

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **RUSSELLS HALL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Dudley

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103813

Headteacher: Mrs L Whittall

Lead inspector: Mrs C A Field

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> January 2005

Inspection number: 267607

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 -11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	302
School address:	Overfields Road Russells Hall Estate Dudley
Postcode:	DY1 2NX
Telephone number:	(01384) 816 785
Fax number:	(01384) 816 788
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs D Glews
Date of previous inspection:	May 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Russells Hall Primary School is bigger than most primary schools and is located in a large housing estate on the outskirts of Dudley. The school serves its local neighbourhood and has 302 pupils from the age of 4 to 11 on roll. The profile of children's attainment when they start in the reception classes is below average. Almost all pupils are of white ethnic origin but with some from African, Caribbean or Asian heritage. A very small minority are from refugee backgrounds and speak Farsi as their mother tongue. A few pupils speak French as their main language. A broadly average proportion of pupils have special educational needs that cover a range of learning difficulties; five pupils have a statement. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard times is very low.

The school was accredited with an *Achievement* award in 2003 and the *Healthy Schools* award in 2004.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
9479	C Field	Lead inspector	Personal, Social, Health Education and Citizenship.
9428	J Butler	Lay inspector	
1189	S Brown	Team inspector	English, history and religious education.
22856	K Campbell	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, art and design and music.
15414	D Carrington	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, geography, special education needs, English as an additional language.
23866	S Hall	Team inspector	Science, design and technology and physical education.

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Russells Hall Primary is an **effective** school with a very caring ethos that values all pupils as being equally special. The team spirit in school is strong and classrooms are happy and purposeful places in which good teaching enables good learning and good achievement. The curriculum is rich and exciting and the provision made for pupils' creative and personal development is a particular strength. The headteacher is the driving force behind the school's many successes and she provides very good direction to its daily life and development. The school gives **good** value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher is held in very high regard by parents, particularly for her strong commitment to inclusion.
- The standards reached by Year 6 pupils compare very favourably with those found in similar schools.
- Good teaching enables boys and girls to learn successfully and to achieve well in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT), and very well in art and design.
- Pupils' creative writing skills including spellings, punctuation could be better in Years 1 and 2.
- Higher attaining pupils are not consistently provided with sufficiently challenging work.
- Children in the Foundation Stage<sup>1</sup> are given a good start to their education.
- Systems for assessment, keeping track of progress and the setting of targets are not used consistently to plan pupils' next steps in learning or to involve them in reviewing how well they are doing.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good, although the school could do more to take account of their views.
- The curriculum is of very good quality and meets the needs and aptitudes of pupils of all ages as well as providing very positive enrichment.
- Staff are very responsive to pupils' special needs and they pay very good attention to pupils' health, safety and welfare.
- Monitoring and evaluation activities lack rigour and more could be done to identify and share good practice in teaching and learning in the drive for even better effectiveness.
- Attendance remains stubbornly below average and some parents do not give the school their full support in trying to improve this.

The school has made **good** progress overall in tackling identified weaknesses since the time of the previous inspection. The provision of a very good quality computer suite is making a positive difference to pupils' ICT skills. However, more use could be made of computers in classrooms to support pupils' studies across the subjects they learn and the school is working towards improving this.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement is **good**. In 2004, Year 6 pupils achieved well from the end of Year 2, in comparison with similar schools, to reach average standards by the end of Year 6.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools	similar schools
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<sup>1</sup> Foundation Stage refers to the provision made for children in the nursery and reception classes.

	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	D	C	C	B
Mathematics	C	B	C	B
Science	C	C	C	B

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.*

The children start in reception with skills and knowledge that are typically below that expected for their age. Language skills and personal development are well below the level expected for their age. By the time they transfer to Year 1 the majority have achieved successfully despite many still not reaching the goals expected, particularly in language, literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress against the targets set for them. Pupils from five to eleven progress at a good rate to reach standards that are average in English, mathematics, science and ICT and reflect good achievement. Standards in religious education meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils reach well above average standards in art and design and average standards in all the other subjects sampled by inspectors.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are **very good**. Pupils have a keen thirst for learning and enjoy their time at school. Too many pupils take time out of school for holidays and this results in the level of attendance being below average. **Good** provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. Classes are happy and purposeful places of learning with extremely effective relationships. Support staff play a pivotal role in assisting targeted groups of pupils to build their basic skills well. The quality of assessment is satisfactory but its use is not sufficiently focused on helping pupils to improve their work, with marking a weakness in this respect. The curriculum offers very worthwhile experiences for the pupils with very good enrichment. The provision for pupils with special needs, including those with statements, is very good. Pupils are very well looked after during the school day. The provision for their personal and social development ensures the pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school has a good partnership with parents and has forged very effective links with other schools and strong links with the community for the benefit of pupils.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The head teacher provides very clear educational direction. She leads from the front and inspires other staff to work together in successful promotion of the school's aims. There is a productive working partnership between the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior managers that contributes substantially to the school's very good ethos. Governors are good critical friends who get to know the school well from their regular visits and from the good quality information provided by the headteacher. Staff are very supportive of one another and there is a shared and collegiate approach to decision-making with staff meetings being the main vehicle for initiating improvement. There is limited direct involvement of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluation or in the analysis of assessment data and this is a missed opportunity.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents told inspectors that their children are very happy to come to school and are enthusiastic to learn. Pupils' views are also very positive about their school. Overwhelmingly they like school, especially their teachers and friends. Most say they would not change a thing about school and identify the challenges as interesting and fun!

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Further promote pupils' writing skills with a particular focus on spellings, punctuation and presentation and extend pupils' imaginative and creative writing in Years 1 and 2.
- Ensure that higher attaining pupils are provided with a consistent level of challenge in the work set in all years and across subjects.
- Extend monitoring and evaluation activities so that senior and middle managers have more extensive information about standards, teaching and learning and use it more rigorously.
- Ensure that assessment and target-setting systems are used consistently to plan pupils' next steps in learning, to track their achievement and to involve them in reviewing progress.
- Raise the level of attendance and involve parents more in supporting the school's policy.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

Pupils' achievement is **good**. Standards in core subjects are average when compared against schools nationally and well above those found in similar schools.

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

- The school adds good value to pupils' education, as shown by the good achievement of Year 6 pupils in the 2004 national tests.
- From a below average base, boys and girls from different ethnic backgrounds achieve well in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and very well in art and design.
- Higher attaining pupils are not consistently provided with sufficiently challenging work.
- There are weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and presentation across the school and a lack of creativity in infant pupils' writing.
- Children in the Foundation Stage are given a good start to their education.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their class-mates because of the good individual learning plans, the regular review of progress against clear success criterion and the setting of small step targets.
- Managers have yet to inject sufficient rigour into assessment and target setting systems to assist more consistent achievement, especially for high attaining pupils.

#### **Commentary**

1. The school has sustained good standards since the time of the previous inspection. The school's trend in raising standards is above that seen nationally. ICT standards are much improved. The provision of a very good quality computer suite is making a positive difference to pupils' ICT skills, however more use could be made of computers in classrooms to support pupils' studies across the subjects they learn. Pupils' independent research skills have been enhanced by the many and varied challenges they are set. The school agrees challenging targets for pupils' achievements in English and mathematics with the local education authority. The school is well on track to reach those set for 2005.
2. The table below shows that Year 2 pupils reached standards that were well below average in reading and below average in writing and mathematics. The results compare as below average in reading and average in writing and mathematics when compared with those in similar



schools. The standard of boys' reading was much below that of the girls in school and below that of boys nationally.

***Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004***

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	14.6 (15.5)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	14.2 (13.9)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	15.6 (16.0)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 49 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- The table that follows shows that Year 6 pupils reached average standards in all tested subjects. Results were well above those found in similar schools across the board. Boys' performance is below that of the girls in school. The overall trend in improvement is above that seen nationally at the end of Year 6.

***Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004***

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.5 (26.9)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	27.7 (27.7)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	29.0 (29.3)	28.6 (28.6)

*There were 51 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- The strong emphasis given to pupils' English language development in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 is helping the younger pupils in school to build strong foundations for more accelerated development as they get older. Pupils from across the ability range achieve successfully because class teachers and the support staff work in partnership to both plan and deliver well-matched work programmes. By the time they leave school, the great majority of boys and girls who have begun school with well below average communication skills are enabled to achieve well both academically and socially, and make particularly good progress in the core subjects they study. The school has made good improvement to the provision for reading in the infants, following the dip in standards in the 2004 national tests. In particular boys are now provided with more appealing texts that are firing their imagination and inculcating a sense of pleasure in reading that was a weakness previously. Every week the school ensures that readers practise their skills with an adult. The challenges for reading and mathematics are very positive features of the home school partnership. Writing skills are improving because of the school's improvement strategies but weaknesses remain in spellings, punctuation and presentation. Insufficient attention is being paid to extending creativity and imagination in infant pupils' work. Too many worksheets are in use and these inhibit their personal writing.
- Findings from inspection show that the standards achieved in most subjects are good given the below average base from which many pupils start. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage even though the majority fall short of the goals set for them in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress against

the targets set for them. Pupils from five to eleven progress at a good rate to reach standards that are average in English, mathematics, science and ICT and reflect good achievement. Standards in art and design are well above average by the end of school. Some very high quality work has been created by boys and girls who benefit greatly from the expertise of a local artist who has worked with them since the Autumn. Lunchtime art clubs are very well attended by any pupil in school who wants to paint or draw. Some pupils who find lunchtimes a personally difficult time have been directed to the art club and have developed their creative talents to a very high standard. Pupils reach average standards in geography and history. In these subjects pupils demonstrate good knowledge, with improving writing skills having a positive impact on their recorded work. Standards in design and technology, music and physical education are average by the end of Year 6. Standards in religious education meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.

6. Inspectors could find no significant variation between the standards that boys and girls achieve, or in their good enthusiasm for school. The achievements of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and those who speak a different language at home are equally as good as other pupils. Pupils new to school are given appropriate support to help them settle into routines and feel secure whilst staff assess their particular needs. Good use is made of teaching assistants to deliver tailor-made programmes either one-to-one or in small groups to help these pupils learn at a good rate.
7. Provision for all pupils with special educational needs is very good. Most of these pupils have learning difficulties, and all achieve well throughout the school. This is because the work is carefully structured to enable the pupils to take the necessary successive steps that lead to increased skills and knowledge. The school is very successful in enabling lower attaining pupils to achieve consistently well and to reach the standards of which they are capable but is not as successful in enabling all of the potentially high attaining pupils to reach higher levels in their work. A useful start has been made in raising both teachers' and pupils' understanding of National Curriculum levels in English through target setting, but few teachers promote targets in lessons, refer to them in marking or involve pupils in reviewing their progress against them. These are missed opportunities to support better achievement and to make crystal clear the school's expectations for the value it expects to add to pupils' education year-on-year, especially for higher attainers.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES**

Pupils have **very good** attitudes towards school and behave very well. Their personal development is good. Attendance is below average, due largely to an increasing problem with family holidays during term time.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils show great enthusiasm for school and all that it has to offer.
- Boys and girls try equally hard and are very proud of their successes.
- Pupils behave very well in class and at play.
- Relationships are very good and there is racial harmony.
- Personal development is good and pupils are well prepared for their future.
- Attendance is below average; some parents do not fully support the school policy.

### **Commentary**

8. Pupils told inspectors that they love school and some would like to come at weekends as well. They are very enthusiastic about all the opportunities they are offered and admit they can think of few ways to make it better. Their attitudes to learning are very good. They listen well, try hard in lessons and are very proud of their successes in class, and in the special challenges provided by the teachers. Pupils responses in class are good, and can rise to excellent in subjects like art and gymnastics in which extra-curricular enrichment has fired their enthusiasm and inspired them to reach for the stars.
9. Behaviour throughout the school is very good, and pupils respond very well to the teachers' high expectations and the level of trust shown in them. Despite two wet breaks during the inspection, behaviour remained calm and considered throughout the day. Another lunchtime pupils were seen to play well across the age range, and the organised use of courtyard games and positive play is very successful at maintaining a harmonious environment. Most pupils say they feel happy and secure in the playground, and those who are shy or slightly anxious can join in activities like the art club or French club for a calmer lunchtime. Parents feel that the school has a clear moral code which is well understood.
10. Very good relationships are a feature of the school which underpins all pupils' academic and pastoral achievements. Pupils with special educational need work very hard, and, like their peers, their achievements are celebrated effectively, which contributes strongly to the very good ethos in school. Pupils are friendly and supportive of one another, care about each other's welfare, and are respectful of the views and feelings of others. There is racial harmony and no evidence of any on-going anti-social or bullying behaviour. In the very rare instances when a pupil has problems managing his or her behaviour, the school will use short exclusion to emphasise its refusal to tolerate aggression. The zero rate reflects very well on the school's very good inclusion record.
11. From a low start, with many pupils lacking personal and social skills on arrival at school, pupils make very good progress and overall their personal development is good. The school works hard to develop pupils' self-esteem and to provide them with inspiration and the courage to have a go. As a result pupils become increasingly confident and also help one another to achieve their goals. For example, in a gymnastics lesson two pupils who were unable to take a physical role were effective coaches of their peers giving them useful advice and ideas for improving their techniques. Pupils grow into very thoughtful and compassionate young people, who reached out to the survivors of the recent Asian tsunami disaster in their "Hands around the World" appeal with touching empathy. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
12. Attendance, whilst improved since the last inspection, is still below the average for primary schools and is unsatisfactory. It is astonishing that around one quarter of all pupils had their education interrupted during the first term of the current school year to go on family holidays. The school actively promotes and rewards good attendance, and tries to explain to parents the importance of continuity in lessons to ensure stepwise gains in learning. However, this is an area in which the parents are still not supporting school policy. Where illness and social problems affect the attendance and punctuality of a few pupils, the school is supportive and monitors the situation well. Punctuality overall is satisfactory and there is a smart and purposeful start to the day.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.7	School data:	0.4
National data:	5.1	National data:	0.4

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory**. The curriculum offers very worthwhile experiences for the pupils with some **very good** enrichment. Pupils receive very good care and support. The school has a good partnership with parents and with its community and very good links with other schools that benefit the pupils.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables boys and girls of different abilities and ethnic backgrounds to learn successfully and to achieve well.
- There are many varied challenges set for pupils to complete in school and as homework and these are very positive features in supporting pupils' very good motivation to do well.
- Systems for assessment, keeping track of progress and the setting of targets are not used consistently to plan pupils' next steps in learning or to involve them in reviewing how well they are doing.

### Commentary

13. The team spirit in school is strong and classrooms are happy and purposeful places in which good teaching enables good learning and good achievement. The strengths in teaching flagged by the previous inspection have been sustained. The weaknesses identified in ICT teaching and learning at that time have all been eradicated. There was no unsatisfactory teaching or learning observed in lessons during this inspection or in the very thorough scrutiny of pupils' past work carried out by inspectors.
14. Teaching is good overall with around ten per cent being of high quality. In the very best lessons the teachers' high expectations and very brisk pace set enabled the pupils to build on what they had learnt previously very successfully. These features were observed to support very good achievement in an upper set Year 6 English lesson in which the pupils wrote very imaginative and detailed creative pieces from the perspectives of various characters they had learned about in a range of fiction texts. The encouragement given to pupils, the expectations of, and insistence upon, positive behaviour, the very good relationships, the well-deployed support of teaching assistants and the good work ethos created in lessons are all strengths that have high impact on pupils' good achievement. Specialist teaching in a number of subjects has been instrumental in supporting pupils' achievements. This is especially the case in art and design and contributes very significantly to the high standards achieved.
15. Pupils respond well to the very positive climate for learning by working productively and purposefully, and many pupils develop good skills of independent and collaborative working.

Pupils generally build skills, knowledge and understanding at good rates. However, those who are potentially high attaining are not always set sufficiently challenging work. Lesson planning, although satisfactory, does not set down clear enough expectations of what pupils of different attainment levels will achieve, especially in writing skills. There is variable use of time targets to aid the pace of an individual's learning during group activities when the teacher's attention is focused elsewhere, and in some higher-attaining groups the pace of work slackens off at these times. Most plenary sessions are used well to reinforce the lesson objectives, but few take stock of what has been learnt by individual pupils or look forward to enable them to identify what they need to do next to improve their work. Marking too is a weakness in this respect. These shortcomings are impeding potentially consistently high quality teaching and learning.

16. The staff in the Foundation Stage have good command of all areas of learning and are working in successful partnership to enable the children to learn well. The quality of teaching and learning for children in the reception class and mixed reception and Year 1 class is good. They have high expectations of both work and behaviour, and this contributes to the good progress the children make. The teaching team has a pleasant, helpful and encouraging manner with the children and gives them much praise for their work. A suitable range of strategies is used in teaching the children, and most effective use is made of the classroom space available. Procedures for recording how well children are doing are thorough, and the teachers and the teaching assistants complement each other very well in ensuring that the children are provided with tasks that are suitable to their needs.
17. The teaching of basic skills is good and pupils in the infant and junior stages build their basic skills successfully. The emphasis placed on developing pupils' communication and language skills from an early age pays dividends as they grow older, and also enables them to have full access to all the subjects that they study. Support staff play a pivotal role in assisting targeted groups of pupils to build their basic skills well. Pupils are attentive listeners and pay good attention to all instructions. Most sustain good concentration in lessons and show a keenness to respond to questions. Pupils' writing skills are improving due to the school's effective improvement strategies but handwriting and presentation require more work, especially in the infant stage. The school's setting arrangements which place pupils in Years 3-6 into ability groupings for some subjects are working satisfactorily, but better use of assessment data could enable those who are potentially high attaining to benefit consistently from more challenging work.
18. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. Planning is of good quality for these pupils and the work is carefully matched to their specific needs. Teaching assistants are effective in their work to support their pupils and they provide useful consolidation and extension activities that enable individuals to make good progress. Class teachers are very committed to the needs of these pupils and they ensure that they are included in all the activities in class. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs has a major impact on their good rates of achievement.
19. Work undertaken in support of the few pupils who speak French or Farsi and are at a very early stage of learning English is of good quality and enables these pupils to learn well. In Year 2 a particularly good job is being done in supporting pupils in their home language which helps celebrate diversity and gives them self worth and the motivation to learn a new language with confidence.

### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 43 lessons***

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (3%)	4 (9%)	26 (60%)	12 (28%)	0	0	0

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

20. The provision made for homework is very good. Pupils are set challenges in all subjects. When pupils complete a challenge they move to the next one and the award of an enamel badge in assembly celebrates their success. Pupils of all ages are highly motivated by the initiative and some Year 6 pupils told inspectors that they find them interesting and fun. The high quality display in corridors in all parts of the building gives high status to the challenges and these show very clearly what contribution they make to pupils' good achievement.

## The Curriculum

The curriculum offers very worthwhile experiences for the pupils with some **very good** enrichment. Statutory requirements are met in full. Extra curricular provision is very good and the quality and quantity of accommodation and resources have a very beneficial impact on pupils' good achievements.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is rich and exciting.
- The provision for pupils with special needs, including those with statements is very good.
- Extra curricular provision is very good.
- Accommodation and resources are very good and this helps to boost pupils' good achievement.

## Commentary

21. The school plans and implements a very inclusive curriculum. Equality of access and opportunity is very good for boys and girls from different backgrounds and enables those with learning difficulties and emotional needs to achieve well consistently. The curriculum provides a range of very worthwhile experiences across subjects and meets statutory requirements in all respects. Pupils told inspectors they especially like the extra-curricular clubs and the chance to learn new things. The curriculum for art and design is a significant strength in promoting pupils' creative talents. Parents told inspectors that the use of ICT has grown and provision today is much better than it was at the time of the previous inspection. ICT can be seen in pupils' work in some subjects and this is a positive step forward. For example, the use of ICT to help Year 6 pupils create their own pieces in the style of *Escher* has enabled work of high quality. The progressive provision of computer-controlled whiteboards across the school is beginning to have good impact on learning in different subjects. However, the computers in classrooms are not yet used with sufficient intensity to enhance provision in the full range of subjects but the school is actively working to address this.
22. There is a good curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage. The team of adults plan together very effectively to ensure that the children have lots of practical activity that enables them to *learn by doing* and grow quickly into independent learners who take full advantage of the exciting experiences being provided. The generous level of staffing here is pivotal in supporting the children's good progress. Accommodation and resources in the Foundation Stage are of good quality and used well.

23. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The special educational needs coordinator (Senco) very effectively manages this provision and is responsible for the very good quality individual work programmes that are devised to meet particular needs. The curriculum for these pupils is of very good quality and ensures that they can build the necessary skills and knowledge systematically. Teachers and teaching assistants provide effective support. All these strengths contribute to the good achievement made by pupils with special educational needs.
24. The curriculum is rich and exciting and the provision made for pupils' creative and personal development is a particular strength. The excellent quality of display around the school reflects this very well. There is good attention paid to cross-curricular links. Art and design work is used very well to tie subjects together. For example, some exceptionally high quality wet into wet water colours of seascapes created in Year 6 were part of a topic that included a geography focus on river estuaries, a history element on World War 2 and an English focus on the *Snowgoose*, a story featuring Dunkirk. Very good use is made of visits and visitors to extend pupils' experiences. For example a visit to *Faith City* in Saltwells helped the pupils gain useful insights into the major world faiths of Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Islam and Hinduism. Extra-curricular clubs include gymnastics, positive play, five-a-side, netball, chess, recorders, choir, after school reading, literacy and numeracy classes, French, and art and design. These add considerable value to the curricular experiences provided.
25. The school is well staffed and resourced. Resources are chosen very carefully to add interest to lessons. Accommodation is very good and has significant strengths and few weaknesses. The strengths lie in its presentation, which is light, bright and airy and maintained to a high standard. The weakness is the need to refurbish some of the staff and pupil toilets. The very unique large-scale murals and tableau painted on walls around the school add that something extra to the high quality learning environment. The quality of display is excellent in all areas of the school and shows just how much the pupils' work is valued.

### Care, guidance and support

The school has a very caring ethos and values all pupils as being equally special. There is **very good** provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and provide a **good** level of support, advice and guidance to help them improve. There is **good** involvement of the pupils through seeking and acting on their views.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Care for the whole child is at the heart of the school's philosophy.
- Very careful attention is paid to all aspects of health, safety and welfare.
- There is very good support for pupils with special educational needs.
- Pastoral support and guidance are very good.
- Academic support and guidance are good but there is room for improvement in ensuring pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils are involved informally in decisions that affect daily school life, but they do not yet have the benefit of a democratic school council.

### Commentary

26. Parents' and carers' views are very positive about the level of care given to their children. Whatever their needs, the school works hard to include and support all its pupils, for example in language support, and through the in-house systems of promoting very good attitudes, behaviour and self-esteem. This aspect is central to the work of the school and is greatly valued

by pupils, who find the staff kind and helpful. Pupils say they feel confident that if they have any problems with their work, help will be at hand. However, there are aspects of planning and marking which do not always give pupils the very best chance to see what they need to do next to improve, or to review how well they are doing. The provision for pupils with special needs, including those with statements, is very good. Full personal education plans are provided for those children in care, and the very good programme of personal, social and health education ensures all pupils are well prepared for the next stage of life.

27. Health and safety procedures are very good. Staff are very aware of individual needs and are proactive in teaching safe practice. Child protection procedures are very good, co-ordinated by well trained and experienced staff, and in line with local arrangements. In 2004 the school was accredited with a Healthy Schools award and now actively promotes healthy snacks at break time, and encourages pupils to make healthy choices from the lunchtime menu.
28. Teachers seek the views of pupils informally through lessons, through offering choices, and through directly asking for ideas about social or charitable initiatives. They also provide opportunities for pupils to record their feelings, views and ideas on the chalkboards around school. However, a more formal and pupil-led school council is not yet in place and the school's plans to improve this area of their democratic voice are timely.

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

There are **good** links with parents and the community, which benefit the educational experiences of the pupils. **Very good** links with other schools, particularly the local secondary school, have made a significant impact on the curriculum and to very good effect.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are very happy with the school.
- Very good links with a secondary school have improved the curriculum in mathematics and ICT.
- Parents are very supportive of the school's subject challenges.
- Too many parents are not supportive enough regarding unbroken attendance.
- Information provided by the school is generally good.

### **Commentary**

29. Parents and carers at the pre-inspection meeting with inspectors spoke with one voice about the high quality care given to their children and praised highly the family values the school promotes. The parents of new pupils to school, some of whom are learning to speak English, praise induction and integration processes highly. Most parents at the meeting agreed they are given too little notice of events in the school calendar. Some parents think that the notice given for meetings and events is rather late. The school works hard to foster a welcoming and mutually supportive partnership with parents and carers and is successful in many areas, but not yet in winning their full support for its attendance policy.
30. Parents and carers benefit from a range of good quality information about school activities and policies, including the regular *Russell's Reporter* newsletter. Pupils' annual progress reports are satisfactory, but lack any clear comparison with what would be expected nationally for a child of that age. Parents and carers are very happy with the school, and provide particularly good support for the challenges, which involve a very beneficial homework component.



31. Parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs are well involved in reviewing and planning their children's work. The Senco ensures that they receive good quality information about their child's progress and there are ample opportunities, whether formal or informal, for parents and carers to talk to staff about the work.
32. Good links with the community help to provide some of the very good enrichment which makes the curriculum so special. Art and design is a key area here, but it is only one of many subjects which benefit from a list of visitors and visits to give the pupils a wealth of first hand experiences, for example in street dance. The emergency services and local council also help in pupils' personal development and the choir visits a retirement home for senior citizens. The pre-school playgroup and after-school groups like Brownies, also help to create links with the local community.
33. There are very good links with the local secondary school, both through the transfer process for pupils, and through a shared approach to monitoring attendance. Extremely valuable links with the mathematics and ICT departments have enriched the curriculum and contributed to the creation of specific challenges for pupils. Other educational benefits include sports matches and musical festivals with local primary schools.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is **good** overall. Governance is **good** and the headteacher gives a **very good** steer to the school.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very clear educational direction and inspires other staff to work together as a very strong team with a shared commitment to improvement.
- Governors are fully involved and supportive of the school and they ask critical questions to ensure that the school is effective in all its work.
- Assessment and target setting and tracking systems are not fully used to ensure achievement is consistently at best possible levels.
- Whilst a positive start has been made to introduce a monitoring and evaluation system, there is still work to be done to ensure it is rigorous and consistent across classes and subjects.

### Commentary

34. The headteacher is a very good leader who inspires staff and pupils alike to maximise their efforts and achievement. She is at the heart of school improvement and works tirelessly to ensure the quality of provision and sum of school improvement are beneficial for pupils. She has entirely appropriate ambitions, aspirations and goals for the school and encourages others to share responsibilities, build strong teams and work in a focused way to help the school move ahead. Her effective record can be seen in the good improvement made since the previous inspection, the high quality school environment, and the emphasis on enrichment and extension of the curriculum so that pupils can enjoy aspects of work and leisure that would otherwise be absent.
35. Other staff wholeheartedly share the headteacher's goals. The senior leadership team, including the effective deputy headteacher, are committed to making the school as successful as possible and they are confident and effective leaders. A significant strength of the school is the very well welded team spirit that motivates the adults in school to *go the extra mile* in their work.

36. Governors are very proud of their school and they can point to some significant improvements in the buildings and resources that are the fruit of their effective involvement and support. They are also holding school managers to account effectively. They investigate performance data and ask critical questions to ensure that pupils are achieving as well as possible. They have an appropriate committee structure that ensures the good flow of information to inform decisions and their business is conducted efficiently.
37. Whilst there are considerable strengths in leadership and the overall quality of management is good, there are aspects that merit further improvement. Much data is collected from assessment to show pupils' progress but it is not yet sifted and organised efficiently enough to feed fully into the target setting and tracking process. At present, the assessment system tends to look back at what has been achieved rather than to be used in an anticipatory way in the setting of precise targets, planning work that is well matched to needs, especially for higher attainers, or to enable staff to write informative and developmental comments when marking pupils' work. There is shared agreement amongst senior leaders that the tightening of the assessment process in these ways will prove beneficial for pupils.
38. Individual staff have many talents and, put together, this ensures good quality provision for the pupils. For example, the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well led and managed and this has a significant impact on the very good quality of education for these pupils. However, the full harnessing of staff talents has yet to be achieved. This is related to the monitoring and evaluation system in school. There is some appropriate monitoring of core subjects by senior leaders but other subject leaders are not involved enough in such work. Thus, subject leaders do not have sufficient opportunities to gather all the information that is required to analyse subject performance and to pinpoint aspects for improvement and strengths to share. Subject leaders are ready for the additional responsibility and challenge that rigorous monitoring and evaluation will bring.
39. Governors, key leaders and staff ensure that finance is well managed. The distribution of the budget is well matched to the priorities in the school improvement plan and accountancy procedures are effective in ensuring careful spending. Overall, the school is an efficient organisation that seeks best value in its purchases and in what it provides. The school is prudent in its management of finances and gives good value for money.

***Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	898,258
Total expenditure	887,436
Expenditure per pupil	2,610

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	39,209
Balance carried forward to the next year	34,178

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

### AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good** with some very good features.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children receive a good start to their education in the reception classes known as the *Foundation Stage*.
- Teaching is consistently good enabling the children to learn successfully.
- Personal and social development is a particular strength.
- The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good.

#### Commentary

40. Many positive features found at the time of the previous inspection have been retained and there has been good improvement. Some areas, such as the quality of outdoor play provision, have improved significantly.
41. Children enter the reception class in the September or following January of the academic year in which they are five. At the time of the inspection, there were 35 children in the Foundation Stage, 13 of whom were newly arrived. Despite only being in school a few days, most had settled happily. Very secure induction procedures and strong links with pre-school providers enable children to make a smooth transition into school. Most children have received some pre-school experience.
42. Attainment on entry is below that expected for their age. Personal and social skills and early language skills are well below the expected level. Despite good achievement overall, a significant proportion of children do not reach the early learning goals in language, literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Standards remain below average by the time children move into Year 1.
43. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. In the development of social skills and language and literacy, it is very good, enabling children to make very rapid progress. There are many strengths in teaching. Planning is very good and well-organised activities adhere closely to the six areas of learning. Very strong teamwork between teaching and support staff ensures successful learning. Support staff are of high calibre and make a major contribution to children's learning. The curriculum provides a good balance of child-initiated and adult directed activities. Children enjoy their work and behaviour is very good. All children are very well provided for and there is very good attention to inclusion. Children with specific learning difficulties, and those with English as an additional language, make as much progress as their classmates because of the high levels of care shown. Assessment procedures are very good. Although further work remains to be done on using assessment with greater precision, current information is used effectively to plan the next stages of learning for each child.
44. Leadership and management are good. Two members of staff, new to this temporary responsibility, share the task very effectively. They know what needs to be done and have brought about change in aspects such as planning within a very short period of time. Generous indoor space is used well and attractive displays celebrate work across the whole Foundation

Stage curriculum. The introduction of an outdoor area, although small, has had a strong positive impact on the quality of provision and the development of physical skills.

## **Personal, social and emotional development**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children make very good progress and achieve very well because personal, social and emotional development is a very important part of all work.
- Adults provide very good role models.

### **Commentary**

45. Children enter the school at various stages of development, but overall, the level is below that typically found for children of this age. Most are happy to come to school and confidently leave parents and carers at the beginning of the day. However, many children have limited social skills, for example they show difficulty waiting their turn and lack maturity for their age. Through very good teaching, children quickly learn to be kind and courteous and their behaviour is very good. There are numerous incentives that successfully encourage positive attitudes. Children who are chosen as '*Special Helper*' take their role very seriously. They are comfortable with adults and inquisitive about visitors to the classroom. All staff value children as individuals and know their needs well. They take every opportunity to develop secure personal skills. Children feel part of a very caring community. They want to learn because activities are interesting and exciting. When observed working on their *Story Street* books, children's levels of concentration were very high because they found the stories exciting. They displayed great enthusiasm and much good humour as they tried to identify the names of the characters. Children work with good co-operation and display increasing maturity and confidence as they become older. Through very good achievement, most reach the early learning goals by the time they move into Year 1.

## **Communication, language and literacy**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are very good and children achieve very well.
- Interesting, purposeful activities promote language development very effectively.
- Adults take every opportunity to develop children's speaking skills.
- Assessment information is very detailed.

### **Commentary**

46. Children's language skills are typically very weak when they first start school. Many children are not confident speakers, and a significant number have speech problems and limited vocabulary. Their needs are met very effectively and children of all capabilities achieve very well. Communication, language and literacy development is at the heart of the Foundation Stage provision and is promoted very effectively.

47. Teaching time is used very purposefully and activities, such as discussing a story about ‘Where is Pip Going?’, promote very good language development. When working in small groups, adults skilfully encourage children to extend their vocabulary and answer questions as fully as possible. Activities are linked well to stories and children develop basic word building skills well when, for example, they sound the initial letter of the characters in the story. Children love books and reading is taught very well. They gain confidence, independence and self-esteem as they share books with adults on a regular basis. Opportunities for writing are good. Some children make recognisable marks; others write their name unaided and attempt simple spellings. Many have some way to go before they can write independently. Assessment is very detailed and provides valuable, well-documented information about children's individual development. Despite making very good progress, many children do not achieve the early learning goals and enter Year 1 with below average literacy skills.

### **Mathematical development**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

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

- Teaching and learning are good, enabling children to achieve well.
- Mathematical development is an important part of daily work.
- Children develop greater mathematical understanding through an interesting range of appropriate learning experiences.

### **Commentary**

48. Children enter the school with below average mathematical understanding. They achieve well, through good quality teaching. Registration time is used effectively to develop numeracy skills and children enjoy the challenge of working out how many new children have joined the class. Mathematics is fun and good quality practical activities, such as number bingo, promote good learning. Tasks are linked well to other areas of learning and adults develop children's mathematical vocabulary at every opportunity. The difference between the January intake of children and their older classmates is very marked. Children new to the school are only totally secure with numbers to 3 and are very insecure when counting by themselves. They have limited vocabulary and find difficulty explaining themselves. Older children display much greater confidence with numbers, because they have been taught well. However, even higher attaining children, who are confident with numbers far beyond 10, are not totally secure in their mathematical understanding and lack vocabulary to explain their thinking. Despite making good progress, many children do not achieve the early learning goals by Year 1.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

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

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

- Children achieve well through a good variety of learning experiences.
- Visits and visitors are used very effectively to develop greater understanding.

## **Commentary**

49. Children are not very knowledgeable about the world in which they live when they enter school. They achieve well through an exciting and stimulating range of experiences and because they are well taught. Lessons are very well planned and children make good gains in their knowledge. They plant seeds and learn about animals and birds, through visits from, for example, the falconer or the *Animal Man*. They learn about their own and other religions and cultures and use discussion time well to express thoughts and feelings. Computers are a regular feature of lessons. Children of all capabilities develop a good level of independence, control and collaboration through activities such as putting the hands on the clock. Visits to places such as Aston Hall successfully enhance learning. Despite making good progress, many children enter Year 1 with below average knowledge and understanding of the world and do not achieve the early learning goals.

## **Physical development**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Outside areas have improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- Children achieve well through good teaching.

## **Commentary**

50. The children's skills in physical development are similar to other children of this age on entry to school. Children achieve well, because adults provide an exciting programme of indoor and outdoor activities. They have access to a good range of outdoor equipment, enabling them to develop sound physical skills through using wheeled vehicles and large apparatus. A well structured outdoor play programme links effectively to other areas of learning. During the inspection, the outdoor area had been turned into a 'road', with traffic lights, signs and zebra crossings, enabling children to gain greater understanding of their transport topic and develop good road safety awareness. Although the play area is too small for whole class use, its introduction has made a positive impact on provision.
51. Children develop good pencil, paintbrush and scissor control, as they write, paint and cut during 'free-choice' activities. Adults support children with special needs well, ensuring they gain greater control in their work. The vast majority achieve the early learning goals on entry to Year 1.

## **Creative development**

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching ensure that children's creative skills are developed well.
- Children receive a good variety of creative learning experiences.

## Commentary

52. Children have average creative skills when they enter the reception class. They achieve well through good teaching and reach the early learning goals by Year 1. Adults make good use of the spacious accommodation for creative work, providing children with numerous opportunities to use a wide range of media. Whether playing in the sand or experimenting with water or paint, children make good progress, because they enjoy what they are doing. Activities linked to the '*Transport*' topic create much excitement. Role-play opportunities, such as going on the bus to the shopping centre at Merry Hill, provide good opportunities for imaginative play and all activities contribute well to the development of literacy and mathematical skills. Children explore and experiment as they paint pictures of cars and demonstrate good creativity in their choice of colours. The 'creative corner' provides further good quality opportunities for experimentation and independent choice.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all capabilities and from different ethnic backgrounds achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- The curriculum is of good quality and enriches pupils' learning.
- Innovative reading developments are helping to raise reading standards in Years 1 and 2. However, writing skills in Year 2 are below average as are handwriting and spelling skills.
- An over-reliance on worksheets stifles imaginative writing in Year 2, especially for higher attaining pupils.
- Marking does not focus enough on the next steps in learning.
- Pupils use their literacy skills well in support of most other subjects.
- The subject is well led and effectively managed.

#### Commentary

53. Standards in speaking and listening and reading are average in Year 2. Writing in Year 2 is below average. Results in the 2004 national tests for Year 2 were below those reported by the previous inspection. Standards in English at the end of Year 6 were average in the 2004 national tests and well above those found in similar schools, although boys' performance was below that of girls. This picture in standards is very similar to that reported at the time of the previous inspection and is borne out by the current inspection findings. Given pupils' starting point on entry to school achievement is good throughout the school. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds achieve well. Inspectors' evidence shows no significant variation between the achievement of boys and girls.
54. In Years 1 and 2 teachers involve pupils in poetry, reading and discussions using questioning appropriately. Pupils are eager to engage in the speaking and listening challenge that reinforces these skills in an interactive and fun way, and leads to another star award. Teachers provide many opportunities for role-play and drama. As a result pupils gain confidence and self esteem in the use of speaking and listening skills. The few pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language are well supported and achieve as well as others in the class. By the end of Year 2 pupils of all capabilities listen well and gain confidence in speaking aloud in a variety of contexts. Teachers build effectively on these skills in Year 3 to 6 so that by the end of Year 6 pupils consider the views of others carefully in discussion and make appropriate contributions. Listening skills are good and speaking skills are at the expected level for Year 6 pupils. Higher attainers use a wide range of interesting vocabulary and hold good conversations with each other, extending their ideas well.
55. By the end of Year 2 average and higher attaining pupils read with accuracy and increasing fluency and expression. They read both fiction and non-fiction texts and understand literacy terms such as *contents* and *index*. They have an appropriate range of strategies to help establish the meaning of unknown words. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs read more hesitantly, using their knowledge of letters and letter sounds to help establish meaning when reading aloud. Basic skills in reading are carefully taught. By the end of Year 6, pupils have been introduced to a very good range of quality authors and pupils demonstrate



pleasure in reading. The school's innovative developments of reading has paid dividends, particularly for younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 where reading standards have improved and developing boys' reading throughout the school.

56. Writing has also been a focus of attention, most noticeably in the junior classes. Standards in writing are below average by the end of Year 2 and average by the end of Year 6. The good achievement in Years 3 to 6 is due largely to the rich and exciting curriculum which provides good opportunities for developing writing skills. In Years 1 and 2 imaginative writing is hampered by an over-reliance on worksheets and more mundane tasks and this restricts the achievement of higher attainers in particular. A significant number of pupils are not fluent in their handwriting. A number of pupils in Year 2 do not join their writing. Spelling skills and punctuation are below average in many cases.
57. Pupils' skills are developed well in Years 3 to 6 and higher attainers in Year 6 are well challenged as a result of high quality and exciting teaching. The writing of the average and higher attaining pupils uses imaginative vocabulary to capture the reader's attention. For example, one pupil wrote 'In the blue expanse above me, aeroplanes crissed-crossed, leaving snail-trail clouds in their wake' and another wrote 'The sky was scattered with an explosion of red, yellow and pink...' Pupils know how to create suspense, for example, 'Glimmers of moonlight picked their way through the trees', and their writing also grabs the reader with exciting story openers. Higher attainers and some average pupils extend their writing well such as the expressive stories they have written based on Paul Gallico's *The Snow Goose*.
58. Pupils undertake writing in a wide range of styles with good examples of diary extracts, sensitive letters written as World War 2 evacuees, play-scripts, eye witness accounts, obituaries, a town brochure from 'Druids Bottom', character studies, persuasive arguments and poetry. Pupils were inspired by first hand experience when birds of prey and their handler visited the school. Pupils were very enthusiastic about this as their completed reports on 'Hawk Eye Day' show. Boys are particularly captured by the choice of media used to stimulate creative writing. Exciting texts such as *Carrie's War* and *A Child's Christmas in Wales* enable pupils to emphasise and enrich the experience.
59. Most pupils' handwriting is legible and neat by the end of Year 6, although some pupils in the junior classes are still not writing in a consistent joined script. A range of punctuation marks is used with reasonable accuracy. Spelling improves steadily, helped by the spelling challenges and 'super spellers' books but a number of pupils are still not confident with strategies to help them tackle unknown words.
60. Teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes very good in Years 1 and 2. It is mostly good in Years 3 to 6 with some excellent teaching seen in the top set in Year 6. Teachers are very good role models for pupils. Their subject knowledge is good. Resources are used very well to enhance learning and lessons are often challenging and exciting as a result. Pupils behave very well and are very keen to learn. Teaching assistants support pupils well, particularly lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, ensuring very good inclusion for all pupils. Teachers make very good use of electronic whiteboards which enrich pupils' learning very well. Pupils use ICT satisfactorily for research and word processing. Good teaching and innovative developments inspire pupils to want to read and write. Assessment is used effectively to respond to individual needs but marking is not sufficiently developmental and is not linked well enough to pupils' personal targets for English. The use of writing skills ladders helps pupils to have a good understanding of how their writing is developing.

61. The subject is well led and managed and this has led to continuing developments and good future capacity for further improvement. Pupils are encouraged by the challenges set by all aspects of English and are eager to succeed. Cross-curricular links in English, particularly with art and history, are a real strength. High quality displays invite pupils to add their thoughts and to write in the style of a poet or author. This is a most successful initiative, which is well used by pupils and teachers and is helping to raise the standard of writing in school.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

62. Overall, pupils use their literacy skills well to support work in other subjects. Skills in speaking and listening are used in a variety of contexts. Across the curriculum pupils engage in discussions in class. Their ability to interact in groups is good. Pupils use reading skills and retrieve and collate information from a range of sources, for example, in history, geography and science topics. Writing skills are used effectively in many subjects although more use could be made of these skills to write extended accounts in subjects such as religious education. Wider opportunities for independent writing across the curriculum in Year 2 have yet to be developed.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics and standards are average at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- The quality of teaching is good, which enables pupils to learn well.
- The subject leaders have ensured that mathematics has sustained past strengths and moved forward successfully.
- Assessment, target setting and tracking and monitoring and evaluation systems are satisfactory but do not consistently ensure that pupils from different attainment groups, especially the higher attainers, achieve at similar rates.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in mathematics due to the well-targeted support that is provided.

### **Commentary**

63. Standards in mathematics are average at the end of Years 2 and 6, and this reflects good progress. National test data suggests significant variation between the performance of girls and boys in mathematics but inspectors could find no evidence of this, nor in their good enthusiasm for school. Whatever their background, pupils are enabled to achieve well in mathematics. The school has worked successfully to improve standards in mathematics since its previous inspection.
64. Teaching and learning are of good quality, and this has a significant impact on pupils' good achievement. The grouping of pupils into two sets based on their attainment level is proving effective in enabling pupils to learn well, though some refinement is due. Whilst planning is satisfactory it is not yet honed enough to include the identification of key knowledge, skills and understanding to be learned by different groups of pupils. This is especially the case for higher attaining pupils, whose starting point for work in lessons is too similar to that of average attaining pupils. However, the encouragement given to pupils, the expectations of, and insistence upon, good behaviour, the work of teaching assistants and the work ethos created in lessons are all strengths. Pupils respond by working productively and purposefully and many pupils develop good skills of independent and collaborative working. Pupils generally build

skills, knowledge and understanding at good rates, as seen in a Year 5 lower set lesson where pupils were provided with well matched work that enabled them to analyse the key information in a problem and to use the correct mathematical operation to solve it.

65. Assessment, target setting, sharing and tracking are of satisfactory quality, but are not yet sufficiently focused to keep a close enough watch on how well different pupils are achieving. This links to the development point about higher attaining pupils discussed above, and also relates to the need to make more use of comments in marking that are targeted to show pupils where and how to improve and the opportunities for pupils to self-evaluate their work during lessons. Subject leaders can draw on some of the systems found in the good provision for pupils with special educational needs in mathematics in the quest for improvement. The work for these pupils is carefully planned in small steps and at the right level of challenge, and the results of assessment are used to keep track of targets and to plan the next stage in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in mathematics lessons, particularly by the teaching assistants who undertake most of the group-based work for these pupils.
66. A team of three teachers, including the deputy headteacher, leads mathematics successfully. This is a change from the former situation when one person led the subject. The new arrangements are bedding in well and, collectively, the subject leaders are striving well for improved provision and performance. However, there remains work on three fronts for the subject leaders to complete. These are assessment, especially the use made of the data produced, the monitoring and evaluation of the subject, and the use of ICT to support improved mathematics skills and knowledge.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

67. There are some good links between mathematics and other subjects, though this could be increased. In particular, the use of ICT is not frequent enough. Some good examples of the use of ICT to support mathematics learning were observed, for example a Year 6 lesson where the pupils used a spreadsheet to keep track of the profit accumulating from the sale of different snacks and to investigate how the changing of variables affected the *bottom line*. In other subjects, such as science, the use of worksheets often restricts pupils' opportunities to devise their own ways of representing information mathematically.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is an improving trend in National test results and current standards are average throughout the school.
- Boys' and girls' achievement is good overall but the highest attaining pupils are not always challenged to the full.
- Science Challenges, presently being completed will help enhance curriculum provision and encourage independent learning.
- Assessment procedures, including marking, target setting and pupil self-assessment, are not sufficiently developed to make a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- The subject leader has made a good start with analysing data but has not yet had the opportunity to evaluate fully teaching, learning and standards in science.

## Commentary

68. Teachers' assessment of the standards attained at the end of Year 2 in 2004 showed them to be below average. The 2004 national test results in Year 6 show that standards were average overall but above those found in similar schools. Current standards are broadly average overall, being slightly below average at the end of Year 2 but more securely average at the end of Year 6. Targets set for Year 6 show a level of expectation similar to that set last year. Achievement is good overall as a result of good teaching in some year groups. However, the sample of work saved by the school shows an inconsistent picture of improvement year-on-year. Pupils with special educational needs achieve at least as well as their peers. The sample of work evaluated by inspectors shows adequate coverage of the science curriculum but with limited investigative work being recorded independently. The over-use of worksheets is hampering the potentially better standards that higher attaining pupils could reach, particularly in the infants.
69. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers manage their classes well and pupils concentrate on their tasks, form very good relationships and work well together. However, questions are not used effectively enough to extend pupils' understanding and there are limited opportunities for pupils to be involved in science investigations. Where first hand experiences are planned the pupils make better progress. For example in a Year 6 lesson on magnetism, pupils were enabled to conduct some of their own experiments resulting in much more probing discussion and better understanding. Although teachers' planning is based on appropriate learning objectives, these are not always shared with pupils at the start of a lesson and insufficient thought is given to matching the work to pupils' different capabilities, particularly in relation to higher attaining pupils. Marking of pupils' work consistently lacks developmental comments and assessment data, although regularly recorded, is not used to set targets to identify the next steps in learning. Sound use is made of ICT to secure and extend pupils learning and to present data and organise scientific findings. Science *Challenges* which encourage pupils to be independent learners and to continue their learning at home are a very positive feature.
70. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily and there has been a satisfactory level of improvement since the last inspection. The analysis of test results and assessment data are beginning to be used to identify areas for improvement. However, the process needs to be formalised as part of a whole school system of data analysis, target setting and tracking pupil progress before it can impact fully on the raising of standards and achievement. The next step is to widen the opportunities for the subject leader to monitor the quality of science throughout the school and to draw on the evidence gained to set more challenging targets for improvement.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been good improvement to ICT since the previous inspection.
- Standards in ICT are average through the school and achievement is good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The subject leaders have ensured that the curriculum for ICT is of good quality, and that resources and the accommodation are very good.

- Monitoring and evaluation systems are at an early stage of development and assessment is not sufficiently focused on helping pupils to improve their work or in setting tasks that are well matched to all pupils' needs.
- The cross-curricular use of ICT, especially to develop pupils' writing skills, is insufficient.

## **Commentary**

71. ICT was a key issue at the previous inspection. The subject has been well led and managed in the interim and the rate of improvement has been good. Today, standards in ICT are average through the school and achievement is good. This is due to considerably enhanced accommodation and resources, better quality teaching and learning, and much improved expectations.
72. Teaching quality is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and confidence and they use the resources effectively to help pupils achieve well. There is careful focus on the building of skills and knowledge, as seen in a Year 3 lesson where the pupils were building and amending a database *All about me*. The insistence on good standards of behaviour and the encouragement given to pupils to work well are both strengths, and were clearly evident in this Year 3 lesson. ICT lessons are purposeful and productive sessions where pupils learn well and the skills of independent and collaborative work are developed effectively. The use of time requires some improvement as not all of the planned activities are packed into the available time. This restricts pupils' opportunities to self-evaluate their learning.
73. The curriculum for ICT is of good quality and covers the different strands of the subject such as computer control and modelling and data handling well. The development of pupils' writing skills would, however, be better served by more emphasis on text processing, especially for the higher attainers. The new computer suite is a very good quality and spacious resource and the computers, other hardware and general stock of software are all of very good quality. This helps to bring learning alive and, therefore, to impact positively on pupils' achievement.
74. Leadership of ICT is good, although as found in other subjects in school, monitoring and evaluation systems and assessment are not yet targeted enough on helping pupils to improve their work or in setting tasks that are well matched to all pupils' needs. Higher attaining pupils were well challenged in a Year 6 lesson observed on the use of spreadsheets, but this is not consistent. The subject leaders have good insights into these areas for improvement and also the subject strengths and they provide firm and effective management for ICT. The potential for continued improvement is good.

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

75. The cross-curricular use of ICT, especially to develop pupils' writing skills, is insufficient. It is apparent that whilst skills and knowledge about ICT, as such, are well developed, the use of the technology to broaden and improve skills and knowledge in other subjects is inconsistent. There are good links between ICT and art and design, with some excellent quality images produced by pupils of all ages, and links to history are also strong. However, links to English, mathematics, science and geography are more limited. There are formal plans to improve the stock of software to encourage better cross-curricular links and the progressive provision of computer-controlled whiteboards across the school is beginning to have good impact on learning in different subjects. The school is actively working towards making even better use of computers located in classrooms.

## **HUMANITIES**

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for religious education is good.
- Assessment, including marking and pupils' self-review, is not effective enough in ensuring achievement is maximised, especially for higher attainers.

### Commentary

76. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with those set out in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
77. In Years 1 and 2 pupils develop a sound knowledge and understanding of Christian traditions and are familiar with the key aspects of major world faiths. They study different festivals such as Christmas and Diwali and they know a variety of stories from the Bible. Recorded work is limited as much of the work in Years 1 and 2 takes place through discussion and circle time, where themes such as *friendship*, *being special* and *caring for others* are explored. In Years 3 to 6 pupils build steadily on their knowledge of the major world faiths of Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. In a Year 6 lesson observed, pupils developed their knowledge of Islam and the importance of the five pillars of Islam in the life of a Muslim. Pupils listened well to each other and were keen to answer questions. The active involvement of two Muslim pupils who demonstrated the different prayer positions and Arabic writing for the class, contributed positively to their personal, cultural and social education. There is a very strong moral strand in the religious education curriculum. Moral dilemmas are explored and pupils consider the life and work of famous leaders such as Martin Luther King.
78. The work in pupils' books reflects satisfactory teaching and learning. Although work is regularly marked, there are few evaluative comments to help pupils improve or identify the next steps in learning. An appropriate range of topics is covered. The good curriculum is enhanced by visits to different places of worship, for example churches and a nearby mosque. Displays in classrooms and about school contribute positively to the subject as do daily assemblies where, for example, stories such as the Aboriginal version of the *Creation story* is shared with pupils. Poetry and news events are drawn together to promote caring for the environment and pupils reflect thoughtfully on their own contribution to this.
79. The subject is soundly led and managed. There have been few opportunities for the direct monitoring of standards and quality of provision and assessment is not consistent or rigorous enough to give full information about pupils' achievement to enable its careful tracking.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The history curriculum is enriched by a good programme of visits and well-chosen artefacts.
- Homework challenges are beneficial to pupils' learning but the use of work-sheets requires review.

## Commentary

80. Pupils work from a well-planned curriculum in history and are provided with worthwhile experiences. Standards are average in history at the end of Years 2 and 6, although writing in Year 2 is limited by the over-reliance on worksheets. Weaknesses in pencil control and handwriting for a significant number of younger pupils also hinder recording skills.
81. The good curriculum enables pupils to have access to a broad range of worthwhile experiences. In Years 3 to 6 pupils have good opportunity to find out about the past using a wide range of primary and secondary sources. They identify sources of information to help further enquiry including the use of ICT for research. In the junior lessons seen by inspectors, challenging tasks set by teachers engaged the pupils' productive learning. For example, in Year 4 pupils investigated artefacts left behind on a bus, looking for clues about the person who left them. They were very excited as they unpacked bags and became observant detectives, recording things about the styles, age and types of contents. Year 6 pupils studied information from the Dudley Census, listing names and occupations from a street in Dudley in 1891. Good use was made of enquiry skills in this lesson and pupils had a real understanding of the working lives of the Victorians, using primary evidence.
82. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have built up a sound knowledge of historical periods such as the Tudor and Victorian periods and Britain during World War II. Their work on those topics includes good factual accounts and empathetic writing such as diaries in the style of Anne Frank, accounts of the Blitz, play-scripts and letters, which describe the feelings of evacuees well. The use of discussion and role-play enhances learning well in all lessons seen. Teaching was good and some was very good. Pupils' ability to work collaboratively is a real strength.
83. The curriculum is very well supported with a wide range of visits, for example to the Black Country Museum, Dudley Castle, Avoncroft and the Dark Ages Trust for a Viking experience. Cross curricular links are strong, particularly with art and literacy. The subject is enriched through high quality displays, including a 'museum' area currently featuring Tudor costume and artefacts.
84. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. The subject leader is enthusiastic and knowledgeable and has successfully led the recent introduction of the *History Challenges* that widen pupils' knowledge and understanding in an interactive and enjoyable way. Pupils are eager to achieve their award.

## Geography

85. This subject was sampled during the inspection, but not in sufficient detail to provide a judgement on provision. From the evidence seen from a scrutiny of pupils' past work, standards are average in geography at the end of Years 2 and 6.
86. The subject leader is a firm advocate of geography and she works hard to ensure that pupils have access to a broad range of worthwhile experiences within the subject. The curriculum is good and geography is well resourced. As in other subjects, assessment, keeping track of achievement and monitoring and evaluation are all aspects of geography that require strengthening. Similarly, the use of geography to enhance achievement in writing and the use of ICT in the subject are ripe for improvement.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

### Art and design

Provision in art and design is **very good** and a strength of the school.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- By Year 6 standards are well above average and achievement is very good.
- Specialist teaching has been instrumental in the high standards achieved.
- The quality of display in communal areas is outstanding.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes towards the subject.

### Commentary

87. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils learn skills in a far more systematic way and art is an integral part of all subjects. The overall quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Key Stage 2, has improved and is now of a very high standard. A professional artist, working alongside pupils, has had a major influence on standards. He enables pupils to produce very high quality work, particularly in observational drawings and watercolours. A creative approach towards learning and very good opportunities for enrichment have a strong positive impact on provision and permeate every aspect of school life. Opportunities for older pupils to continue their work in a separate art room during lunchtime breaks have a high take-up rate.
88. Pupils in Year 2 achieve well and reach above average standards. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils' achievement is very good and standards are well above average. As pupils move through the school they experience an increasingly wide range of media. A particular strength is their depth of knowledge and understanding. Pupils develop ideas, investigate and evaluate their own work and that of others. They are impressively well informed about the work of famous artists. One boy in Year 2 was overheard enthusing about the work of Van Gogh. *'I like him, because he painted sunflowers'*. Pupils of all abilities are equally well catered for. Those that demonstrate exceptional talent are constantly challenged to achieve more. Their work shows great maturity and very high levels of skill. Pupils with special educational needs, many of whom struggle in other subjects, show a particular affinity with art and design. Pupils' attitudes are totally positive. Boys, in particular, show absolute concentration as they apply themselves to their work. For many pupils, art and design is their favourite subject.
89. The richness of the working environment, with every wall painted in the style of different artists, and artwork of the highest quality on display, makes a major contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school and aids their personal development. Examples, ranging from *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'* masks to paintings of *'The Snow Goose'*, demonstrate very strong literacy links. Delicate paintings of orchids in the rainforest area highlight the staggering impact of display. There is genuine aesthetic appreciation in much of the work and pupils' feelings are very well promoted through their exposure to such a diverse range of art. Artefacts complement artwork well. Computer generated pictures in the style of Escher and symmetrical pattern work demonstrate the effective development of art and numeracy skills through ICT.
90. Leadership and management of art and design are good. The headteacher is a pivotal influence in enabling pupils to have high quality experiences in art and design. She transmits her enthusiasm for the subject very effectively and combines with the subject leader to evaluate



standards and achievement through work on display. However, there is not the same focus on monitoring what pupils learn in lessons, in order to gain a firm grasp of standards, and this is an area for development.

### **Design and technology**

91. This subject was sampled during the inspection but not in sufficient detail to provide a judgement on provision. One lesson was observed in design and technology. From this and the evidence seen from a scrutiny of the pupils' past work, standards are average in design and technology at the end of Years 2 and 6.
92. Pupils have access to a broad range of worthwhile experiences within the subject including food technology and pneumatics and links are made with other subjects wherever possible, for example in a Year 5 project linking the making of musical instruments with science. Skills in fabrication using resistant materials are developed from Year 1 through to Year 6 and evidence shows well-made artefacts although the planning part of the process often lacks documented recording of the thinking that has gone into designs. Similarly pupils' evaluations of their work are only documented occasionally, limiting opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work and how they might improve next time. However, pupils' diaries of their work provide a basis for reflection which should be extended to ensure pupils' evaluations of their work are consistently carried out.
93. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The subject leader has yet to formally monitor standards and to further develop links between design and technology and other subjects.

### **Music**

94. This subject was sampled during the inspection, but not in sufficient detail to make a judgement on provision. Two lessons were observed. Additional evidence taken from scrutiny of previous work and teachers' planning indicates that standards are average at the end of Years 2 and 6.
95. Many aspects of provision are similar to those found during the previous inspection. Pupils receive a worthwhile range of experiences. They sing with enthusiasm in assemblies. A small number of pupils achieve good standards in flute and clarinet and the school has recently introduced a wind band. Pupils have good opportunities to participate in performances, ranging from carol concerts to recorder festivals. The choir is involved in many exciting local projects, such as the Youth Music Live Festival in July 2004. Outside visitors, such as *Eurythmy*, support learning well. There are good links with other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 5 made musical instruments as part of their science topic on 'Sound'.
96. The subject leader is enthusiastic but has not yet been given the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment is developing and photographic evidence provides some useful information about topics covered and standards achieved.

### **Physical education**

97. This subject was sampled during the inspection but not in sufficient detail to provide a judgement on provision. One lesson and one taught extra-curricular session were observed. From the evidence seen from a scrutiny of planning, photographs of pupils' work and discussions with the subject leader, standards are average in physical education at the end of Years 2 and 6 with an improving picture seen since the previous inspection.

98. Pupils benefit from a team approach to teaching and learning amongst the staff and the range of experiences which pupils can access is good. The subject leader has encouraged a number of staff to either lead or support aspects of the subject both in normal lessons and in extra-curricular activities. As a result there is a good team spirit and pupils' attitudes are very good as demonstrated during a gymnastics club held before school at which pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 led their own warm up activities. At the same club the teacher used pupils to demonstrate quality movements very effectively and the pupils made good progress. Good use is made of displayed photographs to both model good practice and to encourage pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities. Lunchtime activities are also linked into the physical education curriculum with training made available to lunchtime supervisors to provide worthwhile learning opportunities for pupils.
99. Links with high schools and outside agencies through *Sportlink* and *Dudley Performing Arts* enhance the curriculum opportunities for pupils. Physical education records are kept in each class and pupils are involved in self-assessment that involves keeping their sports certificates of achievement in their 'Me' folders. Detailed swimming records are kept and evidence shows that pupils not attaining the 25 metre standard in Years 3 and 4, are given further opportunity in Years 5 and 6.
100. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic subject leader who has good subject knowledge and has built an effective team of teachers and support staff to enhance the learning opportunities for pupils in physical education. The subject is set well for further improvement.

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

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE) is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The development of the whole child is absolutely central to the school's ethos.
- The delivery is across the whole curriculum and teachers take every opportunity to reinforce and cross-link messages.
- All aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted well.
- The planned introduction of a school council is a timely addition to increase pupils' understanding of democratic citizenship.

### **Commentary**

101. The school philosophy places the development of the whole child, and the promotion of high self-esteem, at the heart of its work. Aspects of PSHCE are implicit in all lessons, and at break times, when all staff take every opportunity to reinforce consistent messages and to provide very good role models. This is particularly noticeable in physical education, where a deliberate linking of PSHCE principles has helped to improve behaviour and attitudes significantly.
102. Assemblies are used well to promote PSHCE, with a spiritual focus and clear moral messages linked to social and environmental issues which the pupils embrace wholeheartedly. The school prayer sums up this attitude very well. In addition, the rewards of badges for completing challenges, and prizes for attendance, provide a very effective set of incentives which inspire the pupils to achieve well, and enable the whole school community to celebrate individual success.

103. The PSHCE programme includes lessons on healthy eating and personal safety, the dangers of smoking and drugs, and sex education. Older pupils think about moral dilemmas and are given the resources to help them make suitable choices in life. The accommodation is so beautifully decorated with high quality, inspirational scenes from the arts and history, that pupils are constantly reminded of what can be achieved with dedication and persistence, such that they learn to become respectful, sensitive and determined to pursue their own goals.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	3

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	5
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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