug large gaps in pupils' knowledge and this has been successful in raising achievement so that most pupils are now working at the expected level from a low base. However, in order to challenge more able pupils further, the school recognises that pupils need more opportunities to design and conduct their own investigations and experiments. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve satisfactorily, as some pupils do not have the language to explain the scientific ideas that they practically understand. For example one pupil described water as "rebreaking" rather than ice thawing, though clearly understanding the concept of a reversible change.
59. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but the quality of teaching varies considerably between classes. It is good overall in Years 3 to 6 where the systematic teaching of skills helps most pupils to make good gains in their knowledge. In a lesson where teaching was good in Year 6, skilful questioning led pupils to discover why the bulbs shone brighter in the parallel circuit. In a lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory in Year 2, extensive time was spent in controlling the behaviour of a significant minority and this reduced the learning for all pupils. The actual activity, examining how to create sounds from different instruments, was worthwhile, but in an effort to circumvent any lack of co-operation, the pace was too slow and deliberate with little opportunity for pupils to be actively involved. A good feature overall is the way in which teachers emphasise the correct vocabulary, sometimes writing key words on the board as a reminder. There are few opportunities for pupils to use their information and communication technology skills to enhance learning in science.
60. Assessment procedures are in the early stages of development but are generally satisfactory overall. The quality of marking is good in Year 6. The teacher makes good suggestions as to how pupils can improve and recognises when a particular step has been achieved.
61. Leadership and management of the subject are sound overall with some strong features. The co-ordinator provides a clear example of good practice in her teaching and this has played an important part in raising standards in Year 6. However, an identified shortcoming in some teaching has yet to be addressed.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen since the previous inspection.
- Effective use is being made of the subject expertise and resources available to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- The computers are slow to load as they are ageing; leading to some frustration for pupils.
- Computers in classrooms are insufficient in number and not used often enough to support learning in other subjects.

## Commentary

62. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are at the expected levels for pupils of their ages and achievement is satisfactory. This shows good improvement from the below average standards found at the time of the previous inspection. Effective deployment of the subject co-ordinator and the visiting Advanced Skills Teacher to teach most year groups in the computer suite, and some very good quality teaching are enabling pupils to make good progress and achieve well in these lessons. The good teaching evident in these lessons is not followed up sufficiently in other class lessons, partly due to insufficient computers being available, which is why overall achievement is satisfactory. There is only one computer in most classes, with two in Year 6. Pupils reported not using classroom computers regularly; sometimes if they finished their work then they could use them.
63. Since the last inspection national funding has meant that all staff have had access to further training and the resources have been extended. The acquisition of digital projectors and interactive whiteboards in three classrooms, and the establishment of a whole school network allowing Internet access and whole class teaching mean the school is well placed to move forward. The school is aware of the need to update the computers, but is waiting to hear if building work, including a new computer suite, is to commence in the near future. In the meantime, the school is looking to purchase laptop computers, which could be used in any classroom.
64. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are good in lessons in the suite; the teachers' secure subject knowledge is used well to give clear, succinct explanations and demonstrations using the digital projector and interactive whiteboard. Good use of questioning checks pupils are listening and understanding the stages in the process, for example when accessing websites. The teachers' expectations of pupils are high, in terms of behaviour and effort. Pupils rise to the challenges set because the lessons are interesting and move at a brisk pace. There is a high level of adult support for pupils with special educational needs, or English as an additional language who need more encouragement. For example, when pupils press the enter key too many times in frustration at the slowness of the machines, adults soon explain what has gone wrong and get them back to where they need to be. Very little teaching was seen in classrooms to support learning in other subjects.
65. Conversations with pupils and examples of their work show they are confident in accessing the Internet, recording data and presenting text. Pupils in Year 1 explored information about different fruits and learned how to present the information in a simple pictogram. By Year 5 pupils, are interrogating information on different websites through a search engine and select relevant information. They import graphics to accompany the text in their work and so enhance the presentation.

66. The subject is well led and managed. Although the co-ordinator is fairly new to the post, much has been achieved in the last year in raising the profile of the use of computers as a valuable teaching resource. The digital projectors in classrooms are used well in many lessons, particularly in Year 6, where lessons need to be interesting to maintain the attention and positive attitudes of all pupils, especially boys.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

67. The use of information and communication technology to support learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The use of computers is insufficiently planned into other areas of the curriculum, except for lessons taught in the computer suite. For the first two days of the inspection, computers were not seen in use in classrooms. Work on display shows computers are used to support the development of literacy skills through editing pieces of work and presenting it attractively, or researching information. Further evidence showed repeating patterns in art and design, but overall the work on display did not show computers to be used often enough to support pupils' learning.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Religious education**

Religious education was not inspected. This subject is inspected and reported on separately in Voluntary Aided schools.

### **History and geography**

No lessons were observed in history or geography, so it is not possible to make an overall judgement on provision. Work in pupils' books shows that there is appropriate coverage of the curriculum in both subjects and that there are good opportunities for pupils to use and develop their writing skills. A good feature is the range of visits undertaken to enhance the learning, for example, pupils spent a day as World War II evacuees.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

Only one complete lesson was seen in art and design, music and design and technology. In physical education, one games lesson, one gymnastics and two dance lessons were seen. It is not possible, therefore, to make secure judgements about overall provision in these subjects. In addition to observing lessons, inspectors spoke to pupils and looked at their work.

68. It is evident from teachers' planning, discussions with pupils and the work on display around the school that work in art and design is varied and interesting. Pupils achieve well and standards are above those expected for pupils in Years 2 and 6. This is a significant improvement from the unsatisfactory progress and lack of emphasis on teaching skills and knowledge of artistic techniques reported in the last inspection. Part of a lesson seen in Year 1 showed pupils confidently sewing and gathering material they had already printed themselves to make large flowers to incorporate into a display. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were investigating pattern and confidently rotating shapes following a lesson using computers to repeat patterns. Another group were successful in making press prints after making a printing block using a polystyrene tile. Pupils' observational drawing skills develop well and these are evident in the good quality diagrams in science, for example, of flower parts and seed dispersal. There is much evidence of three-dimensional work in clay as well as in card and textiles. Large

paintings in the style of famous artists such as Lowry, Monet and Turner show effective use of colour and an understanding of how artists use different brush strokes to gain the desired effect. The teaching in the lesson seen was good. The subject specialist who works part-time provides good advice and support for other teachers and provides a good role model for developing the teaching.

69. In design and technology, the scrutiny of pupils' books and the work around school indicates work of a standard above that expected for pupils in Year 6. All aspects of the subject are covered, from designing and making to evaluating the finished product. A good aspect is the fact that pupils in Year 6 benefit from the expertise of the staff and the resources at the Selly Park Technology College on their regular weekly visits. The pupils respond well to the challenge of using the computers to aid their designs and produce work of good quality. Teaching in the lesson seen was of very good quality due to the high level of subject expertise.
70. Only a singing lesson with the whole school and a class lesson with Year 3 and 4 pupils were seen in music. Pupils' singing develops well as they enjoy joining in together, singing with enthusiasm. Pupils begin to add descants or to improvise naturally when singing and others soon follow the lead. They are willing to practise in order to improve their overall performance. Teaching in the class lesson seen was good, enabling pupils to increase their awareness and appreciation of music. Carefully selected excerpts portrayed different emotions, with pupils recalling Nessum Dorma as the theme tune for the World Cup. The lesson provided good opportunities for pupils to discuss emotions, as well as singing, which they did in tune, with expression and a good sense of rhythm.
71. Standards in physical education in Years 2 and 6 are at the levels expected for pupils' ages in games and gymnastics and are above in dance. Teaching of line dancing is good and because modern 'pop' music is used pupils are interested and want to join in. Good lesson planning for the games lesson ensured pupils were physically challenged as well as developing their skills in passing, attacking and defending. Pupils were slow to organise themselves in preparation for a three-sided game and this slowed the pace of the lesson. In a Year 2 gymnastics lesson, the pupils made satisfactory progress in performing forward and backward rolls. Good attention is given to health and safety issues in all lessons, for example, when lifting and moving apparatus.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

72. No specific lessons were observed but scrutiny of work across the curriculum and discussions with pupils and teachers indicate that provision is satisfactory overall. Aspects of health and sex education are dealt with fully in science lessons with the support and expertise of the school nurse. Pupils are aware of the dangers of harmful drugs through science lessons and a talk and demonstration by a community police officer. Pupils' personal and social skills develop satisfactorily and they acquire sound knowledge of healthy lifestyles. Planning for citizenship is currently under review. Whilst pupils can make informal, direct requests to the headteacher, for example, a request for the refurbishment of toilets was met, there are no formal procedures to canvass pupils' views and demonstrate fully the democratic process. The school council is still in its infancy. No class timetables show time allocated to 'circle time' when pupils can participate in structured class discussions about social and moral issues.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
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	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>5</b>
Pupils' achievement	4
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>4</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
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	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3

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