

INSPECTION REPORT

WALSALL WOOD SCHOOL

WALSALL

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104201

Headteacher: Mr R Trawford

Lead inspector: Mrs J Ikin

Dates of inspection: 1st - 3rd March 2004

Inspection number: 258295

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:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	141
School address:	Brownhills Road Brownhills Walsall West Midlands
Postcode:	WS8 7BP
Telephone number:	(01543) 452 664
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Mills
Date of previous inspection:	11 th January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Walsall Wood School is a small primary school serving the local community. The majority of pupils are from White United Kingdom backgrounds and there are also pupils from Black African, mixed White Caribbean and mixed Asian backgrounds. Three pupils speak English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection there were 143 pupils on roll. There is a Nursery which is attended on a part-time basis by seven pupils. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. There is a wide spread of attainment on entry to the school but overall it is well below average. The number of pupils who join or leave the school in years other than the Reception Year and Year 6 is above average, with the highest amount of mobility being in Years 3 to 6. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and the number with a statement of special educational needs is average. Their special educational needs include specific and moderate difficulties, learning, social, emotional, behavioural, and speech and communication difficulties. The school received a school achievement award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3349	Mrs J Ikin	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Foundation Stage
32676	Mr N Power	Lay inspector	
33079	Ms P Baldwin	Team inspector	English Geography History Religious education English as an additional language
22058	Mrs C Richardson	Team inspector	Mathematics Citizenship Music Physical education Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an improving school, which is very well led by a dynamic headteacher with energy, enthusiasm and vision. There is a clear sense of purpose in the school and staff and governors are committed to developing a school that the whole community can be proud of. A great deal has been achieved in a very short period of time and the school's capacity to improve further is very good. The achievement of most pupils is satisfactory and the school's effectiveness is **satisfactory** and it gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher provides very good leadership. He is held in very high regard by parents and pupils and supported well by senior staff and governors.
- Provision in the Nursery and Reception class is good and children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Behaviour is good because of the school's good provision for personal and social development and the way pupils are involved in the development of their school.
- The school's commitment to inclusion is very good and special educational needs' provision is good.
- There are very good links with other schools which are used well to extend the curriculum.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are poor and this limits their ability to learn.
- Pupils do not achieve as much as they should in science and there is insufficient challenge for higher-attaining pupils in writing.
- There are weaknesses in curriculum planning for progression and in outdoor provision.
- Assessment is not precise enough and insufficient use is made of it to plan for the different needs of pupils in lessons.
- Risk assessment procedures lack rigour.

The school's improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. Most of the weaknesses identified then have been addressed to some extent, although science has not improved enough and more remains to be done in writing and assessment. Standards in information and communication technology and provision for spiritual development have improved and are now satisfactory. Good procedures are now in place to improve attendance. The pace of improvement has increased dramatically since the arrival the new headteacher.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	E*	B	E	C
mathematics	D	E	E	D
science	E	E	E*	E

Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average; E – very low. Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

Caution is needed in interpreting the data because the number of pupils in each year group is small and some year groups have more special educational needs pupils than others. The results of 2003 national tests for Year 2 pupils, when compared to similar schools, were above average for reading and average for writing and mathematics. They were well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The results of teacher assessments for Year 2 pupils in science were well below the national average.

Pupils' **achievement** in relation to their starting points is **satisfactory** overall. Achievement in the Nursery and Reception classes is good, although fewer than average reach the goals that are expected by the end of the Reception Year. Achievement is satisfactory in English and mathematics, although standards in Year 6 and Year 2 are below average. Higher attainers do not achieve as much as they should in writing and, throughout the school, pupils' skills of speaking and listening are well below average. Standards in science are well below average and achievement in the subject is unsatisfactory. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good and for those who speak English as an additional language it is satisfactory.

Pupils' personal qualities are **good** overall. Their attitudes and behaviour are good. Their **moral and social development is good** and their **spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory**. Attendance is judged to be satisfactory. Although attendance rates are below average the school has good procedures in place to improve it.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. **Teaching** and learning are **satisfactory** overall. It is good in the Nursery, the Reception class and Year 6. Assessment is unsatisfactory overall. The curriculum is good in the Nursery and Reception class. Elsewhere the curriculum is satisfactory and all aspects of the National Curriculum are covered, however, there are weaknesses in planning for the progression of skills in subjects other than English and mathematics. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Provision for pupils' personal and social development is good. The accommodation and resources are adequate but there are weaknesses in outdoor provision. Links with parents and the community are good and there are very good links with other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory** overall. **Governance** is **satisfactory**. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. He is supported well by the deputy headteacher and senior staff. The budget is very efficiently administered by the very able school bursar. Governors give good support to the headteacher and fulfil their statutory duties well. However, risk assessment procedures are not sufficiently rigorous.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Both pupils and parents are satisfied with the school and delighted with the way in which the headteacher listens to their views and acts on them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve standards and achievement in speaking and listening and science. *
- Ensure greater challenge for higher-attaining pupils in writing.
- Improve curriculum planning for the progression of skills over the longer term, the use of time available for learning and provision for learning outdoors.
- Improve the precision of assessment and its use to plan for the different needs of individual pupils in lessons.
- Improve procedures for risk assessment.

* As already highlighted in the School Improvement Plan.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Children in the Nursery and Reception class achieve well although most do not reach the goals set for them by the end of the Reception Year because of their low starting points on entry to the school.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3 to 6 achieve satisfactorily although standards are below average in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 and below average in English and mathematics in Year 6. Achievement is unsatisfactory and standards are well below average in science. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT), history and physical education are average and pupils' achievement is broadly average in these subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have started to improve in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are poor and this hinders their progress, not only in English, but also in other subjects of the curriculum.
- Higher-attaining pupils do not achieve as much as they should in writing.
- Standards are too low in science and pupils do not achieve as much as they should in the subject.
- Children achieve well in the Nursery, the Reception class and in Year 6 as a result of good teaching.
- Pupils' progress slows down in Year 4, although new teaching arrangements are improving the situation.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.5 (13.6)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.3 (11.8)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	14.6 (14.5)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 26 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.1 (28.4)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	24.4 (24.8)	26.8 (26.7)
science	24.9 (27.0)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 18 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. The school's results in the national tests for Year 2 pupils fluctuate from year to year. This is because of the small size of some year groups, the differing proportions of pupils with special educational needs within them and the varying numbers and capabilities of pupils who join the school in Years 5 and 6. Close analysis of individual pupil records in English and mathematics shows that more pupils now achieve the levels expected in Year 2. The records of the three-quarters of the pupils in Years 5 and 6 who started at the school and have remained

throughout show an improving trend and the overall results for Year 6 pupils, averaged out over the last three years, are in line with the national trend. This is a result of the school's focus on improving teaching and learning in English and mathematics. The way that the school collates its assessment data for English and mathematics and uses it to track the progress of individual pupils has recently been improved. The information is enabling the school to pinpoint where action needs to be taken to improve standards. For example, it clearly shows a slowdown in pupils' progress in Year 4 and action is now being taken to remedy the situation.

2. Achievement is satisfactory rather than good in English because pupils' speaking and listening skills are poor. Their lack of vocabulary and poor command of standard English grammar is reflected in their writing and is, in part, responsible for pupils not achieving at the higher levels. Many pupils are unaware of what is required for different kinds of good quality writing and are also not clear about what they need to do in order to improve. This also prevents them from achieving at the higher levels. Pupils' limited vocabulary, inability to understand what teachers are saying, reluctance to answer questions and the difficulty that they have in expressing their ideas clearly are also a barrier to learning and higher achievement in other subjects. Standards in mathematics, although still below average, have improved since the last inspection. Pupils do not achieve at the higher levels because they find it hard to explain their mathematical ideas, to understand the patterns and relationships between numbers and to reason logically. This hinders their ability to carry out mental calculations quickly and to solve number and word problems accurately.
3. Not as much time has been spent on the development of science as on English and mathematics and this, in part, explains the low standards and unsatisfactory achievement in the subject.
4. Although pupils can remember some straightforward facts, such as which foods are healthy and which are not, they find it hard to make sense of scientific phenomena. This is because their skills in asking scientific questions, devising experiments, drawing conclusions and communicating findings are poor. Factors that contribute to the low standards are:
 - Insufficient emphasis on the teaching of the skills of scientific enquiry.
 - A lack of clear curriculum guidance to support planning for progression.
 - A lack of precision in assessment procedures.
 - Pupils' limited ability to understand and use scientific language.
5. On entry to the Nursery, children's attainment is well below average. Their achievement and progress vary as they move through the school. They make good progress in the Nursery and the Reception class in communication, language and literacy, mathematical, personal, social, and creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world because of good teaching and well-planned opportunities for children to learn through imaginative play and the direct teaching of basic skills. By the end of the Reception Year, most children do not reach the goals that are set for them because of their low starting points. However, they have good attitudes to learning and have some of the basic literacy and numeracy skills they need for their work in Year 1. There is not enough evidence to form a judgement about children's physical development.
6. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1, 2, 3 and 5 and good in Year 6. Until recently it has not been as good as it should be in Year 4 because work has not been matched to the different needs and capabilities of pupils. The situation has now improved as a result of the new teaching arrangements and pupils are now making better progress and catching up on work that has been missed in the past. Pupils make good progress in Year 6 because of the skilled teaching they receive and the lively and interesting way that subject matter is presented.
7. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the steps noted on their individual education plans and in the development of self-esteem and confidence. Targets set

on pupils' plans are manageable and achievable. The school makes good use of assessment information and observations to identify pupils' needs at an early stage in their learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory and behaviour is good. Personal development is good overall, with moral and social development good and spiritual and cultural development satisfactory. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory but punctuality is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has been effective in promoting good behaviour and raising pupils' self-esteem.
- The school sets high expectations for behaviour and works hard to meet them.
- When pupils become inattentive in lessons it is because they find it hard to listen.
- Provision for spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and personal and social development are good.
- Personal and social development in the Foundation Stage are good.

Commentary

8. There have been a number of improvements since the last inspection. Many of these have been initiated by the new headteacher. The introduction of the house point systems and achievement assemblies, to which parents are invited, is raising pupils' confidence and self-esteem, and is also having a positive effect on achievement. Pupils who were formerly disaffected are now beginning to take a greater interest in their work and demonstrate a sense of pride when they see their name on the 'achievement tree', and are complimented on their efforts by the headteacher and when they receive certificates in assemblies. To be chosen as 'pupil of the week' is a real accolade! Pupils appreciate being consulted about the work of the school, and the fact that the headteacher listens to them and takes their ideas seriously helps them to feel that they are valued and trusted members of the school community.
9. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere in the school and pupils are welcoming and polite to visitors because of the high behavioural standards that the school sets and the way it works to achieve them. Pupils clearly know what is expected of them, respect their headteacher and teachers and generally try hard to stay within the bounds of the rules that are set for them. They have a real sense of right from wrong and fairness and justice, as a result of the strong moral code that the school sets. They are developing a fast growing confidence in raising issues of general concern and looking at ways to solve them in their school council meetings. Pupils say that any incidents of bullying are mostly verbal and these are usually dealt with quickly and effectively.
10. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, find it difficult to listen attentively for a significant length of time. Consequently, they lose interest when they have to spend too long sitting on the carpet in some lessons. However, when presentations are lively and interesting, pupils are actively involved in learning, and tasks are matched well to their differing needs and abilities, their concentration is better.
11. Pupils are generally kind and caring to each other and encouraged in this by the thoughtful and sensitive way they are treated by their teachers. Older pupils look after younger ones at lunchtimes, for example, and higher-attaining pupils support those with special educational needs in some lessons, such as when using computers. Pupils with special educational needs support those from the special school, acting as 'buddies' when they come to share lessons and lunchtimes. Although relationships between pupils are generally good, they do not always have the language that they need to discuss their ideas when working together.

12. Children in the Nursery and Reception class lack confidence and find it very hard to work and play together when they first enter the school and many have to be taught how to speak and listen politely. As a result of the good teaching they receive, they learn to share equipment and resources and become quite independent in doing things for themselves. They develop positive attitudes to learning because of the enjoyable and practical ways in which activities are organised.
13. Provision for spiritual development has improved since the last inspection. There are now planned opportunities for the development of spiritual awareness, including in assemblies and religious education lessons, when pupils consider the importance of prayer and reflection, and in other lessons, for example music, when pupils consider feelings, such as 'loneliness', after listening to the song *Eleanor Rigby*. Pupils' awareness of Britain as a multicultural society is satisfactory and plans are in hand to improve this further. For example, a team of African drummers is to work in the school throughout the summer term. The school is aware of the need to make greater use of visits to places of interest which represent different faiths and cultures.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.0	School data:	1.2
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.

14. Although attendance is well below the national average the school is doing all it can to improve attendance and there are just a few pupils, often from families who are disaffected and who do not value education, who are persistently absent. However, the school's measures for improving punctuality to school lack rigour. There have been no exclusions this term. Exclusions in the past have been reduced effectively through successful multi-agency support.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Asian
Black or Black British – African

Exclusions in the last school year

No. of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
132	24	0
4	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The curriculum is satisfactory and the school provides a satisfactory standard of care for its pupils. Links with the community are satisfactory and links with parents are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and in Year 6 and pupils in these classes learn well. Teaching and learning in the rest of the school are satisfactory. Assessment is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of mathematics is good and there is some good teaching of ICT and physical education.
- There are weaknesses in the teaching of science and in the teaching of speaking and listening skills.
- Teaching in the Nursery, Reception class and in Year 6 is good.
- The new teaching arrangements for pupils in Years 4/5 are helping them to catch up with work they have missed in the past.
- There is good teaching for pupils who have special educational needs.
- Although the procedures for tracking pupils' progress have recently been updated, not enough use is made of assessment to plan for the different needs of pupils in lessons.

Commentary

15. Teaching in mathematics is good and has improved since the last inspection as a result of the introduction of the numeracy strategy and an improvement in teachers' skills of teaching mental mathematics. Strategies, such as encouraging the pupils to count and move in time to a rhythm and illustrating teaching points with the use of moving pictures and numbers on the interactive whiteboard, help pupils to concentrate and make sense of what the teacher is saying. Most teachers are confident in teaching ICT and they are very well supported by the headteacher who has an expertise in the subject. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to teach specific skills and pupils are then given opportunities to practise them on computers in the ICT suite, prior to applying their newly found skills in the course of their work in other subjects. The school has a policy of employing qualified sports instructors for physical education. This ensures that pupils receive expert coaching on the development of specific games and athletic skills.
16. Pupils do not learn as much as they should in science because there is an overemphasis on teaching scientific facts and insufficient emphasis on the development of the skills of scientific enquiry through investigative and experimental work. Although some good questioning was seen by teachers, for example, in a Year 6 lesson where pupils were encouraged to explain what they thought had happened to cause the growth of mould on sandwiches, there is not enough of this. Pupils' skills in asking their own scientific questions are not consistently taught. Experiments are often directed by the teacher and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to devise their own tests and to sometimes get things wrong, so that their mistakes can then be used to promote more rigorous scientific enquiry.
17. Pupils' poor speaking and listening skills are a real barrier to learning in most subjects of the curriculum. They are not systematically taught and there is not enough emphasis on helping pupils to develop these skills in the course of lessons. Simple one- or two-word answers and incorrect grammar in speech are often accepted. When new and more complex words are introduced, for example in literacy sessions, there are few opportunities for pupils to become familiar with their use by incorporating them into their own speech. Pupils are not often challenged to find new and more complicated words for themselves and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their ideas through presentations, paired discussions, drama and collaborative work.
18. The quality of teaching for Nursery and reception-aged children is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. The teacher and nursery nurse are knowledgeable about the needs of young children and the requirements of the curriculum guidance for this age group. Planning is well structured and clear, and ensures that there is an appropriate balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated tasks. The range of activities that is provided is effective in engaging children's imaginations, enriching their experience and in helping the children to learn through play and talk. Interaction between the teachers and the children is good and supports children's learning, encouraging them to think for themselves and helping them to

make progress. Children are sensitively, but firmly, managed and this gives them security in their early days of schooling.

19. There is good teaching in Year 6 where the teacher has a very good knowledge of the National Curriculum subjects and teaches in lively and interesting ways. She makes very good use of questions to encourage pupils to think for themselves and helps pupils to see the relevance of what they are doing by choosing subject matter that will interest them. A good example of this is the way she has taught many historical skills and concepts through a focus on The Beatles. She also checks pupils' understanding of subject-specific vocabulary and involves them in learning by using practical strategies, such as drama and movement. This aids their understanding, particularly when they have a poor command of English and find it difficult to concentrate on the spoken word for any length of time.
20. Pupils who have special educational needs receive the support they need to meet the targets in their individual education plans. Their difficulties are identified at an early stage and good arrangements are made to help them learn. Classroom assistants provide one-to-one support in lessons and the school makes good use of the expertise of local educational authority advisers for pupils with specific learning and behavioural difficulties.
21. The quality and range of assessments of procedures are satisfactory for English and mathematics and in the Foundation Stage. Assessment procedures are in place for other subjects but they are not sufficiently systematic and they rely too heavily on the teachers' informal knowledge of their pupils. Although the systems that the school uses for tracking pupils' progress have recently been updated, they are not yet embedded, and the use of assessment to inform planning for pupils' differing needs varies between classes and is unsatisfactory overall. This, in part, accounts for pupils entering Year 5 with significant gaps in their learning. Pupils are not sufficiently aware of the targets that are set for them in English and mathematics. Their understanding of how they can improve is unsatisfactory as they are not as involved as they should be in the assessment of their own work and comments in marking do not give sufficient help on how they might improve. All statutory requirements are met for the assessment of pupils with special educational needs.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 26 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	1	13	11	1	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and there are satisfactory opportunities for enrichment. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall although there are weaknesses in the school's outdoor provision for learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum provision for pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory but there are weaknesses in the progression of skills over time.
- The curriculum does not promote pupils' speaking and listening skills and pupils' skills of scientific enquiry to a sufficient extent.
- The provision for personal, social and health education is good and sport is used well to increase pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- The very good links with other schools are used well to enrich the curriculum and there is an increasing number of extra curricular activities.
- Although an attractive environment for learning has been created indoors, there are weaknesses in outdoor provision.

- The school is very committed to inclusion, and the needs of pupils with special educational needs and the few pupils whose first language is not English, are met well.

Commentary

22. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes benefit from a rich curriculum which provides a good range of learning opportunities. There is a very well-judged balance between tasks which are set by teachers and those which are chosen by the children. Effective use is made of structured play activities to promote children's learning and a strong emphasis is appropriately given to the development of basic personal and social skills, as well as to the acquisition of the early skills of literacy and numeracy. The good quality of the curriculum for reception children contributes significantly to their effective progress, often from low starting points on entry to the school. There is a good outdoor play area for the Nursery, which is an improvement since the last inspection. However, Reception class pupils do not have access to their own secure outdoor area.
23. The school draws on national and other published guidance to provide schemes of work in all subjects. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However, there is insufficient whole-school planning to ensure the effective implementation of these schemes so that the specific skills of each subject are systematically developed over the longer term. This results in some inconsistencies in the way that subjects are taught and pupils then miss important aspects of their work. This is particularly noticeable in the work of pupils in Years 4 and 5 who have residual gaps in their learning and are having to catch up work they have missed in the past. There is also insufficient consideration given to adapting the published materials and reshaping the curriculum and the way that it is timetabled to make it meet the particular needs of the school.
24. Sufficient time is allocated for literacy and numeracy, and satisfactory use is made of the national strategies to support pupils' learning in these important subjects. Although the basic skills of reading and writing are systematically taught, the curriculum does not take enough account of pupils' very poor speaking and listening skills when they enter the school and there is not enough guidance to support teachers in the development of these skills, not only in English, but also in other subjects of the curriculum. The weaknesses in pupils' speaking skills are reflected in their writing and are part of the reason that pupils who achieve above the levels expected in reading, fail to do so in writing.
25. The curriculum for science is unbalanced. There is an emphasis on the acquisition of scientific facts at the expense of developing pupils' understanding of scientific phenomena through investigation and enquiry. The lack of guidance to support teachers in the systematic development of these skills is one of the reasons for the low standards in the subject.
26. Provision for pupils' personal and social development is good and is particularly successful when links are made between subjects. For example, in the Year 6 history project on The Beatles, the teacher imaginatively used the lyrics of the songs for literacy and used *Eleanor Rigby* for work on loneliness, and this was effective in engaging the pupils' interest and deepening their understanding. The school is also successfully widening pupils' personal and social experiences through visits to other schools, and setting up a school council. Year 6 pupils recently visited the BBC in London to take part in the 'Big Toe' digital radio programme and this was very effective in raising their confidence when working with adults and increasing their awareness of the wider world.
27. The school's very good links with other schools in the area gives it access to very good quality outreach work. Visits and visiting teachers enhance the curriculum and extend pupils' learning in a variety of ways. For example, a sports coach brings in specialist expertise that contributes positively to the standards attained in physical education and a visiting teacher has recently started teaching older pupils Spanish. The school provides an increasing range of interesting

extra curricular activities, including basketball, football, cross-country, cookery and craft. A much needed breakfast club is expected to open next term.

28. A very welcoming and attractive environment for learning has been created inside the school building. Pupils' work is attractively displayed in classrooms and corridors, and a recently introduced 'art gallery' in a corridor used on a daily basis by all pupils is increasing pupils' pride in their work as they see it on display. The computer suite is well used, although it is now too small for whole classes. The headteacher has well-advanced plans to move the suite to a larger room. Pupils, teachers and governors all agree that the outdoor environment is unsatisfactory. The headteacher has already consulted with them and drawn up plans to improve the situation. In the meantime, pupils are greatly appreciative of opportunities to use games and other equipment in the playground. They also benefit from the efforts of a parent who brings in her own resources, such as a 'bubble wand', to improve play experiences during the lunch hour. Resources are of reasonable quality and are well organised. The recent acquisition of two additional interactive whiteboards is having a positive effect on teaching and learning because it enables the teachers to give visual demonstrations which capture pupils' interest and aid understanding.
29. Provision for special educational needs is good overall and is relevant for all pupils with special educational needs. Pupils are included well in lessons and the life of the school. The arrangements for the inclusion of pupils from a local special school in some sessions are very good. These are being extended very thoughtfully and in such a way that they benefit pupils from both schools greatly. All pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language have access to the same curriculum as their peers. The school is highly committed to ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all pupils and catch-up programmes are used for English and mathematics. Special educational needs pupils are well supported; however, there are not enough classroom assistants for all the pupils who need additional help to make good progress. The headteacher is overcoming this in the short term by engaging the help of parent volunteers.

Care, guidance and support

The school seeks, values and acts on pupils' views well. The school gives its pupils satisfactory support, advice and guidance based on its monitoring of them. The school ensures the care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils adequately.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The recently-initiated school council is a very good feature of the school.
- Induction arrangements are good.
- There are good links with outside agencies to support pupils with special educational needs.
- The school's risk assessment procedures currently lack rigour.
- The school does not contact parents promptly on the first day of unexplained absence.

Commentary

30. The introduction of a school council, instigated at an early stage after the headteacher's appointment, is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The school council is valued very much by all in the school. All pupils are keen to have their say about how the school could be improved. Although only recently initiated, the pupils' ideas are already helping to shape the school's priorities, for example in the development of its playground. This helps to encourage pupils and build their self-esteem as well as making a valuable contribution to school life.
31. There are good arrangements for introducing children to the school. These include visits by the teacher to their home before they start school, followed by opportunities for the children to

visit the school and spend time in the classroom. This gradual introduction to school life ensures that they feel happy and secure at an early stage and settle in quickly.

32. Pupils at the school are happy and teachers know their pupils well. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good and this means that the support, advice and guidance pupils receive are satisfactory. However, this is not currently structured to ensure that the support, advice and guidance they are given is the most appropriate for the pupils' circumstances.
33. The school is aware that its risk assessment procedures need further development to ensure the safety of its pupils at all times and is putting in place measures to ensure this. Risk assessment is currently largely informal and is not identified as part of the school's health and safety policy.
34. The school meets the requirements of the Code of Practice in full and liaises effectively with external agencies. Assessments are carried out thoroughly and staff are aware of pupils' programmes and additional medical needs.
35. The school building is very secure and pupils feel safe while inside the school. However, the school does not contact parents of those whose absence is unexplained on the first day of their absence and this is a weakness.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and other schools are good. Links with the community are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school values the views of parents very much and parents appreciate this.
- The educational links with other schools are very good.
- The school does not have a mentor system for pupils whose parents are hard to reach.
- Although parents of pupils who have special educational needs are kept well informed, the progress reports to parents in general often do not indicate what pupils need to do to improve.

Commentary

36. Parents are very impressed with the way the school is developing and are becoming more and more enthusiastic about being involved in school life. The school has an open-door policy and parents know they can approach the school with their concerns. Parents know that their views are listened to, and welcome the high-profile presence of the headteacher who they feel is particularly good at seeking their views. The regular newsletters are produced in an attractive and 'easy to read' format and keep parents up to date with what is happening in the school. The headteacher makes a point of being on the playground every morning and this is appreciated by parents who feel very confident in approaching him if they have a concern or a problem. All of these are noted and followed up.
37. The school has a very good range of strategies to involve parents in school life, for example cheese and wine 'meet the headteacher' evenings, where the headteacher shared his plans for the school and asked for their views. Parents are also invited to the achievement assemblies, which are very popular and increasingly well attended. Parents' evenings are used well to inform parents of how their children are getting on. However, progress reports to parents often do not indicate what pupils need to do to improve and parents are sometimes unaware of the curriculum that their children are following. This means that, whilst parents are now very willing to help, the school does not yet make use of them fully to improve pupils' learning and development. The school is aware that there are some parents who are hard to reach because they themselves are disaffected with school life. The involvement of the education welfare officer is helping with attendance and the school is considering other strategies, such as a 'mentor' system, which would benefit the school.

38. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed and have opportunities to discuss individual education plans with the school. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the partnership with the community and involvement in sporting and other projects and activities.
39. The school values and makes very good use of the educational links it has with local primary, secondary and special schools. The local schools also value their relationship with Walsall Wood School and this means that their collaborative working approach is particularly effective and to their mutual benefit. The close collaboration with local secondary school in mathematics, science and sports enriches the pupils' appreciation of these areas as well as helping the school to improve the quality of its associated curriculum. The school has a particularly productive association with a local primary school in the delivery of its Spanish curriculum. This fosters a love of language in pupils in Year 6 by making it fun to learn. The scheme of study has transferred well the school and is taught very effectively by a visiting teacher.
40. The links with two local special schools are particularly valuable because they enable the school to draw on the expertise of others when they need it and also enable pupils to work and play with others who have different backgrounds and capabilities. Pupils gain an appreciation and understanding of the difficulties and circumstances of others. Friendships develop between pupils and this helps them to become considerate, caring members of society.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory overall**. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and the deputy headteacher gives good support. The governance of the school is satisfactory.

The personal commitment and vision of the headteacher, the energy and drive that he is bringing to the school and the support he has from the teachers, governors and parents are significant aids to improvement. Barriers to improvement are the poor speaking and listening skills of many pupils, their low self-esteem and the poor attendance of pupils from disaffected families in the area.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The dynamic leadership of the headteacher has resulted in many improvements in a short amount of time.
- The governors, deputy headteacher and staff support the headteacher well and share his vision for the school.
- Subject leaders have not always had the time that they have needed to improve their subject areas.
- The budget is well managed and there is very effective day-to-day administration; however, the limited provision of teaching assistant time means that some pupils do not get the one-to-one attention that they need.

Commentary

41. The headteacher has a clear vision based upon placing the school at the heart of its community and achieving high standards for pupils. He has a personal commitment to the area and his down-to-earth and practical style of leadership, together with his drive, dedication and refusal to take no for an answer, has resulted in an enormous number of improvements in the short amount of time since his appointment. He has a clear and accurate view of the challenges that the school faces and of what it needs to do in order to improve. A number of changes, which are making a significant contribution to teaching and learning, have already been implemented. For example, pupils are beginning to hold their heads up

high and show a real pride in their achievement as a result of the new house point system, the weekly achievement assembly and their involvement in the running of the school.

42. If a problem is brought to him, the headteacher deals with it and, as many parents said, 'When he says he will do something, he does it'. This 'can do' attitude has won him the trust and respect of the whole school community. He has shared his outline strategic plan for the future of the school with staff, parents and governors and consulted with them about their views. One of the areas of immediate concern to all was the outside environment. A plan for its improvement, based on the pupils' ideas, is already in place and sources of finance have been found.
43. In addition to regular formal meetings with pupils, staff, parents and governors, the headteacher gives generously of his time to listen to their views on an informal basis. This flow of communication ensures that all feel fully involved in the school's work. Performance management procedures have been reviewed and objectives are in line with the school's targets for improvement. Staff have a clear understanding of its aims and values and are receiving very good support and guidance on their role in moving the school forward. Although they have taken their responsibilities seriously in the past and endeavoured to keep a check on standards, they have not always had enough time to carry out the actions that have been needed to bring about improvements. Science is a good example of where this has been detrimental to school improvement. The delegation of subject responsibilities is now being reviewed in order to ensure a more equitable distribution of the workload. The headteacher himself has taken responsibility for ICT, for example. The deputy headteacher leads her subject areas well and sets a good example through the quality of her own teaching. Following discussions with the headteacher, she has updated the school's system for tracking pupils' progress, analysed the resulting data and drawn up a plan to address the weaknesses. Leadership is becoming evident at every level in the school community. New ideas, issues and concerns are discussed openly and honestly. Pupils are given important responsibilities, for example taking a lead in the running of the school council and leading the weekly achievement assemblies.
44. Special educational needs provision is well led and the school's very good links with two local special schools demonstrate the school's very strong commitment to inclusion. The co-ordinator is efficient and knowledgeable. She has established effective procedures for the identification of pupils who need additional support, especially those who would benefit from any additional literacy support. The school uses its funding carefully to ensure that there are sufficient resources to meet pupils' needs and opportunities for training for teachers and learning support assistants. The leadership and the management of the Foundation Stage are good.
45. Governors are very loyal to the school and the school benefits from their hard work and commitment. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities and check the school's work by visiting the school and talking with the headteacher and staff. Committees and meetings are well organised and attended, and issues are debated openly and honestly before decisions are taken. Governors come from a wide range of backgrounds and collectively they have a good range of experience and expertise which they contribute willingly and generously for the benefit of the school. For example, a teacher from the local secondary school is a governor and this greatly enhances the links between the two schools. He also contributes prizes for pupils who attend regularly.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	457,369	Balance from previous year	64,876
Total expenditure	421,840	Balance carried forward to the next	35,529
Expenditure per pupil	2,721		

46. The large carry-over figure from 2002 included an additional small school grant and monies set aside to refurbish the school library and replace windows and furniture. The carry-over to 2003 was monies set aside to cover a predicted deficit in monies available to cover the cost of teaching in the next financial year.
47. The school benefits from a highly efficient bursar. The day-to-day administration of the school is very good and this enables the school to run smoothly. The budget is well managed and the principles of best value are applied satisfactorily so that the highest value is obtained for the lowest cost. This has helped the school to remain within its allocated budget when there have been fluctuations in the number of pupils attending the school. The governors' first priority is the provision of experienced teachers; however, the number of teaching assistants available is limited. As a result, some pupils, particularly those who attain at the lower levels and whose language skills are particularly poor, do not always get all the one-to-one attention they need to make good progress.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

48. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and has improved since the last inspection. The children achieve well as a result of the good teaching they receive in all the areas of learning seen, although many do not reach the standards expected by the end of the Reception Year because of their very low starting points. Children attend the Nursery on a part-time basis for mornings only. Attendance in the Reception class is on a full-time basis. The children achieve well, although overall standards are below average by the end of the Reception Year because of the very low starting points of many of the children when they enter the school. Good attention is given to the development of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and to children's personal and social development and the children are well prepared for their work in Year 1. The children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well.
49. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage ensures that all pupils have access to all the areas of learning through a range of well-planned play activities that they choose themselves, as well as through more formal tasks which are directed by the teachers. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Teachers know how well each child is doing and have the information that they need to respond to them in ways which help them make progress. There is a good outdoor play area for nursery-aged children. However, reception-aged children do not have enough opportunities to work and play outside. The Nursery and the Reception classes are of a good size, but they are accommodated at either end of a very long corridor and this makes it difficult for them to work together. Resources for the Foundation Stage are adequate, but there are weaknesses in the provision for outdoor play for reception-aged children.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are keen to learn and concentrate well.
- They develop confidence and self-esteem.
- Most children behave well and form good relationships with their classmates and with the adults who work with them.

Commentary

50. In the Nursery, children develop curiosity and enjoy exploring the wide range of interesting experiences, both indoors and outdoors, which is provided. These experiences are extended indoors in the Reception class, although there are few opportunities to work outside. Children maintain concentration for extended periods because the activities provided are relevant, enjoyable and well matched to their needs.
51. When children enter the Nursery and the Reception classes, they are quickly helped to feel secure as a result of the positive and supportive response they receive from all the adults who work with them. Children are encouraged to be involved in the learning process and all their ideas are taken seriously when setting up activities. For example, they are asked to make their own suggestions about what to do when they find an abandoned bear in the playground. This results in posters being made to find the owner and the children themselves taking the bear home so that he is looked after when they are not in school. The teacher, nursery nurse and classroom assistant are skilled at picking up children's responses and using them as

starting points for learning, often participating in the children's play effectively to extend their ideas. Children are confident to try new activities and grow in self-esteem because their ideas are valued.

52. When children enter the Nursery they find it hard to share and to play amicably together. As a result of the activities that are provided and the patient intervention of their teachers, they learn to take turns when talking and learn to share equipment and resources fairly. The children respond very positively to opportunities to choose the activities in which they will take part. They are encouraged to do things for themselves, even though it might be difficult, and so they develop the skills that they need for independent learning.
53. The children behave well because of the high expectations that their teachers have of them and the consistent reinforcement of acceptable behaviour. Although they initially find it hard to take 'no' for an answer, the children quickly learn that some things are right and others are wrong, that their actions can affect those around them and that there is a need for agreed ways of behaving when working with others.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The early skills of reading and writing are taught well.
- Good attention is paid to incorporating communication, language and literacy development in all the activities provided.
- Children's speaking and listening skills are poor.

Commentary

54. Children are introduced to a good range of books in the Nursery and, as a result, enjoy listening to stories and know how books work. In the Reception class they thoroughly enjoy joining in with their teacher when she reads familiar stories to them, for example 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. Children learn to associate the letters of the alphabet with the sounds that they make. They remember them well because each letter sound is associated with a physical action. Older and higher-attaining children are able to blend sounds when the teacher mimes them, to make simple three-letter words. Correct letter formation is emphasised from an early stage, and children are encouraged to write simple words themselves in both formal and informal activities.
55. Stories in books are often used as a starting point for many of the activities that take place, both in the Nursery and the Reception class. These are well planned to help the children see real purpose and meaning in reading and writing. Children in the Nursery have written messages on clipboards and sent messages over the intercom and telephone as part of their role play in the 'space station'. Children in the Reception class have written passports for their bears in case they get lost and have written in class bear's diary when he has stayed at their house. The children's early attempts at writing are valued; as a result children gain confidence in writing for themselves and know that writing has a purpose and is a useful thing to be able to do.
56. Children's speaking and listening skills are poor when they enter school. By the end of the Reception Year most are able to sit and listen quietly when asked to do so and show by their actions that they understand what is said to them. They are given good encouragement to express their own ideas and to respond to the teacher's questions, but often do so in simple one- or two-word answers. They comment on their actions in simple terms and take turns in conversations. However, they do not have the breadth of vocabulary that they need to

organise and clarify their thinking and many find it hard to speak clearly with confidence and control.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a wide range of practical and enjoyable opportunities for children to learn to count and recognise numbers.
- There are good arrangements to help children become familiar with the passing of time and to learn about shape, space and measure.

Commentary

57. Children count reliably up to ten by the end of the Reception Year and some children can count up to 20 because of the numerous opportunities that are provided in practical play situations, both in the Nursery and in the Reception class. For example, children in the Nursery find numbered space ships which have landed in the outdoor area, and take them back to the classroom to see how many they have. They also enjoy counting down from ten as their role-play 'spaceship' is launched. In the Reception class, they regularly count on a number line and can say when one number is missing. They begin to use language, such as 'more' and 'less', and some are able to find 'one more' or 'one less' than a given number.
58. Most children develop the language that they need to describe two-dimensional shapes. In the Nursery, they develop their understanding of directional and positional language through outdoor play. In the Reception class, this knowledge is developed further, for example children use the words 'over', 'under' and 'through' when re-enacting a 'bear hunt' journey in the playground with their teacher. Children in the Nursery gain an early understanding of weight by putting 'moon rocks' that they have made on balances and comparing their size and structure. Children in the Reception class gain an early understanding of measure, for example by counting how many bears' paw prints it takes to go right along the length of a large toy snake. Opportunities to fill and empty containers in the sand and water trays help children develop the language of capacity, such as 'full' and 'empty'.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of practical activities is provided for children to find out about the world about them.
- There are not enough opportunities for children in the Reception class to explore the outdoor environment.

Commentary

59. The children build and construct with a range of objects, including construction kits, cardboard packaging and play dough. Most children select the appropriate components and resources to develop their work.
60. There are good opportunities for children to develop their understanding of the place where they live. For example, the children in the Reception class have been taken on a walk to the shops. They are now able to point to photographs of the places they have been to and, with prompting, say something about them. They develop an early understanding of maps through

their play with small trains and cars on play-mats. The children make satisfactory use of computers as part of their learning, for example when drawing pictures of bears. With the help of their parents, they have also made use of a digital camera to take pictures of the class bear in their houses. They have also programmed a small robotic toy as part of their work on direction in mathematics.

61. Children enjoy exploring the world about them. For example, nursery children are encouraged to explore their outdoor play area. Children in the Reception class thoroughly enjoy looking for bears through a pair of binoculars as they go on a 'bear hunt', and exploring the darkness of the 'bear's cave', with torches. They are fascinated with the shadows that they make. They have also considered some of the creatures that might live inside a cave, other than bears, for example, spiders. Where there are weaknesses, it is because children in the Reception class do not have enough opportunity to explore the outdoor environment for themselves.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

62. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about provision for children's physical development. However, it can be said that whilst children in the Nursery have their own designated outdoor play area, children in the Reception class do not, and so they miss the opportunities they need to develop their movements on a larger scale than is possible indoors.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy working with a range of different materials, singing and listening to music.
- Teachers are skilful in creating situations which encourage children to develop their imaginative ideas.
- Children make limited use of their language skills in the course of their imaginative play.

Commentary

63. The children enjoy exploring colour, texture and shape as a result of a good range of opportunities to work with paints and to make collages and prints out of different materials. They quickly learn to sing simple songs from memory. There are ample planned opportunities for children to develop their ideas in imaginative ways. A good example is the way in which the outdoor role-play area in the Nursery has been transformed into a rocket. This motivated the children to make their own rockets using large boxes and to set off, with a selection of toys, on their own space journeys. In the Reception class, the discovery of the lost bear was very effective in engaging the children's imaginations and motivating them to think of ways in which they could help him. Their involvement in making a role-play cave for the bear led to them creating their own cobweb designs and making spiders. The teachers and teaching assistant participate effectively in play alongside the children, promoting and introducing imaginative ideas. However, children need even more help in developing the vocabulary that they need to talk about their imaginative ideas and describe their actions.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Whilst the achievement of most pupils is satisfactory in reading and writing, standards are below average in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Higher-attaining readers do not achieve as much as they should in writing and pupils' speaking and listening skills are well below average.
- The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory and teaching in Year 6 is good.
- There are good arrangements to ensure that pupils with special educational needs make progress.
- Assessment procedures are satisfactory but not enough use is made of assessment to inform planning.
- The co-ordinator checks teaching and learning and has taken action to improve standards in reading and writing.

Commentary

64. Standards are below average and have fluctuated since the last inspection. There are several reasons for this. There have been significant variations from year to year because of high proportions of special educational needs pupils in some year groups, and a significant number of the pupils who join the school in Years 5 and 6 are those attaining at the lower levels. Pupils also start school with speaking and listening skills that are well below average and do not make enough progress in developing these skills as they move through the school. They have a limited vocabulary and do not always understand the meaning of the words that they hear. Their conversational and discussion skills are poor and they do not have a sufficient understanding of the difference between their own colloquial style of speaking and grammatically-correct, standard English. This is a real barrier to learning, not only in English, but also in other subjects of the curriculum, because pupils do not always fully understand what their teachers are saying and they do not have the language that they need to express their ideas clearly.
65. The weaknesses in pupils' speaking skills are also evident in their writing. Whilst most pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points, few achieve at the higher levels because of their limited vocabulary and ability to express their ideas in interesting ways. Weaknesses in spelling are also a factor. Pupils' reading skills are better than their writing skills. This is because the basic skills of letter sounds are taught well at an early stage and this helps pupils to read new and more complex words when they meet them. Opportunities to read good quality texts together at the start of lessons, and in 'guided reading' sessions, also help pupils to find deeper meaning in the books that they read. However, they are hampered by not always understanding the meaning of more complex words and achievement is satisfactory rather than good because of this. Pupils are encouraged to read at home and this contributes to the progress that they make. However, not all receive the support they need to read at home and then this slows down the progress that they make. The individual reading booklets provide a constructive dialogue for a minority of parents, whilst the reading diaries of older pupils successfully encourage them to reflect on their own reading.
66. All teachers have a sound knowledge of the literacy strategy and follow it carefully when planning their lessons. Good teaching is a feature of lessons in Year 6. An example of this is a guided reading lesson with Year 6 when pupils were enthused by the teacher and were keen to read the well-chosen story. The teacher knew the book well and was skilled at pausing at key moments and using questions skilfully to promote good understanding of the story as well as the author's skill. She positively encouraged the pupils to listen purposefully

and stimulated their curiosity about words they did not know the meaning of. When pupils did not know what 'ineffective pecking' was, the teacher gave a very clear explanation and a pupil then redefined it as 'rubbish pecking' which was humorously accepted by the teacher and understood by peers. Where teaching is less successful, pupils are not sufficiently involved in answering questions and there is insufficient emphasis on the systematic development of pupils' speaking skills through drama and discussion.

67. There is a wide range of strategies to ensure that pupils with special educational needs take part in lessons and make progress. Work for these pupils is well planned and closely linked to the targets on their individual educational plans. Where a pupil requires additional resources to support learning, these are provided.
68. Teachers use assessment consistently to check pupils' reading, writing and spelling skills. Their assessments are carefully recorded and used to help set the ambitious targets that pupils are expected to achieve by the end of each year. However, not enough use is made of assessment to inform teachers' planning over the shorter term. Pupils have specific writing and reading targets but there is little indication that the majority are particularly aware of them and they are not referred to sufficiently by either teachers or pupils. In a minority of classes, the teachers' comments are positive and well focused on improvement. However, comments or indications in marking that indicate clearly what pupils need to do to improve their own work are not consistently used in the majority of classes.
69. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator carries out her role conscientiously and her analysis of data has highlighted a need to improve planning for writing across the school. Weaknesses in spoken and written grammar and vocabulary have also been identified, as well as a need to improve standards of spelling across the school. The very good new headteacher has already improved the systems that the school uses to check English and agreed to additional spelling computer programs being introduced across the school.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

70. Reading and writing skills are satisfactorily developed across the curriculum. For example, in religious education, Year 2 pupils have written recounts of Bible stories they have heard. In Year 6, pupils have written imaginatively in role as Sir Francis Drake. ICT and literacy skills are used together in history by Year 6 pupils when researching about the Beatles on the Internet, using downloaded images and producing displays of moving images and text to present their information. Pupils' use of speaking and listening skills in other subjects of the curriculum are poor, however, and this is a barrier to learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are below average. This represents an improvement since the last inspection.
- Teachers use whiteboards well to stimulate interest and increase pupils' rate of learning in the lesson.
- Pupils are not good enough at rapid mental calculation.
- There is some good practice in marking of pupils' work but pupils are not given enough information about what they need to learn next to improve their work.
- The subject has been well managed and led and assessments are beginning to be used to inform planning.

Commentary

71. Most pupils in Years 1 and 2 have a secure grounding in number calculation. Work in pupils' books shows that by Year 6, pupils can apply the four rules to large numbers, but they lack the confidence to find their own preferred ways of solving and recording number problems. This prevents them from achieving at the high levels and is a result of an insecure understanding of the patterns and relationships that exist between numbers. On some occasions, they also find it difficult to understand what their teacher is saying.
72. Teaching in the lessons seen was good, with teachers planning activities for all levels of ability within the National Numeracy Strategy. Learning and achievement over time are satisfactory rather than good because some pupils, particularly those in Years 4 and 5, have missed work in the past and have residual gaps in their knowledge and skills. They are gradually catching up on this as a result of the good teaching they are now receiving. All teachers emphasise the use of a precise mathematical vocabulary. However, pupils do not always make use of it themselves and often struggle to explain their mathematical thinking. This affects their powers of logical reasoning and their ability to calculate rapidly and solve mathematical problems. Lessons start with a brisk mental session, often involving counting and moving rhythmically and moving, which pupils enjoy. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards and pupils are immediately involved. 'The bin's over there', shouted out one pupil in Year 2 when the teacher wanted to dispose of a number as part of her demonstration. Classes are managed well during the main mathematical activities and if there are learning support assistants they are used well to support groups of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils achieve well when there is additional support. Lessons are broken down into a series of different activities with time targets, which motivate the pupils to stay on task and work quickly.
73. The subject is led and managed well and teaching has been monitored carefully by the co-ordinator and local education authority advisor. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. They have recently been updated and are beginning to be used to inform planning. Teachers are aware of which level each pupil is expected to reach by the end of the year and are using information gained from half-termly assessments satisfactorily to monitor progress. Targets have been introduced recently but most pupils are not yet used to referring to them in lessons to improve their work. There are some good examples of helpful marking, with pupils' responses, but in some books there are few comments or indications as to what pupils need to learn next. To raise standards pupils' progress towards their targets must be rigorously monitored to ensure that they achieve as well as they should.

Mathematics across the curriculum

74. Although the National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented well in mathematics lessons it has only recently been planned into other subjects. Mathematical skills are used in science when data is presented in the form of graphs and bar charts. Pupils use their measuring skills in design and technology and older pupils' knowledge of calculations is used in information and communication technology. The school is also becoming a more numerate environment with more displays involving counting and questioning skills.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average in Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- The skills of scientific enquiry are not systematically taught.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory.

- Although the co-ordinator has kept an overview of the subject she has not been given the time and resources needed to improve the subject.

Commentary

75. The school's results for Year 6 pupils in science were well below the average for similar schools in the 2003 national tests and in the bottom five per cent when compared to national averages. The results of teacher assessment in science in Year 2 were also well below average. Standards have been low for the last three years and are not as high as they were at the time of the last inspection. The findings of the inspection show that standards are well below average in Year 2 and Year 6 and that achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards in scientific enquiry are a particular weakness. Although pupils have some understanding of facts about living things, materials and forces, and can make simple observations about scientific phenomena, they do not ask questions about why things happen as they do, devise their own experiments to test their ideas or draw conclusions about what they observe. Although pupils make some use of reference materials to find out about scientific ideas, they do not have the scientific language they need to communicate their ideas, and their skills in recording experiments are weak.
76. Although the quality of teaching and learning in lessons seen during the inspection was satisfactory, teaching and learning over time are judged to be unsatisfactory because pupils do not make the progress that they should. Lessons are planned to take account of the National Curriculum and ensure that all parts of the curriculum are covered. However, there is insufficient planning for the progression of skills in scientific enquiry and the evidence from pupils' work shows that there is not enough time spent on this aspect of science. Older pupils are not as advanced as they should be and, even when teaching is good, time is lost because the teacher has to help them to catch up on work that they have missed in the past. A good example of this was in a Year 4/5 lesson when the teacher had to put back the lesson she had planned because pupils did not yet know how to ask a scientific question and how to write up an experiment.
77. The assessment of science is unsatisfactory. The procedures that the school uses are not sufficiently systematic to help teachers plan precisely for the next steps in pupils' learning. This leaves gaps in pupils' scientific knowledge, skills and understanding and so they do not make the progress that they should. Although work is marked regularly, it is not sufficiently targeted at helping pupils improve their work and so they are not sufficiently aware of the quality of what they have done.
78. The subject leader was given the subject as a temporary measure three years ago. She has managed it conscientiously within the constraints of the very limited time available to her. She has kept an overview of teaching and learning, analysed test results and organised some very successful science weeks. She has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject but has not been given either the time or resources to do anything about them. There has not been enough focused action for improvement and teachers have not received sufficient training on how to teach the subject better.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The skills of information and communication technology are taught effectively; however, the computer suite is too small for whole-class teaching.
- The recently-acquired interactive whiteboards are making a good contribution to pupils' learning.

- There are good arrangements to ensure that pupils with special educational needs make progress in ICT.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

79. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and most pupils reach the standards that are expected in Year 2 and Year 6. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. All teachers have received effective training to support their work and this has increased their confidence and expertise. Work is satisfactorily planned so that it builds on what has gone before and this helps pupils to make steady progress. For example, pupils in Year 6 build on their knowledge of how to combine graphics and text by learning how to produce animated pictures, with text and sound, to make multi media presentations about the Beatles. Teachers frequently ask pupils to work in pairs so that more experienced computer users support those who are less skilled. This helps both groups of pupils to make progress because the more competent pupils improve their understanding by explaining things to those who are still learning, and the less competent pupils have the benefit of one-to-one support. Pupils with special educational needs also benefit from these arrangements. They are also encouraged and supported by classroom assistants or adult helpers who work alongside them in the ICT suite.
80. The school's resources are satisfactory overall and have been recently enhanced by the acquisition of two new interactive whiteboards, so that the school now has three in all. These are being used effectively as an aid to teaching and learning, not only in information and communication technology but also in other subjects of the curriculum. In information and communication technology, they are particularly effective in demonstrating subject specific skills prior to pupils trying out these skills for themselves. The computer suite is not big enough for whole-class lessons now that some of the classes in school are larger than they were. The school is aware of this and there are well-established plans to move the suite to a larger room and to provide more computers.
81. The subject is well led and managed by the headteacher who has an expertise in information and communication technology. He has a very clear overview of the subject and has well-established plans to update equipment even more, enlarge the computer suite and promote greater use of information and communication technology in other subjects of the curriculum. The evidence from planning and from pupils' work shows that insufficient use is made of assessment to track pupils' progress and plan for their different needs. A new, more rigorous system of assessment has just been introduced but has not had time to have an impact on teaching and learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

82. Pupils make satisfactory use of their information and communication technology skills to support their work in English and there is also evidence of their use in art and design and mathematics. There are weaknesses in other subjects, for example the use of control equipment in design and technology, sensor equipment in science and compositional programs in music.

HUMANITIES

History was inspected in full and is reported below. Religious education was sampled. No report is made on geography because no lessons were seen and there was insufficient first-hand evidence to form a judgement.

Religious education

83. No lessons were observed in **religious education** during the inspection and so it is not possible to form a judgement about provision. However, a well-organised and informative

portfolio of work samples from Years 1 to 6 was studied, displays, books or folders for all year groups were sampled and there was a discussion with the co-ordinator and pupils. The evidence indicates that standards are in line with the requirements of the Walsall Locally Agreed Syllabus, as was found at the time of the last inspection and achievement is satisfactory. Scrutiny of work suggests that teaching is at least satisfactory. The school places appropriate emphasis on helping pupils to recognise the importance of their own family in Year 1 and to consider the significance of special days, buildings, food and objects of different religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. There is an increased emphasis on prayer in Years 3 to 6. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have written their own thoughtful and well-structured prayers, and have drawn their own prayer mats, whilst learning about Islam, what Muslims believe and how their beliefs affect their everyday lives. Recently, a Muslim from a special school visited to demonstrate ritual washing and was spontaneously and impressively supported when required by a Year 5 pupil for whom English is not a first language.

84. Spiritual awareness in assemblies is encouraged by moments of guided reflection, stillness, and by the use of a candle. A church schools worker carries out termly assemblies, as does the Four Oaks assembly team. A Christian choir from Uganda, the Watato Children's Choir, made a significant, positive impact on pupils, and several pupils, having heard them, persuaded their parents to attend the evening performance with them. Anglican and non-conformist churches within walking distance of the school are visited and older pupils are made aware of the different parts of the Anglican Church and the importance of symbolic artefacts. Opportunities to visit the places of worship of religions other than those of Christianity, have not yet been identified.
85. Pupils are encouraged to make good use of their literacy skills in religious education, particularly in Year 2, with an emphasis on rewriting the stories Jesus told. The meaning of the parables is drawn out through thoughtful marking. In some classes, adequate worksheets are the main form of recording work and the standard of content and presentation varies markedly in quality.
86. The curriculum is satisfactorily led and well managed and resourced and the co-ordinator is well informed, has good subject knowledge and is well organised. However, there are insufficient opportunities yet for her to monitor teaching and learning through observation of lessons. Samples of work are being assessed from all year groups in advance of adopting assessments linked to the forthcoming reviewed syllabus. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Resources have improved and there is now more emphasis in year group assemblies on the festivals and celebrations of different religions.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement varies as they move through the school but is satisfactory overall, and good in Year 6.
- The quality of teaching varies but is satisfactory overall. Some good teaching was seen in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Pupils with special educational needs enjoy their work in history, achieve well and take a full part in lessons.
- Good links are made between history and other subjects of the curriculum; however, there are weaknesses in whole-school planning for the progression of skills.
- There is no assessment system in place that tracks progress and informs teaching.

Commentary

87. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Although progress is satisfactory in Years 1, 2 and 5 and good in Year 6, progress slows down in Years 3 and 4. This is mainly because of the lack of guidance for teachers in planning for the progression of skills and also the lack of systematic assessment to record what pupils have learned. Where there are weaknesses in pupils' achievement, it is because they do not have a sufficiently secure understanding of chronology, are uncertain of how to use dates and terms relating to the passage of time and are uncertain how to use different sources of evidence to find out about the past.
88. Where teaching is good, teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and use questioning skills and resources well to gain pupils' interest. A good example of this was in a Year 2 lesson when the teacher demonstrated good subject knowledge and used a 'mystery' picture of Louis Braille well to arouse pupils' curiosity through skilful questioning, encouraging them to suggest their own ideas from what they could see. A video was carefully introduced once the pupils had sufficient understanding and curiosity to make the most of the well-paced content. In a successful Year 6 project on the Beatles, the teacher made very good use of well-chosen materials to illustrate the way the events of the time influenced their music. Where teaching is not successful, it is because there is too much emphasis given to pupils remembering previously taught basic facts, too much teacher talk and insufficient use of questioning to help pupils develop their own skills of historical enquiry.
89. Pupils with special educational needs are given the support that they need to take part in lessons. This is either from classroom assistants or adult helpers. Work is matched well to their individual needs.
90. The subject co-ordination and management of history are satisfactory. Some impressive whole-school projects, such as all classes learning about the history of the school for its centenary, have been well co-ordinated and led. The subject leader monitors planning half-termly but has not yet observed teaching across the school or sampled work from all classes. There is still no structured assessment for history in place, even though this was raised at the last inspection.
91. Some good links are made between history and other subjects of the curriculum. This makes history more meaningful for the pupils and helps them to understand how historical events have influenced society and are still having an influence today. For example pupils have looked at the way Edward Jenner influenced medicine as part of the work in science. There are well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills in history, for example, writing in role and reading for meaning, such as analysing the meaning of the Beatles' lyrics within the context of the time they were written. Long-term planning required review after the last inspection and some work has been done on this. However, there is still not enough emphasis on the systematic development of the skills of historical enquiry.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Physical education was inspected in full and is reported on below. Music was sampled. No judgements are made on design and technology and art and design because no lessons were seen and there was insufficient first-hand evidence to make judgements.

92. There was not enough evidence to form a clear judgement about **music** as no lessons were seen. However, the subject was discussed with staff and the headteacher who has a strong commitment to raising the profile of music throughout the school. The pupils' enthusiasm for music was obvious during assemblies when they sang tunefully and clearly to the music on the CD. Music is used to set the scene for assemblies and Year 6 pupils select and insert tapes and CDs very competently. Pupils are enthusiastic about the prospect of involvement in a whole-school production of 'The Wizard of Oz' and say they have enjoyed previous

Christmas productions. The evidence suggests that pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly in line with expectations, their achievement across the school is satisfactory and that standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

93. Pupils in Year 1 to Year 5 have lessons based on a published scheme and a member of the peripatetic music service is now teaching all pupils in Year 6 to play the recorder. There are three groups who work on composition, some as an ensemble and another group on basic notation. The class teacher works on aspects of the National Curriculum with pupils when they are not playing recorders. There are good plans for the improvement of music. Pupils in Year 5 are to learn the recorder after Easter and teachers will be coming into the school to teach a range of instruments from September. A group of African drummers are also visiting the school in the summer term. A choral group is to commence in the summer term, leading to the formation of a choir.
94. Through the inclusion link with the special school, pupils will be involved in an exciting drumming project during the summer term and members of the peripatetic service will visit to give pupils an opportunity to listen to music and explore the sounds instruments make. Good links are made between music and other subjects of the curriculum when it is appropriate. For example, in history in Year 6, pupils listen to the music of the Beatles and reflect upon the words of some of their songs.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The use of professional instructors and links with other schools and the community make a positive contribution to the standards achieved.
- Pupils with special educational needs are given the support that they need to help them take part in physical education.
- The subject is well led and managed and there are increasing opportunities for participation in sporting events locally and with other schools.
- There are weaknesses in the school's outdoor provision for athletics and games but there are now plans to improve the situation.

Commentary

95. Standards in physical education are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection. All pupils learn to swim between Years 3 and 5. Most pupils leave the school with confidence in the water and the ability to swim at least 25 metres. Physical education is regularly taught and there are good opportunities to take part in sport during lunchtimes and after school. Pupils who have special educational needs are given all the support that they need, either from classroom assistants or from adult helpers, to enable them to take a full part in lessons. Although teaching is judged to be satisfactory overall, the school's policy of employing professional sports coaches is having a positive impact on improving standards. A good example was seen in a Year 3/4 lesson which was taught well by a professional basketball coach, who was supported effectively by the class teacher. Pupils developed their skills of controlling the ball well and maintained their interest and enthusiasm for the whole of the lesson so that learning and achievement were both good. Pupils were able to evaluate each other's work and skills improved in the lesson. Pupils in Year 6 attend cross-country and football clubs and spoke enthusiastically about taking part in events with other schools and say they have many sessions with professional coaches. The school also has good links with Walsall Football Club and pupils have visited its grounds.
96. The subject is led and managed well by the enthusiastic co-ordinator who has worked hard to obtain funding for coaching in many sporting activities during the year. These are to be

extended into Year 1 and Year 2 later in the year and give pupils opportunities for involvement in team games and competitions with other schools.

97. The impoverished nature of the outdoor environment was an immediate concern to the headteacher when he first came to the school. His consultations with pupils have resulted in a clear plan for improvement which will take into account the need for the school to have its own football pitch and areas in which physical activities can take place. Pupils are already appreciative of the headteacher's efforts to improve their sports facilities at playtimes and lunchtimes. For example, they now proudly carry out games equipment, including football posts, for use at lunchtime, and take full responsibility for putting them away again.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The programme is thoughtfully planned to extend personal development and link purposefully with other subjects so that pupils grow in confidence.
- Pupils learn to consider issues maturely and practically through school council meetings and involvement in decisions about the school.
- The inclusion link with the special school provides pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 with very good opportunities for the development of personal and social skills.

Commentary

98. The school has a good personal, social and health education programme that provides opportunities for pupils, including those with special educational needs, to increase their confidence and self-esteem in the daily life of the school. There are opportunities for pupils to take the initiative and accept responsibility around the school and contribute to those less fortunate than themselves in other countries. Pupils are very willing to take on responsibilities around the school, including leading the awards assembly each week, which is well attended by parents. Pupils put money into a bucket to send to charities that will help children in Africa get clean water.
99. There are good links with citizenship when members of the recently-formed school council consult with other pupils about developments to the school environment. Children in Reception assert their wish to be involved in any decision-making and older pupils accept their right to be consulted as members of the school community. Older pupils have the opportunity to learn how to make decisions about issues such as alcohol and drug abuse. The subject is included well in other lessons, such as history in Year 6 when pupils consider how famous people like John Lennon used their fame to project their views.
100. The very good inclusion project with the special school provides weekly opportunities for pupils to meet with other pupils who have learning difficulties. The respect they show for each other and the successful 'buddy' partnerships are extremely helpful for pupils from both schools. They learn to listen to each other, share and value ideas and experiences.
101. The subject is led and managed well by the headteacher. Displays around the school include a varied and interesting selection of posters promoting good personal and social attitudes.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	4

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
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).