

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**HOWLEY GRANGE  
COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Halesowen, West Midlands

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103814

Headteacher: Mr R H Evans

Reporting inspector: Mrs M A Palmer  
20646

Dates of inspection: 14 -17 February 2000

Inspection number: 181833

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: infant and junior

School category: foundation

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: mixed

School address: Howley Grange Road  
Halesowen  
West Midlands

Postcode: B62 0HS

Telephone number: 01384 818395

Fax number: 01384 818396

Appropriate authority: Local Education Authority

Name of chair of governors: Mr D M Mackay

Date of previous inspection: 01/07/1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs M A Palmer	Registered inspector	Children under Five	The school's results and pupils' achievements
		History	
		Equal opportunities	
Mr L Kuraishi	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
			(Support - How well is the school led and managed?)
Mr A Allison	Team Inspector	Science	
		Music	
		Physical Education	
		Special Educational Needs	
Mr J Collins	Team Inspector	Mathematics	How well is the school led and managed?
		Information Technology	
		Design & Technology	
Rev E Milroy	Team inspector	Religious Education	How well are pupils taught?
			How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			(Support - How well does the school care for its pupils?)
Mrs S Howe	Team inspector	English	(Support - How well is the school led and managed?)
		Art	
		Geography	

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services  
Strathblane House  
Ashfield Road  
Cheadle  
Stockport  
SK8 1BB

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Howley Grange is a large community primary school with 418 pupils currently on the school roll. The school is situated on the southeast edge of the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley. It principally serves pupils from the local area. However, an increasing number travel to the school from farther afield. Currently 20 percent of pupils are from outside the school's immediate locality. The school is over-subscribed and in the last year 15 pupils have been admitted on appeal. Pupils come from a range of home backgrounds. Three percent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. This is lower than average nationally. All pupils have English as their first language. Three percent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is below the national average.

The school is situated in pleasantly laid out grounds, which incorporate the duck pond of the farm which originally occupied the site, as well as a Millennium Garden which is being developed by the older pupils. The school is organised into fourteen classes, with two classes for each year group from reception to Year 6. Children enter the reception classes in the September of January before their fifth birthday. Before entering school, most children have had experience of nursery or playgroup. At the time of the inspection, there were 25 children under five in the reception classes.

Pupils display a range of skills on entry to school, but, overall, attainment is in line with that expected for children of this age. Throughout the school, 69 pupils are on the register of special needs. However, only two have statements of special educational need. This is below the national average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Howley Grange is a very effective school in which the high standard of teaching is reflected in pupils' achievements. The school is very well led and managed and provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- By the time they leave the school pupils' attainments are above the national average in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils attain high standards in religious education and all foundation subjects, with pupils in Key Stage 2 achieving very high standards in information technology.
- Pupils are very keen to learn and their behaviour is very good.
- Teaching is good in a high proportion of lessons throughout the school. This level of consistency has a strong impact on pupils' learning.
- The headteacher gives outstanding leadership. He is very effectively supported by the deputy headteacher in promoting an exceptionally strong commitment to improvement throughout the school based on highly effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and taking effective action in response to findings.
- Relationships at all levels within the school community are very strong, supportive and constructive. The headteacher, staff and governing body work effectively together to ensure that the school's aims, values and policies are very well reflected in its work. This adds significantly to the quality of education provided.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and learn well.
- The curriculum is broad and well balanced. It is successfully enriched through a very wide range of extra-curricular activities. Links with the community make a very effective contribution to pupils' learning.

#### **What could be improved**

- Although information gained from assessment is used successfully to match work to the needs of high and low attaining pupils, particularly in the core subjects, it is not consistently well used to match work to the needs of some pupils of average prior attainment across the curriculum.
- The curriculum for children under five provides insufficient opportunities for some aspects of their creative development.
- Financial planning is insufficiently detailed to support elements of the school improvement plan beyond the first year.  
Procedures are not fully in place in the early years to track the progress of children across all areas of learning.

The school has no major weaknesses. The areas for improvement identify relative weaknesses which will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection. An excellent programme of monitoring of teaching and learning has been introduced. Actions taken as a result have had a direct impact on teachers' practice. The quality of teaching is now good, with very good teaching in a fifth of all lessons observed. In the last inspection, teaching was satisfactory overall and over half the teaching was good; but ten percent was unsatisfactory. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance is good and has resulted in a general raising of the level of challenge in work set for higher attaining pupils. Teachers' awareness of the needs of lower attaining pupils has also been raised. In addition the provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved and is now very good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved and are now consistently very good. These improvements in teaching and pupils' attitudes to learning are reflected in improvements in pupils' overall attainments by the time they leave the school. These are above the national average in English, mathematics and science, compared with standards at the last inspection, which were in line with the national average in English and science, and below in mathematics.

The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils have improved since the last inspection. A particular strength is the planning of the foundation subjects to ensure that subjects are addressed in depth despite reduced allocations of time. A worthwhile programme of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities successfully promotes pupils' enthusiastic approach to learning as well as their acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils have more opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility for aspects of the life of the school. They also benefit from increased opportunities to develop investigative and research skills. However, this area remains under-developed.

The task of setting targets and organising action to sustain and monitor improvements in the quality and standards of education has been very successfully tackled by the headteacher, senior staff and governing body. The school improvement plan now encompasses both short and longer-term priorities. Detailed estimates of time and associated costs are provided for the forthcoming year but they are insufficiently well identified for subsequent years.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A	A*	B	D
mathematics	B	A	A	C
science	C	A	B	C

**Key**

well above average      A

above average          B

average                    C

below average          D

well below average      E

On entry to the reception classes, most children show skills, knowledge and understanding which are in line with those expected for their age. Children make good progress and by the end of the reception year, most children have reached higher standards than those expected for their age. Pupils sustain their good progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 and by the time they leave the school they attain standards above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and make good progress at Key Stages 1 and 2.

The table above shows that in 1999, the average test scores of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 were well above the national average in mathematics and above the national average in English and science. When pupils' performance in 1999 is compared with that of pupils from similar schools, results were average in mathematics and science and below average in English. The school has responded actively to the analysis of test results and has taken steps to raise the attainment of pupils in English and mathematics, with particular emphasis on improving the standards of writing.

At the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999, pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics was well above the national average and above average compared with similar schools. In writing, pupils' attainment was above the national average and in line with similar schools.

Evidence from the inspection indicates that pupils are on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected standards in reading, writing and science. Evidence indicates that pupils are on course to attain the expected standard in mathematics.

In religious education, pupils exceed the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus at both key stages. In information technology pupils' attainment is above that expected for their age at seven and well above expected standards at eleven. Pupils attain consistently high standards throughout the school in art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils give of their best and are very eager to learn. They are highly responsive and responsible and show very good attitudes in all they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good in and around the school during lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Pupils have a mature respect for each other and for adults.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good. They respond very positively to opportunities to take the initiative and assume extra responsibilities. Relationships throughout the school are very strong and constructive.
Attendance	Levels of attendance and punctuality are very high.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching is good. In the course of the inspection, two thirds of the teaching seen throughout the school was good. The highest proportion of good teaching was observed in the reception classes and in Key Stage 2. One fifth of all teaching was very good. Teaching of this quality was observed in all phases of the school. A very small number of excellent lessons were also observed in Key Stages 1 and 2. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed.

The teaching of children under five is good. The teaching of English, including literacy, and science is good at both key stages. The teaching of mathematics, including numeracy, is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. The teaching of religious education is good at both key stages. In information technology, teaching is good at Key Stage 1 and very good at Key Stage 2. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is secure, enabling them to plan lessons and assess pupil's progress well. They are enthusiastic and clear about what they expect pupils to learn. Specific learning aims are shared with pupils in the most effective lessons, enabling pupils to understand what is needed for them to learn and make good progress. Questioning is used well to promote pupils' thinking and check their understanding. Teachers have high expectations which successfully promote pupils' active involvement and very good behaviour. In most lessons in the core subjects, tasks were well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils, effectively reinforcing and extending their learning. However, this was not consistently the case, particularly for the differing needs of average attaining pupils. In these instances some pupils' achievement in the course of the lesson was more limited.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. All areas of learning are incorporated for children under five. However, insufficient emphasis is given to aspects of creative development. At Key Stages 1 and 2 the carefully planned curriculum is broad and relevant and caters well for the wide range of pupils' interests and abilities. A very well balanced programme of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities enriches pupils' experiences and provides valuable practical opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very effective systems are in place to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are identified early, appropriate individual education plans are drawn up, additional support is provided and progress is reviewed regularly. These arrangements promote pupils' good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision for pupils' personal development, including all aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Very high quality assemblies and structured personal, social and health education sessions successfully promote pupils' personal development. Art and music make positive contributions to pupils' cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a very caring environment for all pupils. Procedures for monitoring child protection issues and pupils' welfare, including health and safety, are very effective (although the health and safety policy has not yet been ratified).

Good links between home and school successfully promote pupils' willingness to come to school and their very positive attitudes towards learning. Good relations are established in the early years when parents are welcomed into school as part of the new entrants' induction programme. Throughout the school parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and school activities in general. Most parents encourage their children's learning well at home, particularly in the early years, and are supportive of the work of the school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher leads by example in his outstanding commitment to school improvement. He works very effectively with the deputy headteacher in inspiring, motivating and influencing staff in creating and securing commitment to a clear educational direction for the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors successfully contribute to the effectiveness of the school. They are thorough in their approach and well informed about what is going on in the school and the challenges it faces.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The excellent standard of monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching has resulted in raised standards of pupils' attainment since the last inspection. The school very clearly identifies appropriate priorities, takes necessary action and reviews progress towards its targets very effectively.
The strategic use of resources	The school budgets systematically for all expenditure, has a growing awareness of best value principles and supports educational priorities well through careful short-term financial planning. Longer-term planning is not well developed. Specific grants are used well and their effectiveness regularly monitored.

The school is well staffed and equipped to teach the curriculum. Teachers have a good range of expertise and experience. Support staff contribute well to pupils' learning, particularly those with special educational needs. The accommodation is good overall and provides a stimulating learning environment. Additional building work and extensions in recent years have substantially enhanced facilities both for pupils and staff. However, some aspects are not satisfactory. Learning resources are good and their use is well planned to promote pupils' progress. Information technology is particularly well resourced and successfully supports pupils' learning across the curriculum.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Their child likes school.</li> <li>• The school expects their child to work hard.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable approaching the school.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• Their child is making good progress.</li> <li>• The behaviour is good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of activities provided for their child.</li> <li>• How closely the school works with parents.</li> <li>• Information about how well their child is getting on.</li> <li>• The amount of homework their child is set; a minority wanted more and a minority wanted less</li> </ul>

The inspectors endorse parents' positive comments. The school provides a good range of learning opportunities, which are very well supported by extra-curricular activities for older pupils. Parents are invited into school before their children enter reception and on occasions throughout each year. Help in classrooms and parents' support in encouraging pupils to read at home are welcomed. There is an annual report on each pupil's progress and three formal occasions when parents discuss their children's work with staff. Teachers are available to meet parents informally and regular newsletters keep parents abreast of school events. These arrangements are sufficient to enable teachers and parents to work together effectively and to keep parents well informed about their children. There are inconsistencies in the use of homework, but overall, teachers' use of homework is constructive and contributes appropriately to pupils' learning.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. Since the last inspection standards of attainment have improved overall. This is reflected in the results of National Curriculum tests for seven and 11 year olds in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Results in these subjects in recent years show the percentages of pupils attaining or exceeding the nationally expected standards by the end of each key stage to be above, and often well above, the national average. Inspection findings, based on lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' completed work, indicate that pupils are in line to maintain these standards and to achieve the challenging targets set in literacy and numeracy.
2. Pupils' results in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 1 were above the average for similar schools in reading and mathematics and in line with the average for similar schools in writing. Pupils' results at the end of Key Stage 2 indicated a dramatic increase in the percentage of pupils achieving the nationally expected standard of Level 4, but an equally dramatic drop in the attainment of the higher Level 5, particularly in English. The impact of this on pupils' average point scores meant that although Key Stage 2 pupils' results were in line with similar schools in mathematics and science, they were below the average for similar schools in English. Following thorough analysis of results, initiatives have been developed and rigorously implemented in recent years. These include a focus on the needs of higher attaining pupils, the formation of "booster" groups and "setting" for literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 2 for part of the year. Along with the effective implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies, these approaches have resulted in a rise in average attainment by the end of both key stages. Moreover, the results of a focus on the development of pupils' writing skills throughout the school are beginning to be seen.
3. Despite the fall in English at Key Stage 2 in 1999, the school has maintained overall standards above the national average in the core subjects in the last three years. This is despite the rise in the number of pupils with special educational needs and the increasing mobility of pupils into and out of the school. For example, the present Year 6 class contains over one-quarter of pupils who have joined the school since the age of seven, and one-fifth of pupils have left since Key Stage 1 assessment.
4. Children under five demonstrate a wide range of skills on entry to the reception classes. Overall, their attainment is broadly average. They quickly settle and make good progress in all areas of learning. By the age of five they attain the Desirable Learning Outcomes<sup>1</sup> in aspects of their physical and creative development. Most children exceed these standards in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and aspects of physical and creative development and begin working towards National Curriculum targets, particularly in English and mathematics. The reception class teachers place a considerable emphasis on developing children's language, literacy and numeracy skills and children make good progress in these areas. Children listen very attentively to adults when they give instructions or tell a story. Their teachers take every opportunity to develop their vocabulary and understanding and children respond very well, speaking increasingly clearly and distinctly. They handle books carefully. Higher attainers read simple texts confidently and most recognise common words and letter sounds and read and write their own names. Children recognise numbers, count effectively and use mathematical language confidently in the introductions to numeracy sessions. Their knowledge and understanding of the world develop well and they make a very good start in their understanding

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<sup>1</sup> Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education - SCAA/DfEE. These are goals for learning of children by the time they enter compulsory education at the age of five.

and use of computers. Children make good overall progress in their physical and creative development. This is evident in their confident use of movement and their enthusiastic response to music making and singing activities. However, they have fewer planned opportunities for structured role-play and exploring and selecting materials in art and craft activities, with the result that further creative development and learning do not take place. Children make good progress in their personal and social development. They establish very good relationships with each other and the adults working with them. Consequently they greatly enjoy coming to school and this makes a significant contribution to the good progress they make. They become highly absorbed in activities planned for them and concentrate very well. They play very co-operatively with their classmates, taking turns and sharing equipment.

5. The National Literacy Strategy has been successfully introduced and is now well established throughout the school. By the end of both key stages, pupils' overall attainment in English is above average. Pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress and the school is well placed to achieve the challenging targets that have been set for attainment in English. From the early stages, teachers encourage pupils to talk about their work and to listen carefully to adults and to each other. This develops well so that by the time they leave the school most pupils express their views and opinions confidently, using increasingly complex vocabulary accurately. The development of the basic skills of reading and writing receive significant attention. Pupils throughout both key stages make good gains in their reading skills. By eleven, most enjoy reading for pleasure and are developing clear tastes and preferences in their reading. They use reference books competently to support their work. There are regular planned opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills. There is also an effective focus on providing increased opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of extended writing, particularly at Key Stage 2. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their skills through work in other areas of the curriculum, including geography and history. This whole-school approach adds significantly to pupils' development and use of their literacy skills.
6. The school is successfully implementing the National Numeracy Strategy and pupils are making good progress in numeracy at both key stages. There are opportunities for pupils to talk about their work and to use and apply their mathematical understanding across the curriculum, for example in science and music, which successfully reinforces their learning. Pupils' attainment in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1 is in line with national average with a continuing increase in higher attainment. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment overall is above the national average. Consequently, pupils are in line to achieve the appropriately challenging targets set for them in mathematics. Teachers in Key Stage 1 plan carefully so that pupils build systematically on the good start made in the Early Years. Their skills of quick mental calculation increase rapidly and most attain a secure grasp of number facts and bonds, which they use effectively in their work. By the end of the key stage, most are secure with addition and subtraction and their understanding of shape and measuring are developing well. Pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to make good progress across all areas of mathematics and gain increasing competence in using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division in a range of situations.

7. In science, pupils make good progress as they move through the school. At Key Stage 1 pupils gain the basic skills of scientific enquiry. They learn to conduct and record simple experiments well and carry out tests and investigations sensibly, for example when learning about what plants need for life. At Key Stage 2, they plan and carry out investigations that are reliable and fair. They also learn to use their knowledge to make predictions and test them out, for example when working with electrical circuits. Throughout both key stages pupils achieve an increasingly broad and secure level of understanding related to life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes.
8. In information technology, pupils' attainments are above the national average by the end of Key Stage 1 and well above by the end of Key Stages 2. This is an overall improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are very well supported by the information technology co-ordinator and their own teachers who ensure that the school's extensive resources are very well used. As a result, pupils make good progress at Key Stage 1 and very good progress at Key Stage 2. Following a good start in the early years, pupils successfully build up high standards of word processing capability and a good level of competence across the range of information technology skills. They transfer, extend and reinforce their skills successfully through work across the curriculum, for example, Year 6 pupils use the Internet effectively for collaborative story writing with pupils in America.
9. Pupils' attainments in religious education at the end of both key stages exceed the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. This marks an improvement at Key Stage 2 since the last inspection, when standards of attainment were found to be average. They make good progress in learning about Christianity and other major world religions as they move through the school. Their knowledge and understanding are successfully extended by well-planned visits to places of worship including churches, a mosque and a synagogue.
10. Pupils attain good standards in art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education. This reflects an improvement since the last inspection in history at Key Stage 2 and an overall improvement in physical education and music at both key stages. In all other subjects, high standards noted in the last inspection have been maintained. There are no significant differences in the attainment or progress of pupils of different gender, background or ethnicity.
11. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good throughout the school. Support is well targeted and enables pupils to make good progress overall towards the goals set in their individual education plans. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive effective support and they are fully included in all activities. Higher attaining pupils benefit from the school's raised awareness of their needs, which has informed both long and short-term planning. This enables them to make the advances of which they are capable, and results in their attainment of the higher levels in national tests.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

12. Almost all parents feel that their children are happy to come to the school. Pupils are personally welcomed by the deputy head teacher and the staff every morning, which promotes their sense of being valued and safe. Inspectors noted that pupils arrived very enthusiastically, with a clear eagerness to be involved in school activities. They enter in a purposeful manner, which enables the teachers to start the registration briskly and commence the day without waste of time. Where lessons are particularly well prepared and pupils are very successfully motivated, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils generally respond very well to challenging work and to opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and personal development. They are proud to show their work to visitors and bring the trophies and certificates they have gained outside the school, to share with others during appropriate assemblies. Pupils carry out duties sensibly; for example, they play musical instruments during the assemblies. Pupils willingly

help with other duties around the school, such as tidying up after the lessons and acting as register and door monitors.

13. Children in the reception classes are well motivated and respond enthusiastically in lessons, confidently applying themselves to their tasks and activities. The school positively promotes diverse cultural traditions so that all children show very good attitudes to learning and enjoy their time in the school. This is strength of the school.
14. Behaviour throughout the school is very good and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning. During the well-presented whole school assemblies pupils listen to what others have to say, share in their achievements and are consistently very well behaved. Pupils walk about the school with a sense of purpose and hold doors open for adults and visitors. They are courteous and polite, confident about discussing their work, and proud to ask visitors to observe their extra curricular activities, such as playing in the school orchestra or the recorder club. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils behave admirably while on educational visits and represent their school favourably. Parents commended the pupils' good attitudes developed by the school and the way high standards of behaviour are promoted. There are very few written rules and pupils are well aware of what is expected of them. There is no evidence of bullying or racial harassment. The school has never had to suspend a pupil for unacceptable behaviour.
15. Pupils use their initiative well, planning successfully and sharing responsibilities. For example, with a minimum of adult intervention, older pupils set up and run the school "stationery shop" which is modelled on a commercial shop. Pupils confidently take part in the school presentations and play musical instruments during the assemblies. Pupils enjoy opportunities to engage in purposeful conversation during break and lunchtime and work effectively in the school tuck shop. They often give good support to younger children and share their toys willingly. Pupils work hard to achieve and accumulate house points for achievement. This has positive impact on sustaining good behaviour and maintaining high work standards. Opportunities for group activities are frequent and there are many examples of pupils co-operating and collaborating well, for instance in design and technology lessons, school orchestra practices and various sporting activities. These good levels of mutual support help to promote harmonious working environment throughout the school and develop pupils self esteem and leadership qualities. Almost all parents are satisfied that the school is successful in helping their children to become mature and responsible adults.
16. Attendance registers are completed appropriately twice daily and the school secretary ensures their safe keeping, which meets statutory requirements. The school works closely with parents and the Education Welfare Officer to maintain good level of attendance and punctuality. The school has maintained good levels of attendance and punctuality since the last inspection. There are no unexplained absences for the current school year.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching is good overall. In more than two thirds of lessons teaching is good or better. In one fifth of all lessons observed teaching was very good and in a small number teaching was excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed in the course of the inspection. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when ten per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory.
18. The teaching of children under five is good overall. Nearly two thirds of teaching observed was good or better. Teachers have high expectations and promote children's social skills well, successfully encouraging co-operation and respect for others' efforts, as in physical education and dance sessions, when they work closely together and observe each other's movements. Lessons are well planned, particularly literacy and numeracy sessions, where follow up activities are well matched to the learning needs of most children of differing prior attainment and promote their good progress. Carefully selected and relevant resources capture children's interest and encourage their developing concentration. Along with the variety of activities, including lots of singing and action rhymes, they promote pupils' enjoyment of school and motivation to learn. Teachers' instructions are clear and explicit and children respond well, for example in a music lesson when they carefully followed the verbal and hand signals of their "conductor". Class management is secure and effective. Pupils know what is expected of them and their behaviour is very good. Support staff are effectively deployed and positively support children's learning.
19. At Key Stage 1, almost half of the teaching observed was good or better. At Key Stage 2, teaching was good in three-quarters of lessons and in one third of these the teaching was very good. Excellent teaching was observed in a very small number of lessons at Key Stages 1 and 2.
20. Teachers generally have a good knowledge of their subjects and use it to enrich lessons and stimulate pupils towards high attainment. Lively, well-paced introductions engage pupils quickly in their learning. In the best lessons very clear lesson aims motivate pupils effectively and interest them immediately in the tasks. In a Year 5 literacy lesson, for example, the teacher very successfully conveyed enthusiasm for poetry to the pupils. As a direct consequence, they responded thoughtfully and sensitively to questions and were very keen to offer their own suggestions. They demonstrated knowledge of a wide range of forms of poetry including limerick, haiku, narrative and nonsense poems and were so involved with their work that they asked if they could continue with the tasks later in the week. The time spent in whole class discussion at the end of the lesson is used very effectively to sum up what has been learned, to lay the foundation for new learning and to celebrate the achievements of the pupils. Individual lessons are well planned and form part of clear sequences of teaching and learning which are set out in the good medium term planning to boost pupils' progress. As a result, pupils build well on previous learning. The tasks pupils are asked to do are usually well matched to their needs and teachers adopt strategies which successfully raise the attainment of pupils of all levels of ability. Sometimes follow-up tasks are pitched at several different levels, to allow pupils to complete suitably challenging work with success, as in a literacy lesson in a Year 3 class, focusing on the identification of silent letters and digraphs. High attainers tackled more complex words and examples, pupils with special educational needs were well supported by a classroom assistant and the class teacher gave support to other groups. However, although the provision of well-targeted work is usually good, this is not always the case. In some lessons, tasks do not sufficiently match the differing needs of average attaining pupils. Moreover, in a few lessons all pupils tackle the same tasks and their success is judged by what each individual produces; some have too little challenge and others make limited progress because the level of difficulty is too high.

21. Teachers plan good curricular links; for example, in a Year 5 history lesson on Ancient Greece the teacher used relevant guided reading about Greek Gods in the Literacy Hour to extend the pupils' understanding of myth and legend and widen their specialist vocabulary. At Key Stages 1 and 2 teachers group pupils in different ways during the week, sometimes by ability. From time to time, high attaining pupils are given the opportunity to learn in small groups as are pupils with special educational needs. All pupils are helped to make better progress. In a high attaining group of Year 2 pupils the children worked well at Level 2 recognising, spelling and using such challenging words as, "Christmas", "elephant", "alphabet" and "photograph". The pupils presented their work very well, marked it and worked at a good pace. In a numeracy lesson a set of lower attaining pupils was helped to understand the properties of angles by some very good direct teaching, with clear exposition given at an appropriate pace. The teacher knew the pupils very well and very successfully presented reinforcement tasks for those individuals who had difficulty in recognising obtuse and acute angles by sight. As a result pupils worked steadily at the variety of tasks, both co-operating with a partner and demonstrating sufficient mathematical confidence to work independently.
22. Teachers inspire pupils with a sense of industry, which is clearly evident in pupils' approach to their work. Lessons start on time and pupils move around the school purposefully. Teachers carefully plan the use of resources to promote pupils' learning most effectively; for example, Year 2 pupils examined a wide range of artefacts to reinforce and extend their understanding of life in Victorian times. Long-term planning incorporates a very well thought out programme of visits and visitors, which enlivens and extends teaching and learning. Teachers also make good use of appropriate project boxes borrowed from the schools' library services. Teachers successfully promote pupils' use of the information technology resources available to promote learning across the curriculum; for example, in history pupils in Years 5 and 6 competently used their research skills to extend their knowledge of diverse subjects including Greek gods and occupations in medieval England.
23. In the most effective lessons teachers share the aims of the lesson with the pupils and then use plenary sessions to check what pupils have achieved and enable them to extend their developing skills of self-evaluation. Occasional weaknesses occur in lessons which are satisfactory overall; for example, learning opportunities were more limited than necessary in a science investigation, because there was too much teacher direction. On the rare occasions when pupils are not fully involved, teachers were tending to accept responses from those pupils with their hands up volunteering, whilst a small number, though well behaved, were not fully participating in that part of the lesson and making less progress. Pupils' work is regularly marked and assessed. There is a clear policy on the marking of writing, which is carried out consistently. Throughout the school there are very good examples of extended comments on pupils' work, which help them to know how to improve and what to do next. However, in some instances teachers operate different systems of marking and recording assessed work in foundation subjects.
24. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is effective. Teachers have successfully implemented literacy strategies and lessons have a good balance of well-paced activities. Last year, the assessment of pupils' work and results of statutory tests indicated that ground had been lost in writing extended pieces, in the short segments of time in the literacy hour. In consequence, time is dedicated to extended writing each week and improved attainment is evident. Mathematics sessions start in a lively way, usually with quick-fire mental calculations which successfully spark pupils' enthusiasm, involvement in the lesson and enjoyment of numeracy. Teachers make brisk transitions from the introduction to other activities so that no time is wasted. Good on-going assessment is used to encourage and support pupils so that all make progress. Effective presentations and a high level of pupils' active participation, successfully engage their interest so that pupils listen carefully, have positive attitudes and readily volunteer answers to questions. Pupils with special educational needs are pleased with the opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

25. Homework is generally used effectively to extend and complement the work pupils do in school. It increases appropriately as pupils move through the school. However, there is some inconsistency from class to class, so that opportunities are occasionally lost for some pupils to reinforce their learning.
26. Pupils who are identified as having special educational needs have detailed individual education plans, which are used well by teachers in their lesson planning. The implemented plans enable pupils to make good progress across the range of provision. There is a termly review of the individual education plans and adjustments are made as necessary. Parents are kept informed. Both teaching and non-teaching support staff work effectively with the pupils in the classroom and outside the classroom, when pupils are withdrawn for support. For pupils on the special educational needs register at stage 5, the requirements of their Statements of special educational needs are carefully monitored. All pupils have full access to both the curricular and extra-curricular provision.
27. Overall throughout the school teaching has many more strengths than weaknesses. In all subjects of the curriculum the quality of teaching promotes positive attitudes to work, diligence and pleasure in learning. Pupils are secure in and around school and are very well behaved and courteous. A purposeful learning atmosphere is created in which pupils are expected to succeed and are secure in the knowledge that their teachers will help them to do so.

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

28. The curriculum for children under five incorporates all areas of learning and enables pupils to make good progress overall towards the Desirable Learning Outcomes. It also provides a secure foundation for Level 1 of the National Curriculum. High priority is appropriately given to children's personal and social development, language and literacy and mathematics. Good quality learning opportunities are also offered in sessions promoting knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical education and music lessons. Topics, such as "People Who Help Us", are very successfully planned and delivered, providing a wealth of meaningful and interesting experiences which successfully promote children's knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of areas of learning. However, although satisfactory overall, provision for aspects of children's creative development, such as role-play and art and craft, is less well developed.
29. The school provides a broad balanced and well planned curriculum, which promotes the progress of pupils of all ages very effectively. It has introduced the numeracy and literacy strategies successfully to the benefit of all pupils. Notably, the school has successfully maintained all foundation subjects and religious education as quality learning experiences, despite limitations of time. The school actively seeks to use curriculum time to best advantage. For example, the curriculum was often blocked to give pupils experience of some foundation subjects at different times in the year. However, pupils now study their subjects for a planned time each week, which helps them to build on their previous learning more effectively and sustain their developing knowledge. The school identifies weaknesses in the curriculum and action is taken to remedy them; for example, in religious education, the need for better continuity in pupils' learning from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.
30. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is much improved since the last inspection. No pupils are dis-applied from any areas of the curriculum. Pupils are well integrated into their classes and are able to keep in step with the full curriculum. Their learning is organised carefully so that after the introductory part of the lesson any withdrawal sessions are carefully aligned with the class's regular curriculum or pupils stay with the class working on materials tailored to their needs. At other times the curriculum is organised into sets as in mathematics and English to enable all to cover the same ground at an appropriate rate using particular

methods to establish and consolidate progress. When smaller groups are withdrawn from the full class lesson, often they work in adjacent areas, with classroom assistants and move in and out of the larger group easily. Similarly the curriculum for high attaining pupils is enriched by the provision of smaller groups at various times in the week when they can explore similar topics but at a deeper level. They are challenged to achieve and broaden their experience, as are all pupils. All pupils have equal access to the learning opportunities and are valued as individuals whatever their level of attainment.

31. Provision for pupils' personal social and health education is good. The school has successfully reviewed its programme and presented the findings to staff, although the policies for health education and drugs awareness await revision when the local authority's guidelines are published. A newly revised Sex and Relationships policy has helped to focus staff on curricular provision and developments. The local authority has undertaken a recent lifestyle survey of pupils in Year 6 and Year 7, in which the school participated as part of the Health Promoting School Initiatives. The school is committed to using the results to influence curricular provision in a way which closely meets the needs of the pupils as well as that of the locality. Recent initiatives involved winning a day's free milk for all pupils, after which about half the pupils decided to take milk daily; also, the school was featured on 'Midlands Today' for its work in health education, involving a 'Walk to School Day'.
32. The very wide range of extra-curricular activities in music, sport, arts and craft, benefit pupils greatly and form valuable links with the wider community. More girls than boys participate in extra-curricular music, in line with the national pattern. The school benefits greatly from participation in the Top Sports Initiative, for example the after-school basketball team is coached by a specialist tutor and won the local basketball championships in Birmingham last season. Provision for team sports is wide ranging and includes "touch rugby" and a girls' football team. Parents contribute to the running of activities, for example offering a 'junk modelling' arts and crafts group. Activities are well attended.
33. The extensive links which the school forms are a great strength, as they turn pupils' eyes to the outside world and bring visitors and the community into the school. From their time in reception pupils make many visits, for example to a farm, and throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils make visits and receive visitors to extend the curriculum and successfully promote learning in subjects such as history and geography. Pupils in Year 6 are involved with a local firm which makes roof rails for cars. Economic awareness is much enhanced as pupils meet directors, "clock in", visit the shop floor, study elementary aspects of industrial relations and eventually return to school to design a company 'logo'. The successful designers receive awards from senior managers at a celebration with parents. The Dudley Grid for Learning has given great impetus to pupils' curricular experience in information and communications technology. Pupils express real joy, awe and wonder in their increasing competence and in the knowledge they acquire.
34. The school has strong links with initial teacher training institutions, especially Newman College. A very successful scheme links students with individual pupils on art projects. The products are displayed in Birmingham Art Gallery and later in the year senior staff from Newman visit the school with students. Pupils introduce their student mentors to their parents and celebrate their success. This is one of many examples of the way the school works to celebrate continuity in education and to help pupils to look to the future.
35. Good links with receiving secondary schools promote pupils' progress through the curriculum well and ensure that pupils' work in their new school builds on what they already know. Secondary school staff visit to acquire detailed knowledge of pupils and to teach in the school; for example, physical education teachers take sports sessions. As a result of these links, teachers are well placed to deal quickly with any problems that might arise when pupils move on to their new schools.

36. The school very successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, through a range of activities, which reflect the values expressed in the school's aims. These findings mark an improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the promotion of pupils' understanding of the diversity and richness of other cultures, which was found at that time to be barely evident in practice.
37. Well-planned, high-quality assemblies raise pupils' awareness of spiritual, moral social and cultural issues. For example, an assembly led by Year 2 pupils celebrated many aspects of their curricular experience. These included, history, in the depiction of the hardships of child colliers in Victorian mines, scientific discovery, such as the Davy Lamp and a spirited dance sequence, which included the movements of the collier's working day. In other assemblies visitors skilfully presented well known bible stories in a refreshing way and children were successfully engaged, for example in the story of the 'Good Shepherd'. Pupils join in prayers and hymns and enter and leave in a very orderly way, sometimes accompanied by music prepared by older pupils
38. Within lessons pupils' spirits are lifted by good examples of art, as when pupils evaluated each other's efforts sensitively in representing a landscape in the manner of Seurat. Pupils expressed awe and wonder in information technology lessons, gasping as images arrive via the Internet. Similarly, they take real pleasure in their success at constructing repeating patterns in mathematics lessons. Around the school the high expectations which teachers hold of their pupils, both in terms of behaviour and their learning successfully promote pupils' moral development.
39. Pupils know right from wrong. From their first days in school they learn to take turns and to be fair in their dealings with others. School rules are restricted to the few that are deemed necessary. It is clear from pupils' behaviour around school that they know and obey them very well. They learn the rules of fair play in sport, in tests, in day-to-day encounters with each other and with their teachers. Co-operation is often emphasised, as is service to the community. The good examples of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and all staff give pupils confidence in dealing with difficulties and emphasise personal responsibility for behaviour and concern for others.

40. Pupils' social development is well promoted by an understanding of the past, for example in visiting the Yeoman's House locally and understanding how people related to each other. On a daily basis, pupils are given regular opportunities to work alone and in small and larger groups. They relate well to each other, move purposefully around school with very good self-discipline and often act imaginatively, for example, in movement in physical education lessons. Classes and individuals take responsibility for others with a real concern. Social concern is often unobtrusive; for example, pupils volunteer to clear the music room after general teaching to prepare it for music and instrumental teaching. In class teaching all pupils clear away quickly and sensibly when the activity changes.
41. Good provision is made for the cultural dimension of pupils' learning. Aspects of pupils' development are well promoted across the curriculum, particularly in history, art and music. Pupils learn about their cultural heritage through a range of activities, including visits to Oak House, Lunt Fort and the art gallery. Pupils also benefit from visits to school by theatre groups. Provision for multi-cultural awareness is much improved since the last inspection. Many subjects make very good contributions. In history pupils learn about Ancient Cultures such as the Greeks and Egyptians and come to appreciate the difference between myth and legend and historically established events. In religious education, good quality teaching of world faiths, including Christianity, helps pupils to appreciate their own cultural heritage and to respect others whose views are different. Pupils have opportunities to experience many examples of music drawn from across the world, which extends their knowledge and understanding of diverse cultural traditions.
42. Carefully planned daily acts of collective worship are of a broadly Christian character and fully meet statutory requirements. They contribute very effectively to the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

43. The school provides a secure and enjoyable learning environment for all its pupils. As a result the children are happy, confident and trustful in establishing very constructive relationships with adults and with one another. Parents responding to the questionnaire strongly agree that their children like to come to school and that they are happy or very happy at the school. All staff make it a priority to settle children well, beginning with the established and successful pre-school meetings between teachers and the carers. The school pays great attention to pupils' educational and emotional needs and provides a high level of support.
44. The teachers and support staff know the pupils well and are sensitive to their needs, providing appropriate opportunities for them to discuss any concerns or problems. Appropriate priority is given to providing for pupils' medical needs. A caring environment, sensitively supervised by the deputy headteacher, ensures that sick and vulnerable pupils are well supported. The school secretary makes good safety arrangements prior to pupils' educational visits out of school.
45. The staff has a firm commitment to inter-agency working and has developed good understanding of what can be contributed by other professionals. Effective use is made of support and advice from a range of sources where children have medical problems and where there are emotional, social, behavioural or learning difficulties.

46. The staff know the children and their families well and very strong relationships are established from the start. Class teachers informally monitor the personal and social development of children and pupils who behave well are awarded certificates and recognition is given in particular weekly assemblies. Parents are provided with appropriate reports on pupil's personal development.
47. The school has effective systems overall for tracking pupils' academic progress. However, although teachers assess children's skills shortly after joining the school and maintain records of progress in aspects of literacy and mathematics, procedures are not in place to fully track children's progress in all areas of learning through the early years. Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, the assessment programme is carefully planned and teachers are supported by a clear policy and practical guidelines. All pupils have review sheets which build up into a profile of attainment. The questions used for self-review grow in complexity as pupils mature. Teachers assess pupils' performance formally in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science termly and maintain clear records of progress in continuous assessment sheets, which record the National Curriculum levels which pupils achieve. The school plans to extend the system to cover all the foundation subjects by the summer term of this year. Progress is monitored throughout the year and formally reported to parents in the annual report. Teachers include success criteria in their schemes of work and assessment activities in their overall planning. In this way they successfully use the results of pupils' assessment as a measure of the effectiveness of their own teaching. Records are passed from class to class so that teachers are well informed and able to plan work at appropriate levels to promote pupils' good progress.
48. The school also makes effective use of non-statutory tests to keep track of pupils' progress and detect any under-achievement, at the end of Years 3, 4 and 5. The results support teachers' own, on-going assessments of pupils' performance. Information gained is used to detect weaker areas of learning and to modify planning; for example, a recent assessment showed some shortfalls in pupils' understanding of the properties of angles, so this topic was revisited and extended. Well-annotated pieces of work are kept in subject portfolios and used by teachers in determining standards of work and planning how individual pupils can improve.
49. Pupils maintain record of achievement folders, which include pieces of their best English and mathematics work which pupils select and review with their teachers. Review and evaluation sheets are compiled; pupils reflect on what they have achieved and set targets for the coming year. Parents are well informed about their children's progress. They are invited to add their written comments about the pupil's progress, interest and achievements to their record of achievement. Special meetings are held in Years 2 and 6 to explain to parents about the National Curriculum tests and how they can help their children to prepare well.
50. Procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality are very effective and well understood by parents and carers. Regular contacts with the education welfare officer and parent/carers are maintained. Administrative systems for promoting punctuality and attendance are good and have been sustained since the last inspection.
51. Very good behaviour in the school is promoted through a system of mutually agreed and simple classroom rules, which are incorporated in the whole school behaviour policy. All pupils know that regular poor behaviour will necessitate a meeting with parents. A system of incentives and sanctions is in place and is understood by parents and pupils. Pupils are aware that unkindness or harassment are not tolerated and children from different social backgrounds are taught to respect one another. No incidents of bullying were observed in the course of the inspection. Minor incidents of unacceptable behaviour are carefully observed and prompt intervention by the staff prevents future repetition.
52. The school complies very well with the locally agreed child protection policy. This provides clear instructions about action to be taken and agreed inter-agency

procedures. Teaching, support and midday staff are alert to the issues and there is a properly qualified and nominated child protection representative who has received training. Another member of the senior management team and midday supervisors are due for appropriate training to be arranged with the local authority. There are secure arrangements for first aid and the staff is aware of the procedures in case of an emergency. There are sufficient numbers of qualified first aiders. However, they need to renew their certificates.

53. The health and safety policy is in draft form, awaiting guidance from the local authority. It needs to be finalised, ratified by the governing body and appropriately implemented. There are suitable routines for sickness, more serious injuries, regular safety checks and appropriate attention to safe practices in lessons. The extensive sporting activities and good quality food provided by the school kitchen encourage pupils' adoption of a healthy and safe life-style. Staff promotes hygiene effectively as part of the curriculum and there is generally good attention to safety matters. All adults are aware of their responsibilities in providing a safe environment. The school caretaker regularly undertakes risk assessment and the building is generally kept clean and free from obstructions. Some minor health and safety issues were drawn to the attention of the school caretaker and the headteacher.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

54. The school has successfully maintained good relationships with parents since the last inspection. Almost all parents are satisfied with the quality of education provided and the standards achieved by their children. They strongly agree that teaching and behaviour are good and enable their children to develop positive attitudes to school and make good progress. Most parents feel that they are kept well informed about their children's progress and that pupils' annual reports are satisfactory overall. A significant minority of parents feels that the school does not provide an interesting range of extra-curricular activities. However inspectors noted that the school provides a very wide variety of sporting and musical activities outside the school hours and they are very well supported by pupils. Parents are satisfied that they can approach the school at any time and their suggestions and complaints are dealt with effectively. The inspection findings confirm that the parents and carers have easy access to the staff and that the school secretary operates an "open door" policy; this enables parents to express their views. Responses to the parental questionnaires were generally very positive.
55. Good links between parents and school contribute to pupils' very positive attitudes to school, which are instrumental in ensuring very good attendance and punctuality. Easy access to the class teachers and the headteacher ensures prompt attention to complaints and suggestions and helps resolve behaviour problems. A small but successful parents' association organises many functions for fund raising and social events, which makes a significant contribution to the resources and good ethos of the school.

56. The school encourages parents to take part in their children's learning and a number of them assist in class rooms by hearing readers or helping with other activities. Some parents help their children with homework and make positive comments in their children's homework diaries. Parents of children with special needs are properly involved in their children's education plans and the school provides them with the opportunity for participating in periodic review. There are three open evenings as well as many opportunities for informal meetings between parents, pupils and teachers. Regular newsletters are sent to the parents/carers informing them of school events. Information about the curriculum to be covered in their child's class is sent to parents termly, whilst parents of pupils in Years 5 and 6 receive half-termly bulletins.
57. The current school prospectus is written in "user friendly" language and contains most of the statutory information other than a minor omission for the rates of attendance and unauthorised absence, which should be included in the next publication. The governors' annual report to parents for the year 1998/99 meets statutory requirements.
58. There are effective and flexible induction procedures for new pupils in the school. At an introductory meeting the school establishes mutual expectations and responsibilities in respect of behaviour, attendance and needs for additional educational support. Parents with children in the early years are encouraged to come into school and stay with their children for a settling in period, as necessary. This helps to strengthen the developing relationship between parents and teachers.
59. A significant number of parents have signed home-school agreement and there exists an effective working relationship between parents, carers and the staff. This enables them to share information about children's attitudes to learning and the progress made.
60. Some parents are keen to be actively involved in the school life, regularly attend events and celebrations, accompany children on school outings and help with reading in the classes. Most are involved with their children's homework, but this is not consistent throughout the school.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

61. The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior staff are excellent and major strengths of the school. They make a significant contribution to the development of the school. The senior management team meets regularly to monitor the progress of pupils and the continuing development of staff. There is very effective delegation of responsibilities to all key staff. They are given time to fulfil them and the progress of their work is very effectively monitored by the head and deputy. In addition phase co-ordinators are able to release other classroom teachers to develop their subject responsibilities. Curriculum co-ordinators are given responsibility for their own budgets and have opportunities to develop their skills in providing value for money in their spending decisions. The professional development of teachers is guided by the targets which come from monitoring by the headteacher and deputy and the agreed priorities in the school improvement plan. All these factors are a major improvement since the time of the last inspection and have played a significant part in the rising standards achieved by the school over the past three years.

62. There are very good relationships evident at all levels throughout the school. All contributions are valued and the school is characterised by a caring, supportive ethos, which contributes to the shared commitment to succeed and raise standards further. This commitment is reflected at all levels and purposeful learning is a feature of lessons in the school. This commitment of all involved in the school, teaching and non-teaching staff, is the result of the excellent partnership between the head and the deputy and the way they lead and manage the school's development.
63. The school is well supported by its governing body, who share its commitment to improvement. The governing body is made aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and its progress through regular meetings and reports by the head and other senior staff. There are governors with special responsibilities for literacy, numeracy, pupils with special educational needs and information technology. Additionally, all other governors are 'twinned' with the other subjects of the curriculum and many make visits to the school. There is thorough discussion of the school's identified priorities in the school improvement plan and progress towards meeting its targets is regularly reviewed.
64. The headteacher and deputy rigorously monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the school. Issues arising are dealt with sensitively through discussion with the head, and through training and advice from the deputy in her role as staff development co-ordinator. Phase leaders and subject co-ordinators are involved as appropriate and the whole process makes a significant contribution to good quality of teaching in the school. The effectiveness of the school is monitored through detailed and careful analysis of its test results and the behaviour, and personal development of its pupils. Children's attainment is assessed on entry to school. There is careful monitoring of pupils' progress through the levels of the National Curriculum and this shows that most make good progress. Data from tests in years 3, 4 and 5 is used to build up a profile of all pupils and this information is used effectively to tackle any identified weaknesses. When identified, prompt action is taken to remedy them. For example, it was used to identify a weakness in pupils' writing in Key Stage 2 and this is now a specific target for improvement. It helped to focus the school's strong commitment to develop the needs of more able pupils, which has had a major influence on rising standards. The school improvement plan is used well to target any weaknesses with appropriate costings and resources identified, and planned monitoring and evaluations to review them. This is a major improvement from the time of the last inspection.
65. The governors contribute well to the financial planning and are sufficiently watchful over the outcome of expenditure or of development generally. The school is well placed to apply the principles of best value to its future spending. The balance of the school's annual budget is well monitored and an appropriate carry forward is available to meet future educational needs. The school has a short-term approach to financial planning, which makes it difficult for the management to adjust to changing circumstances such as changes to income relating to the number of children in the school or unexpected changes in the staffing structure. The school has worked hard to produce the two yearly improvement plan but it is not yet fully supported by an appropriately longer-term financial plan.
66. The school has effective monitoring and evaluation procedures and makes good use of information technology to access and use data, such as the school's monthly budget report. Financial administration is good and specific grants, for example for literacy "booster" classes, are used effectively to promote pupil's achievement.

67. The school is well staffed for the number of pupils on roll. The teachers have good qualifications and a range of experience. The school makes effective use of the part time teachers to support pupils, particularly in Years 2 and 6. A number of music and physical education specialists visit the school regularly making a good contribution to pupils' learning. Good use is also made of the non-teaching staff who support class teachers and pupils with special educational needs. The co-ordinators are particularly effective in their monitoring and advisory roles. The school is awaiting guidelines from the local authority on the induction of newly qualified teachers.
68. The school buildings generally provide good accommodation to meet the needs of the number of pupils although some classrooms are cramped and noisy. Recent building work has provided additional space and facilities which are of benefit to both staff and pupils. Use is made of every available space for teaching purposes. Groups of pupils are withdrawn from classrooms and taught in the communal areas with no evident difficulties. Although the hall is large it does not provide enough accommodation for all the school to assemble together satisfactorily every day and so assemblies are split into upper and lower school. The school has a very good library/computer suite. At the time of the last inspection the library had just been completed. However the recent need to provide more computer terminals has led to the division of the library accommodation. Use of the suite is timetabled for each class and it is also used by pupils at other times of the day. As the music room is separate from the main school building it provides opportunities for pupils to practise their composing and playing without disturbing others. However, this can be a disadvantage in bad weather. The school is clean and well maintained. It is enhanced by carefully mounted and well-presented examples of pupils' work across all subjects of the curriculum. In the school grounds there are areas for pupils to sit in social groups, the flowerbeds are well kept and the pond is clearly marked for safety purposes.
69. Resources for learning are good in all areas of the curriculum and are accessible to pupils. However, some of the equipment for children under fives is well worn and tired. The number and quality of the computers in school are particularly good. The subject co-ordinators have audited the resources and are responsible for the purchase of new equipment within a specified budget. The storage areas are tidy and well maintained: this is an improvement since the last inspection.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

70. Howley Grange is a very effective primary school with no major weaknesses. In order to extend the current achievements, the following points for improvement should be considered in the action plan:

Increase the effectiveness of assessment by:

- Sharpening the focus of assessment of pupils of average attainment within classes, to ensure that work across the curriculum more consistently matches their needs. (paragraphs 20, 88, 102)
- Extending and developing procedures of assessment for under fives, to more fully track the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding across the areas of learning. (paragraph 7)

Improve the curriculum for children under five by:

- Providing further opportunities for children to explore, and express their ideas and feelings in creative ways. (paragraphs 28, 84)

Strengthen financial planning by:

- Ensuring that sources of funding for development initiatives are more accurately identified beyond the forthcoming year, in line with the School Improvement Plan. (paragraph 65)

71. In addition, the school should consider the following more minor points for action:

- Extend the good practice in some classes of using homework well to support learning by making more consistent use of homework to support learning in the classroom, particularly at Key Stage 2. (paragraph 25)
- Ensure the revised health and safety policy is ratified by the governing body and appropriate training is provided for staff. (paragraph 53)
- Ensure that information is published in the prospectus, according to statutory requirements. (paragraph 57)
- Plan improvements to minimise the effects of the unsatisfactory aspects of the accommodation, where possible. (paragraph 68, 82)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	84
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	50

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	18	45	35	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	418
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A	14

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	69

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	95.3
National comparative data	94.1

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	28	31	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	22	24	27
	Girls	30	29	30
	Total	52	53	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 ( 94 )	90 ( 94 )	97 ( 94 )
	National	82 ( 77 )	83 ( 81 )	87 ( 83 )

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	26	28
	Girls	30	30	31
	Total	53	56	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 ( 98 )	95 ( 93 )	100 ( 94 )
	National	82 ( 81 )	86 ( 83 )	87 ( 87 )

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	39	20	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	30	35	36
	Girls	18	17	20
	Total	48	52	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 ( 86 )	88 ( 81 )	95 ( 90 )
	National	70 ( 65 )	69 ( 59 )	78 ( 69 )

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	30	32	32
	Girls	17	18	19
	Total	47	50	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 ( 82 )	86 ( 86 )	89 ( 90 )
	National	68 ( 65 )	69 ( 65 )	75 ( 71 )

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	7
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	403
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

*This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	30

#### **Education support staff: YR - Y6**

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	180

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A

Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A

Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998-1999
	£
Total income	703,590
Total expenditure	683,033
Expenditure per pupil	1,607
Balance brought forward from previous year	13,877
Balance carried forward to next year	34,434

## *Results of the survey of parents and carers*

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	418
Number of questionnaires returned	282

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	35	4	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	45	6	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	46	3	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	55	11	3	5
The teaching is good.	51	44	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	49	14	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	36	4	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	37	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	38	45	13	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	62	32	2	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	51	4	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	36	25	4	14

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

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

72. Children join the school in the September or January before their fifth birthday. They are admitted as part of a well-planned induction programme which incorporates meetings with parents and a series of half and full day visits for children prior to starting. This allows them to be introduced gradually to school and enables links with home to be quickly established. Children soon feel secure and confident. They are assessed within their first half term of full time school and their standards are often above the LEA average in personal and social development and counting. At the time of the inspection, there were 25 children under five in the reception classes. A wide range of attainment is represented in the school's intake. On entry they demonstrate skills in line with those expected nationally for children of their age. Boys and girls of all backgrounds settle well and make good progress. In aspects of physical and creative development they successfully achieve the standards outlined in the Desirable Learning Outcomes. In personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and aspects of physical and creative development children often exceed the standards expected by the time they are five. Those with particular needs are sensitively supported and make progress in line with other children under five. These findings reflect those of the previous inspection, when attainment at five was found to be generally above the national average.

#### **Personal and social development**

73. Children, including those who had been in school for only a few weeks, were happy, settled and well used to the classroom systems. They are confident and show a steadily increasing degree of independence in their response to activities and daily routines. They change for physical education and put on their own coats before going outside, with a minimum of adult help. They respond readily to their teacher's questions, in the class group. They settle to tasks and concentrate very well for extended periods of time. Children show consideration for others and handle books and equipment carefully. They are able to co-operate with one another and take their turn when using equipment. When moving around school, as when they go to the hall for assembly or physical education, they follow instructions well and are very sensible. The children are very well motivated and their behaviour is very good.
74. The reception class teachers have a sound understanding of how young children learn. Along with support staff, they establish very good relationships with the children and make the children's activities fun. The reception classes present a welcoming environment in which the children settle securely into school life. Carefully planned topic work successfully promotes children's self-awareness, as they learn about themselves and other people through topics such as those focusing on "feelings". Teachers consistently praise their efforts and celebrate their work, which is presented around the classroom. This encouragement promotes the development of children's self esteem and pride in their work.

## Language and literacy

75. Children quickly learn to enjoy stories and rhymes. They listen attentively and most of them readily join in with repeated choruses. Within the class group, most children express themselves confidently, using appropriate vocabulary. When asked questions about the shared text in the literacy hour, children communicate their ideas simply and effectively. They are interested in books and keen to share a story. They understand that words and pictures convey meaning. Most children begin to recognise their names and a number of common words. By the time they are five, children are familiar with the characters in their reading books and some children are well launched on the early stages of reading. They carefully practice the formation of letters and learn to identify the sounds they make. By the time they are five most write their own names and some express their ideas independently in writing, using simple words and phrases.
76. There are strengths in the quality of teaching and provision in this area of learning. There are also weaknesses. Children are successfully introduced to the Literacy Hour. Stimulating texts capture their interest and promote their enjoyment of books and reading. Planned follow-up activities appropriately maintain their involvement and reinforce their learning. However, although a variety of tasks are organised, they are not consistently challenging enough for all children. Moreover, opportunities for children to extend and explore imaginative language through role-play are not sufficiently well structured or developed. Teachers carefully carry out statutory assessments and maintain records of children's progress in aspects of their language development. They use this information when directing support to individual children, but it does not consistently inform the planning of future work for different groups.

## Mathematics

77. Children develop a sense of number, order and sequence through daily counting routines, activities and rhymes, as well as increasingly structured sessions, introducing children to the requirements of the National Numeracy Strategy. They make good progress in learning to sort by shape and colour, and understand mathematical language, such as, "more", "less", "bigger" and "smaller". They make very good progress in developing numeracy skills and by the age of five most children recognise and accurately record numbers to 10. Children demonstrate a wide range of attainment, with some competently carrying out basic computations, such as adding numbers within ten, whilst a small number of lower attaining children work on making sets of three objects of the same colour.
78. The quality of teaching and provision is good and all opportunities are taken to develop children's awareness of mathematics. The reception class teachers plan carefully to ensure that children have access to a sufficient range of first-hand and formal and informal practical experiences to promote their use of appropriate language and to secure their mathematical understanding. The teachers also successfully employ a repertoire of lively number songs, notably the Number Rhombi, to motivate and sustain children's interest in this area of learning. They regularly assess children's work as they progress through the commercial mathematics scheme. The information gained is used appropriately to plan the next stage of children's learning and to guide support. However, opportunities are missed to use group work as a time to observe and record what children know and can do.

## Knowledge and understanding of the world

79. Children successfully acquire a sound knowledge and understanding of their world through a good range of stimulating activities. They learn about the properties of materials such as sand, water and play dough by handling them. Their understanding of materials is further promoted through topic work; for example, when thinking about, "People who help us", they examined a fire fighter's uniform; they made good progress in the use of appropriate vocabulary such as "rough", "smooth", "heavy" and "light" and learned that some materials are waterproof. They use the computer very well to support their learning and acquire high standards of competence by the time they are five; for example, they control the mouse to move graphics on the screen in number, language and art based programs.
80. Good teaching of interesting topics, supported by stimulating experiences, successfully promotes children's learning; for example, teachers promote children's awareness of the differences between the past and the present through considering old and new toys, particularly focusing on teddy bears. Similarly, teachers lay the foundations for children's geographical learning, through topics such as, "Where I Live". However, opportunities are missed for planning the reception classrooms to incorporate materials and activities which would stimulate children's curiosity and learning by giving them the chance to explore and select from among them.

## Physical development

81. Children move safely and confidently in and around the reception classrooms. They enjoy regular opportunities to be active in physical education lessons, using a range of apparatus and equipment and demonstrating confidence in jumping and balancing. Children control their actions well and respond imaginatively to contrasting musical moods in dance sessions. By the time they are five, they demonstrate a good awareness of space and change speed and direction safely. Most children make good progress in pencil control and are able to use tools and a range of markers with growing dexterity. They have opportunities to use large and small construction materials and equipment and children demonstrate satisfactory manipulative skills. When given the opportunity to do so, children also use scissors appropriately and safely in creative activities. However, very few incidents were observed in the course of the inspection. Children do not have access to a secure outdoor area but they have regular opportunities each day to experience the space in the playground.
82. The quality of teaching and provision is good in aspects of physical education. In particular, teachers make good use of the facilities provided by the large, well-equipped hall. In the classroom they plan practical activities which successfully promote children's pencil control and basic handwriting skills. They give less emphasis to planning activities which develop skills in handling and controlling a broader range of tools. The absence of access to a specific secure outdoor area restricts teachers' opportunities to provide a broader range of activities as an effective outdoor extension to the classroom learning environment.

## Creative development

83. Children listen to, sing along with and carry out the actions to a wide range of songs and rhymes. In music lessons they make good progress, demonstrating their familiarity with untuned percussion instruments, creating appropriate sound effects to accompany a story about "The Dustbin Man" and responding appropriately to signals from their "conductor". They express themselves confidently in paint, for example in the self-portraits around the classroom, linked to their topic on "Myself". They also enjoy opportunities to express their ideas imaginatively in the role-play area. During the inspection, there were very few observations of children making simple models and demonstrating such skills as cutting and sticking skills.
84. The quality of music teaching is good. However, planning is insufficiently clear and specific about what children are to learn in other areas of this provision. Consequently, the preparation and organisation of activities which promote children's free expression and use of imagination has limited impact on their learning of art and craft skills and techniques.

## ENGLISH

85. The results of 1999 National Curriculum tests and tasks for seven-year-olds indicate that overall pupils' attainments at the end of Key Stage 1 were well above the national average in reading and above the national average in writing. Although the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level in reading and writing had fallen, the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 3 had risen. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' results were above average in reading and average in writing. Results at the age of eleven in the 1999 tests show that the percentage of pupils attaining the required national target level was above the national average. However, the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 5 declined to below the national average. Moreover, pupils' overall results were below those found in similar schools. The school has carefully analysed these results and set as a priority the need to develop pupils' writing skills at both key stages. Targets for improvement have been set and progress towards achieving them is already evident.
86. Current attainment as seen during the inspection and from the scrutiny of pupils' completed work indicates that standards are above national averages at both key stages. This marks an improvement since the last inspection.
87. Over the last three years, despite a fall in the results of tests in writing at Key Stage 2 and the overall level of attainment at Key Stage 2, standards above the national average have been maintained. This has occurred in the context of increasing numbers of pupils with special educational needs and the impact of rising numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school, other than in reception and at the end of Year 6. The inspection findings also indicate no significant variation in the attainment of pupils of different gender, background or ethnicity. Combined data show no discernible difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress towards the targets detailed in their individual educational plans.

88. Pupils enter school with average language and literacy skills. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout the school, reaching above average levels of attainment by the time they leave. Teaching is of a good standard resulting in improvements in the pupils' standard of attainment. The curriculum is broad and well balanced allowing systematic development. Tasks are generally challenging although there is a need for more consistent provision of planned activities closely matched to the needs of the pupils, particularly those of average attainment within the class. Through the careful analysis and monitoring of writing activities progress for all pupils, but in particular for the higher attaining pupils, is evident. Parents generally give their children good support, particularly in reading in the early years. This further enhances progress and promotes pupils' positive attitudes towards reading. The school has successfully implemented the literacy hour. Pupils' literacy skills are developed well in many areas of the curriculum, with particularly good examples of written English across a range of subjects, such as history.
89. Standards in speaking and listening are good. In Key Stage 1 particular attention is paid to improving pupils' verbal abilities through retelling familiar stories such as "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," encouraging pupils to listen carefully, offer opinions and share knowledge. By the end of the key stage most pupils can speak confidently to various audiences, which was evident in the well delivered Year 2 assembly on the life of children in Victorian times. Class discussions at the beginning of the literacy hour are often lively and stimulating although there is a tendency for some to be over-long. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are encouraged to make comparisons and form their own opinions through discussion. They explore feelings and emotions, for example in the poems of Walter de la Mare, and are introduced to choral reading. Pupils show respect for the speaker and their opinions. The plenary sessions of the literacy hour are also used effectively, giving different groups of pupils opportunities to read their stories and to describe and explain their tasks to the other pupils.
90. By the time pupils leave the school most have attained a good standard in reading. Most pupils read at an appropriate level for their age and stage of development. Pupils in Key Stage 1 enjoy reading books; they can retell stories and can predict what might happen next. Most use phonic and picture clues and self correct. The higher attaining pupils read a variety of storybooks. Many can name a favourite book and know the author; they have some knowledge of library skills. Most pupils take their books home regularly to practise their skills, together with a reading diary for parents and teachers to exchange comments. The class reading sessions in the literacy hour are well used with teachers focusing on different ability groups using appropriate books. Books from various schemes are banded together and have been graded into ability levels. The lower attaining pupils are given guidance when choosing books from their banded box. Pupils in Key Stage 2 also enjoy reading. They choose books from a wide range available, are able to discuss events and characters and use inference and deduction. The higher attaining pupils often use the blurb before deciding to read a particular book. Pupils sometimes keep lists and write critiques of the books they have read. The teachers ensure all pupils read books at a suitable level. After an analysis of the reading records of the pupils in Year 6, teachers target the more fluent readers to ensure they are sufficiently challenged. This was a key issue in the last inspection report. Pupils of all ages read with good expression taking note of punctuation to add meaning. The class and group sessions in the literacy hour are well used in both key stages with teachers focusing on different ability groups using appropriate books. Pupils have regular phonics teaching during the literacy hour.

91. The quality of pupils' writing is good in both key stages. There is excellent evidence of this in the Millennium diaries produced by each class with every pupil contributing a piece of neat well written work to their class diary. By the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils can sequence their sentences logically in extended pieces of work which are interesting and informative. Their writing is fluent with sentences delineated with capital letters and full stops. The higher attaining pupils use speech marks and exclamation marks correctly. Most write legibly using cursive script. The spelling of words in common use is usually accurate. As pupils move through the key stage a variety of writing is introduced. They retell familiar stories such as "Little Red Riding Hood" using picture frames and narrative, write and sequence lists, compose their own poems and write letters. They also write imaginatively, for example when writing about life as a chimney sweep in Victorian times. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are introduced to a wide range of styles of writing. Factual writing is explored in Year 4 with pupils writing about helping birds survive the winter, and then making their own leaflet explaining how to look after an animal, using the techniques of a non-fiction writer. Pupils are introduced to planning and redrafting and encouraged to use glossaries to extend their knowledge of language. Pupils in Year 5 wrote poems about school life using several poets as a stimulus. In Year 6 the imaginative writing of pupils included flashbacks, good use of connectives and time phrases. Pupils use alliteration, simile and metaphor in their written work. The slight drop in the standard of writing in Key Stage 2 is being addressed through timetabling a specific session for writing practise and by using part time teachers to support and enhance learning, particularly for the higher attaining pupils.
92. Pupils' response in English lessons is good. Behaviour is usually good or very good with pupils showing interest in their work and settling to tasks quietly and quickly. They are keen to contribute to class discussions and enjoy working together. Occasionally pupils become restive when the introductory task is too long. The teachers respond positively and sensitively to the pupils, which instils confidence and allows pupils to express opinions and explore feelings. In the best lessons pupils display high levels of concentration and work at a brisk pace. Many pupils show interest and enthusiasm for literacy, which was particularly evident in a Year 6 poetry lesson.
93. The quality of teaching overall is good. At both key stages teaching is often good or very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers' planning is thorough and well matched to the objectives of the National Literacy Strategy. Learning objectives for each half term are outlined and act as assessment points for the pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to stimulate pupils' learning through asking and answering questions. Teachers encourage pupils to listen carefully and welcome their questions and contributions. Some of the best learning occurs when teachers use skilful questioning to enable pupils to use their knowledge and apply it to new situations. Lessons are well managed and usually proceed with pace. The aims of each lesson are displayed on the blackboard, often split into achievable objects with the tasks for different groups clearly outlined. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils; they expect good standards of behaviour and work and are rewarded with interesting work, neatly presented and generally of a high standard. The school has a policy for marking spelling and grammar. Most teachers support pupils' progress with positive comments but the best progress is evident when teachers not only support but also analyse the work and inform the pupil how to make improvements. Pupils' work is regularly assessed by the class teacher and monitored by the co-ordinator. The school has a portfolio of agreed assessed work. Internal reports are made on each pupil each term, which inform future planning. There is good liaison between teachers as pupils move up the school. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good overall with detailed individual educational programmes taking account of the pupils' needs. Homework is used to consolidate learning and pupils regularly take home books to read.

94. The co-ordinator and headteacher have analysed the results from the last three years and have set targets. The literacy timetable has been reorganised to allow more time for pupils to complete extended pieces of writing. The co-ordinator has a clear view of how to extend teaching and raise standards and teachers have been informed and supported. Teachers' planning is monitored. Resources are good and include plenty of books, both fiction and non-fiction. Reading books are banded to aid systematic progress. The library is used regularly by all classes providing opportunities for improving study skills. Literacy is being developed well through the curriculum, for example, detailing instructions and giving accounts of investigations in science, describing the journey of a river in geography and writing a letter from the point of view of an historical figure in history. Pupils use their information technology skills well to enhance the presentation of work; for example, Year 5 pupils used a computer publishing program when working on the final draft of their poems. Some pupils in Year 6 are using the Internet to write stories in collaboration with pupils in America. All the classrooms and communal areas have plenty of print for pupils to read.
95. Literacy is taught daily, and the school's provision for literacy is good. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development with opportunities for pupils to work together, to experience the eloquence and rhythm of language, to discuss moral issues, to listen to storytellers and visiting theatre groups. The teaching of the subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

## **MATHEMATICS**

96. The 1999 National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds show that although the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level for their age had fallen slightly, it still remained above the national average. This slight decline, however, was more than offset by an increase in the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 3, which was above the national average. Results at the age of eleven in the 1999 tests show that the percentage of pupils attaining the required national target level was well above the national average. Although the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 5 declined slightly from the previous year it was still above the national average. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection when the attainment of a significant proportion at this age did not meet national expectations. Current attainment as seen during the inspection and from the scrutiny of work already completed suggest that these trends are likely to be maintained and that the school is well placed to achieve the targets set for it in mathematics. Attainment by the age of eleven is above the national average and that at age seven is in line with national average with a matching increase in higher attainment. This is an overall improvement from the time of the last inspection.
97. The good standards of the past three years are being maintained. This needs to be viewed in the light of increasing numbers of pupils with special educational needs and the effects of the rising numbers of pupils who come to and leave the school between reception and Year 6. Over the three years 1996 to 1999 the overall performance of pupils in mathematics was well above the national average at both ages seven and eleven. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys or girls. The improvement in higher levels of attainment has been influenced by the school's policy and the work done with more able pupils for the last two years. The policy of setting groups of pupils by ability for part of the year, the use of 'booster' classes and the current policy of employing additional support staff to replace a member of staff on maternity leave are enabling staff to closely target the progress of all groups of pupils, particularly in Years 2, 5 and 6. The very careful analysis of test results in all junior classes helps teachers to focus closely on the needs of their pupils. All this is enabling pupils to achieve a good rate of learning in mathematics and helps to account for the rise in average attainment at eleven and the rise in higher attainment at seven. Further explanation for the school's improvement can be seen in the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, which has provided a new impetus to the teaching, and learning of the subject.

98. Pupils with special educational needs throughout the school are given good support by their class teachers and other learning support staff. They make good progress in relation to their prior learning and develop their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts as they progress through the school.
99. From their time in the reception class children under the age of five are introduced to number through a series of well planned and resourced activities. They are continually encouraged to count and relate numbers to everyday happenings in the classroom so that by the time they move to the programmes of study of the National Curriculum, they are confident and capable in their number work. This work is well developed in Years 1 and 2 through work in number bonds up to and beyond 20, addition and subtraction of money. By the age of seven more able pupils can add tens and units numbers together when it involves 'carrying' over to the tens column. The newly introduced Numeracy Strategy is having a positive impact on the ability of most pupils to recall number facts and bonds quickly, and all lessons seen were characterised by the high level of enjoyment by pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when it was judged that too little time was devoted to other areas of mathematics, most pupils by the age of seven can draw lines of symmetry on reflected shapes, and the lower attaining pupils can describe the basic properties of 2D shapes. All pupils are able to record data pictorially and use a tally chart to record data on birthdays before constructing a simple bar graph. Most infant classes make good use of information technology to support work in mathematics and plenary sessions are used well to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills.
100. By the age of eleven pupils demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding of number skills in the four operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. More able pupils are able to use the long multiplication and division methods in their work and most pupils are developing their own strategies for problem solving. Oral sessions at the start and end of lessons develop pupils' skills of mental calculation and pupils enjoy the challenges that teachers set.
101. Pupils across the key stage show a desire to improve and grow increasingly confident in their use of number. For example, a Year 3 class was collecting their own data prior to plotting the information on a graph. Year 5 pupils enjoyed a 'game' of addition of tens and units where they had to select numbers to be given to their opponents for addition towards a specific total. Pupils make good use of calculators to check their answers as seen in a lesson on angles in Year 4. This work is well developed so that by Year 6 more able pupils can use a protractor to measure and draw angles with accuracy. More able pupils in Year 5 were exploring the effects on shapes when they are rotated and in Year 6 homework is used well to reinforce the lesson objectives. The use of correct vocabulary is emphasised throughout as was seen in a lesson with lower attaining pupils following the same topic on angles. This use of language is a strong feature of many lessons in the school so that by the end of the key stage most pupils are able to explain their work clearly.

102. During the period of the inspection no unsatisfactory teaching of mathematics was seen. In 70 per cent of lessons seen teaching was good or better, and it was very good in 20 per cent of lessons. This is an improvement on the last inspection when only a third of teaching was judged to be good. Teachers show a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject, which they use well in questioning of their pupils and in giving clear, detailed instructions. This enables pupils to settle quickly to their tasks and keeps the pace of learning moving forward. Most teachers make good use of resources to motivate pupils and use assessment during lessons to check on pupil's progress and provide appropriate support when needed. The use of repetitive work noted in the last report was not seen and all pupils enjoy the challenge and pace of lessons. This shows in the increased rate of learning that most pupils achieve. All this helps lower attaining and most average pupils to make steady progress in their learning during lessons. More able pupils often show very good progress over lesson times. The use of time in lessons is generally good, and ensures lessons proceed at a brisk pace. As pupils strive to complete their work, this increases their effort and rate of learning. Where lessons are less than good there is sometimes a lack of clear learning objectives identified in planning, the pace of the lesson is pedestrian rather than challenging, and there is a lack of different activities more closely focused on the different levels of abilities within the class.
103. Pupils' numeracy skills are reinforced effectively in areas of the curriculum other than mathematics. Notably, pupils record data in science and geography in table and graph forms. In music they are encouraged to count the beats and very good use is being made of individual learning programs for a number of Year 6 pupils in information technology.
104. The subject is managed effectively by the co-ordinator who has led in-service training for other staff in the new numeracy strategy. Along with the commitment to raising standards shown by the staff of the school as a whole, this has contributed to the rising levels of attainment in recent years. Very good use is made of the analysis of test data to inform teachers' planning effectively. The teaching of mathematics has been closely monitored by the head and deputy and the resulting information shared with the co-ordinator. Currently the co-ordinator monitors the subject through teachers' planning but there are plans for him to be released in the immediate future to monitor the teaching and learning in the subject more closely. Continuity of learning is monitored through end of year meetings between year groups and all data and information is recorded and passed on to the next class teacher. Resources are good and have benefited from the recent focus on the subject in the school improvement plan. They are well sorted and stored so as to be accessible, thus helping the teaching and learning of the subject across the school.

## **SCIENCE**

105. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 indicate that the number of pupils attaining the national expectation (Level 2) was very high in comparison with the national average. The number of pupils achieving Level 3 was broadly in line with the national average. However the number of pupils achieving Level 3 was below the average for similar schools. In the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests the number of pupils achieving the national expectation (Level 4) was well above the national average and the number achieving Level 5 was close to the national average. The number of pupils achieving Level 4 in the tests was above the average for similar schools, but the number of pupils achieving Level 5 was below the average for similar schools. Since the previous inspection there have been improvements in attainment at both key stages compared with the national average. The evidence suggests, however, that the higher attainers are not being sufficiently challenged, particularly at Key Stage 1. The previous report highlighted the fact that investigative skills were not as well developed as other aspects of the science curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 2. This was not the case during the current inspection and pupils were, for example, observed effectively investigating the effect of exercise on their pulse rate.

106. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have made good progress in all aspects of science. In their exploration of plants they know that without light and water plants will die. They can identify and name the leaf, stem, flower and root of flowering plants. In their investigations relating to plants they can use magnifying glasses effectively and communicate their observation using appropriate terms – ‘We saw veins in the leaves.’ They can name some common materials and describe uses for them based on their knowledge and understanding of the material’s properties. They know that forces can be described in terms of pushes and pulls and that forces can make things speed up, slow down or change direction. Recording their work is done in a variety of ways. Pupils are able to use IT to record their work and to import appropriate illustrations.
107. Good progress is maintained through Key Stage 2, particularly in relation to knowledge and understanding. There was evidence of pupils carrying out investigations which enabled them to develop their skills of observation and recording and to understand the notion of a fair test. The work in their books shows they have a good knowledge of food chains, know that mixing materials such as adding salt to water can cause them to change and that some changes can be reversed and some cannot. They also know that some materials are conductors of electricity and some are good insulators. In a Year 4 classroom there was a well presented display of work done by pupils on heat, light and sound which indicated a good level of knowledge and understanding. Also in a Year 4 class pupils investigating electric circuits were able to make simple predictions before testing and recording their findings using text and diagrams. Year 6 pupils know that the Sun, Moon and Earth are approximately spherical and that the earth spins round its own axis and how day and night are related to this spin. They know about the circulatory system, the effect of exercise on pulse rates and can name the major organs of the body. They record their findings well using a variety of methods.
108. The quality of teaching is good. In half the lessons seen the teaching was good or very good and the rest of the lessons were satisfactory. At the beginning of each lesson pupils are told what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson and, in the best lessons, how they will achieve this and how their learning will be assessed; an example of this was seen in a Year 6 lesson which was a follow-up to an investigation of the effect of exercise on pulse rates. All lessons are well planned. The teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the subject lead to confident teaching at a good pace, as was evident in another Year 6 class where the children were engaged in an investigation into the effect of exercise on the pulse rate. Pupils respond very positively to the teaching, concentrating well and applying themselves to the tasks. Behaviour is good whether in the whole class or group situation. Teachers use good questioning skills to review learning at the beginning of a lesson and in the plenary sessions at the end of lessons. Teachers make good use of support staff. In a Year 3 lesson the classroom assistant had been briefed on her role and she worked effectively with a group of pupils with special educational needs to help them succeed in the differentiated activity provided for them. This enabled the teacher to work with the average and above average children on another task. An extension activity was provided for the more able to provide a more appropriate challenge for them. Teachers make good use of resources so that when carrying out investigations group sizes are small and pupils are involved, as in a Year 2 investigation with plants. In a Year 6 lesson the teacher used an information technology program on the heart and circulatory system, projected onto a big screen, to review and consolidate the earlier learning to good effect. Homework is also used to consolidate learning. For Year 6 the activity was aimed at Levels 3 to 5 targeting the full range of ability within the class. A discussion with the acting co-ordinator elicited information about how a timetabled homework session is used to follow up the homework task. Marking of books supports learning through encouraging comments and when considered appropriate the awarding of house points. The investigations observed were not generated by the pupils themselves though in Year 6 the teacher used questions to draw some ideas from the pupils when discussing what might constitute a fair test. Regular assessments are used to monitor the achievement and progress of the pupils and the outcomes of these assessments are used in subsequent planning.

## ART

109. Standards of pupils in art by the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 are above that expected for pupils of that age. By the time pupils leave the school they have well developed drawing and painting skills. They make carefully observed drawings using pencil, chalk and charcoal, paint detailed portraits and landscapes and have studied the works of various artists. Their work shows great sensitivity to detail in depth. The school has maintained the good standards evident in the last inspection.
110. Progress for all pupils throughout the school is good. It is particularly good in some lessons at both key stages where pupils are given opportunities to investigate the characteristics of different stimulus materials, express their thoughts and feelings and experiment with resources in order to develop their own ideas in their sketchbooks. In Key Stage 1, pupils are introduced to the primary colours and to colour mixing. They make carefully observed paintings and portraits of people they know, progressing to studying the paintings of Vincent van Gogh and painting their own pictures using his style. In Key Stage 2, Year 4 pupils use their developing skills to create a variety of compositions using different media based on pointillism and the paintings of Seurat. They work individually and in groups, carefully arranging the dots to compose interesting pictures. In Year 6 pupils are introduced to the work of abstract artists and experiment with different textures and techniques in their images. Year 6 pupils also use watercolours, charcoal and pencil to build up their own carefully designed compositions. Pupils make good progress overall in developing an appropriate art vocabulary and work with increasing independence using their own ideas. They are clear about learning intentions and understand how to achieve these.
111. Pupils display good attitudes to learning and enjoy their work. Behaviour is good and most pupils persevere to improve their work. They share resources well and treat them with care. Relationships are good.
112. Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good; their expectations of learning are appropriately high and relationships are good. The good progress that pupils make, both within lessons and over time, is directly related to the well planned opportunities, particularly at Key Stage 2, for pupils to explore and experiment with materials and ideas, for example through using the stimulus of different artists in various years and varying the methods and materials used by pupils when designing their own pictures. Teachers' planning is good and builds on pupils' previous learning experiences. Literacy in art is promoted effectively, for example the Year 6 pupils use the poem "Echoes of Winter Light" as the stimulus for their watercolours. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into all lessons and make progress in line with their classmates.

113. The school has strong links with Newman College and Year 6 pupils work in collaboration with students from the college producing high quality art work. This year a Millennium theme was chosen and pupils and students worked together to produce a textile collage of a telephone, representing advances in information technology and a large clay star, representing increasing knowledge of space. The school also has a kiln, which is used to fire pupils' clay artefacts. The co-ordinator has only recently been appointed, but planning has been monitored, pupils' work assessed and there is a well-defined action plan with clear goals in place. These include the purchase of more artefacts and computer programmes to complement those in use.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

114. During the inspection it was only possible to see one lesson in design technology; this was in Key Stage 2. From this lesson, a scrutiny of previous work on display and recorded in a folio of pupil's work, discussions with the co-ordinator, and information from teachers' planning, it is possible to judge that pupils are making good progress in both key stages in design and making processes. They experience an appropriate range of materials and media, which help to develop their skills in cutting, shaping and constructing. The good standards identified in the last report have been maintained.
115. Children in reception classes have made a home from reclaimed materials and sewn pictures of flowers. Current display work of kites and 'Postman Pat' are focused on the use of card and tissue paper. The degree to which the subject is well integrated into other areas of the curriculum is well illustrated by other work in Key Stage 1 which includes bridges made from construction kits, a science display of a 'Feely Teddy' and a most striking display of a Victorian coal mine. Materials of wood, paper, card and cloth are all used well to develop pupils' skills of making, and scrutiny of previous work recording shows that the design process is well understood by pupils. These designing and making skills are further developed in Key Stage 2, when pupils make a number of objects related to their Year 3 Roman topic and Year 4 study of the Tudors. Work in mathematics is also supported by straw constructs of 3D models. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 show a marked degree of development of the design process in their work on designing a 'land' yacht, a castle and a 'movement' box. They follow all the stages of the design process and their use of appropriate materials for specific purposes is well developed.
116. There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on teaching but in the one lesson seen, teaching was good. However, from the study of planning and pupil's completed work, it is evident that teaching is often good. The current curriculum adequately addresses all the requirements of the National Curriculum and ensures the progressive development of appropriate skills in designing and making. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator who has worked hard to raise and maintain the profile of the subject across the school. Resources are generally good. They are well stored and accessible and have a positive impact on the teaching and learning of the subject.

## GEOGRAPHY

117. Standards of pupils in geography are above those expected by the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2. The last inspection also indicated that standards were above national expectations. Year 1 pupils map their route from home to school, marking in geographical locations such as the motorway and local shops. Year 2 pupils match plans of objects to pictures using a computer programme. They also use a compass to find north, south, east and west and identify features close to the school in a particular direction. A study of the Inuit people is undertaken in Key Stage 1. In Year 3, pupils study settlements, identifying features which encourage growth. This topic is explored in greater depth in Year 4 and again in Year 6 when an extensive topic of Halesowen is undertaken focusing on employment, industry and shops. Pupils begin to understand how people affect, and are affected by, their environment. Year 4 pupils begin to study a river looking at its journey from source to mouth, whilst in Year 5 a more extensive study of the river system in the Woodgate Valley introduces pupils to the geographical language associated with rivers such as, confluence, meander and valley.
118. The progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and by pupils in Key Stage 2 is good. The progress of pupils with special educational needs, through both key stages is good. In Key Stage 1 pupils begin to learn map skills. These are developed through studying a variety of maps and atlas and making their own maps of the local area. In Key Stage 2 pupils acquire an increasing knowledge of how to interpret maps through identifying continents, countries, and oceans. They find places using grid references, beginning with one and two figure references and progressing to three or four figure references by the end of Key Stage 2. Progress is particularly good when planning builds on previously acquired knowledge and skills. For example the younger pupils learn about the Inuit people of North America and Greenland whilst the older pupils study Polar Regions and the effect of the intense cold on the lives of the people of Baffin Island.
119. Pupils are interested in their geographical work and have positive attitudes. They enjoy learning about their own locality and comparing it with more distant areas both abroad and in this country. Pupils particularly enjoy the local studies when they visit local shops, rivers and Halesowen.
120. The quality of teaching in geography is good at both Key Stages. Teachers' knowledge and planning is good. They often outline their aims for the lesson on the blackboard so pupils have a clear understanding of what is being taught. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, pacing the lessons well and providing interesting, stimulating tasks generally matched to the needs of their pupils. Occasionally tasks are not challenging enough for the average and above average pupils, for example, colouring in a photocopied sheet. Good emphasis is placed on the development of a geographical vocabulary. Resources are used well and include some computer programmes. There is good evidence of integration with other subjects such as the charcoal drawings of the Kenyan grasslands and the descriptive writing of the journey of a river. Assessment is satisfactory. The co-ordinator monitors the planning and delivery of the curriculum and plans to introduce more rigorous assessment procedures. Resources, including a variety of books and a range of maps and photographs, are generally of a good quality. They are well used well to support teaching and learning.

## HISTORY

121. The standard of pupils' work in history is consistently high throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. These findings reflect those of the previous inspection at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2 there is an improvement since the last inspection, when attainment was found to be in line with national expectations.
122. The youngest pupils talk about history using everyday language. They sequence events throughout the day in a booklet entitled, "My Day", distinguishing between yesterday and today, aspects of the past and present, and of old and new. When learning about food, Year 1 pupils found out what their parents and grandparents ate when they were young and compared their findings with what children eat today. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a good understanding of aspects of life in the Victorian era; for example, they know of the hardships of those working class children in the Halesowen area who worked in coal mines from a young age. They also know of significant characters of the time, including Florence Nightingale, and can contrast her work with that of their own school nurse. At Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress in acquiring historical knowledge and understanding as they successfully study specific periods in history. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates their thorough factual knowledge of Invaders and Settlers, including the Anglo-Saxons. Pupils retell myths and sagas which formed part of Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage and words from their language which are still in use today. Children are familiar with stories of Viking raids and settlements and their impact on the British Isles. Through drama, the current Year 3 pupils demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of aspects of life in the Roman Empire, for both rich and poor. They also put themselves in the place of characters in history, when they write letters from the perspective of a Roman legionary writing news from Britannia, or a Celtic warrior sending a warning to another tribe. Year 4 pupils learn about Ancient Egypt and their work indicates a good understanding of the part played by the River Nile in the life of the people. Pupils also demonstrate an increasing awareness of chronology, as they sequence the Tudor monarchs. Their work also indicates a knowledge of Tudor life and significant events, such as the Spanish Armada. Analysis of Year 5 pupils' work indicates a good knowledge of Britain since the 1930's. In particular, pupils compare characteristics of children's lives in the 1930's and 1990's. Current Year 5 pupils have a very detailed knowledge of aspects of life in Ancient Greece, including its art, leisure, legends and gods. They begin to understand the different forms of historical evidence. When searching for information on Greek gods and their symbols, they competently use a range of sources, including the Internet. Year 6 pupils successfully reinforce and extend their research skills, using copies of census documents as a basis for their work on medieval life in Halesowen, focusing particularly on local occupations.
123. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are well supported and encouraged and make good progress. There are no significant differences in the progress of pupils of different gender, background or ethnicity.
124. The teaching of history is good overall throughout the school, with some very good teaching in Years 5 and 6. This promotes pupils' successful acquisition of knowledge about the past and their good sense of chronology. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of history are good and they use them well to plan a wide range of activities and approaches to the subject. Long and medium term planning incorporate appropriate visits for pupils of all ages, which very successfully promote pupils' learning. These include Year 2's visit to Hartlebury Castle, as part of their study of the Victorian era, Year 3's trip to Lunt Fort, as part of their work on the Romans, and Year 4's visit to Oak House, to conclude their work on the Tudors. Speakers and theatre groups also visit school as part of a well-planned programme which very successfully promotes pupils' understanding of history. These events, along with their teachers' great enthusiasm for the subject and carefully presented displays of pupils' work around the school, encourage pupils' very positive attitudes and high level of interest in this area of the curriculum. Effective use is made of the resources available to the school and well-planned opportunities

ensure that pupils have a wide range of first-hand experiences and opportunities to handle artefacts. Information technology is used well as a research tool. Pupils sift through the information they find, competently identifying the key evidence they need. This effectively extends and reinforces their historical and literacy skills, particularly at Key Stage 2. Teachers encourage pupils' efforts and actively discuss their work in lessons. The co-ordinator maintains a useful portfolio of fully annotated pieces of pupils' work from all age groups. The subject is managed well. All opportunities are taken to ensure that history has a high profile within the school; for example, a Year 2 class's assembly focused on the Victorians, presented their work in a variety of ways, including dance. The subject makes a very positive contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. Recent work in creating a Millennium Timeline in the entrance hall, marking significant events from the birth of Christ to the present day, and ensuring that every pupil contributed to the Millennium Diaries, significantly enhance pupils' awareness of the passage of time, chronological understanding and knowledge of people and societies of the past.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

125. The overall attainment by the end of both key stages is well above the national average. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Much of this improvement is due to the clear focus that the school has had on the recent development of the subject. It has formed a major part of the school's improvement plan and there are future plans to consolidate this progress and take the subject forward. The co-ordinator has no current class responsibility and is helping to consolidate pupil's learning by taking whole class sessions in the new suite. All pupils across the school are benefiting from the direct skills teaching during these sessions and are able to transfer these skills in other areas of the curriculum in their classrooms. This is enabling almost all pupils to make good progress across the range of skills in information technology.
126. From the very beginning of their time in school the youngest children under five are introduced to computers and soon become adept in their use, particularly in developing their mouse and keyboard skills. They are able to make a picture by choosing elements and positioning them in a landscape. Many then use the keyboard to write their name. This is developed in Year 1 where pupils choose elements according to size to try to give their pictures perspective. By the end of the key stage pupils are able to create an island picture from a written description to support their work in geography. Older pupils in Year 3 have used information technology in their topic on the 'Romans' and it is well used to support literacy work in many classes. For example, Year 4 pupils have used very good word processing skills, such as changing size and type of fonts, to write poems with decorative borders to create a very striking display on 'The Lesson in the Classroom'. Work in science is well supported in years 5 and 6 and various graph forms have been used by Year 5 pupils to record the findings of their surveys on favourite authors and books. By the end of Key Stage 2 the more able pupils have designed and produced their own Millennium Calendars and a newspaper, the 'Howley Express'. Many pupils are adept at using the Internet for research purposes and some have pen pals through e-mail in America. This has come about from the collaboration with six other schools in America and Australia in writing 'chapters' for a story that pupils publish over the Internet.

127. Much of this confident use of information technology comes from the very good teaching of the co-ordinator in the computer suite, but it is also very well supported by the level of confidence and competence shown by class teachers and other support staff. Very good use is made of the range of resources available to continually develop and extend pupil's skills. The activities are well planned and matched closely to the ages and abilities of all groups of pupils. This provides a continuing challenge to pupils and enables their learning to be extended and moved forward at a very good pace throughout the school. Particular good use is being made of specifically targeted programs for groups of pupils to support their numeracy work. The result is that pupils enjoy working on computers and show a very positive attitude to their learning. They work hard, persevere and take great pride in their work and success.
128. The subject is very well led by an enthusiastic and competent co-ordinator who has done much to raise the profile of the subject across the school. He has led training for other staff and worked closely with the local education authority advisors to develop the use of information technology across the curriculum. He has also led training on the wide range of hardware such as projectors and cameras, so that they now are seen as valuable aids to support work in all classes. This is a noticeable improvement since the last inspection. There are good links with other local primary and secondary schools as well as with a local college. The current scheme of work is very firmly skills-based and addresses all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Work has started on recording pupils' achievements in an 'electronic portfolio' that can follow them through the school. Resources for the subject are very good and are used very effectively to promote learning across a wide range of subjects in the curriculum.

## MUSIC

129. The standard of music is above national expectations at both key stages. This is an improvement on the previous inspection report, which recorded that pupils were up to national expectations with some above or well above. The areas to develop listed in the previous report have been addressed. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress. The subject has several strengths. One of these is that all the teaching is shared by two teachers, one each from Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, who have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Another strength is the opportunity for pupils to perform individually or collectively in assembly, in concerts for parents, in the wider community and to participate in the Dudley Schools Music Festival. A third strength is the specialist music room and its resources away from the main building, despite the fact that accommodation is a little cramped.
130. In Key Stage 1 the pupils develop an awareness of musical elements, including pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo and timbre, and use this awareness to explore and invent rhythmic compositions which have simple structures. This is exemplified by the Year 2 work on trains which involves listening to Honegger's 'Pacific 231', singing 'Morningtown Ride' and composing their own 'train' music which they record and playback so that they can critically evaluate it and then improve their composition. In Key Stage 1 also they learn to sing from memory and in parts. Some of their singing has cross-curricular links - songs related to the science topic of 'Light' and to the history topic of 'Victorian Times'. In Key Stage 2 further development of the skills of composing, performing, listening and appraising takes place by working with a wider range of instruments, in larger groups and with more emphasis on structures. For example in Year 4 pupils compose and perform their own 'storm' sequence as part of which they listen to and analyse, with the help of the teacher, the 'storm' sequence in Beethoven's 'Pastoral Symphony'. In Year 6 pupils are able to combine the vocal and instrumental when setting poetry to music, using standard notation or their own notation. In Year 6 also the length of the compositions increases and the structures become more complex. They are also able to evaluate their music using the appropriate terms. Some of the singing in Key Stage 2 is also related to other curriculum areas as when the pupils learn medieval songs.

131. Pupils have an enthusiastic attitude to music and behaviour is good. They enjoy the lessons, are fully involved and take some responsibility for their own learning. They listen attentively to the performances of other groups applauding their efforts and, particularly in Key Stage 2, offering constructively critical evaluations. They also have the opportunity to listen to music of great composers of the past, music of other cultures and our times such as that by Arvo Paert. They sing well in class, in assembly and in the lunchtime choir. All pupils also have the opportunity to learn the recorder and play in the school orchestra as part of the extra-curricular provision. The Dudley Schools Music Service provides tuition for string, brass, woodwind and keyboard for those whose parents request it and pay the termly fees.
132. Teaching in music in both key stages is good overall and is never less than satisfactory. All lessons are well planned and involve all pupils. The pace is good, instructions are clear and teachers use good questioning skills to consolidate and promote learning, though occasionally the critical evaluation is more teacher-led than necessary. The teachers have high expectations of the pupils, relationships are good and pupils are keen to make the most of the resources and supplement these with their own instruments – clarinet, trumpet and recorder were used in some groups. All lesson plans incorporate informal assessment opportunities and the teachers maintain individual records for each pupil based on end of key stage descriptors.
133. The policy and guidelines for music are up-to-date and in line with the school policy, particularly in relation to equal opportunities. The detailed scheme of work covers all of the programmes of study with the timetabled allocation for music in mind. Lesson planning is facilitated by the scheme of work, which also shows links with other areas of the curriculum. There are sufficient resources in the music room to support the teaching. Additionally the computers in each class have music programmes including ‘Compose’ and ‘Music Box’ and there is a music section in the ‘Encarta’ program which they can access. There is an annual budget for music which is supplemented by the parents' association when necessary, such as the recent purchase of additional keyboards and drums.
134. The school has strong links with the community including performing in residential homes for the elderly and local churches. The school also participates in the Dudley Schools Music Festivals.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

135. On the basis of lessons observed in dance, gymnastics, games skills and swimming, pupils in both key stages achieve standards that are above national expectations. The school has improved on the standards reported in the last inspection.

136. In Key Stage 1 pupils learn to listen attentively to music and interpret this music in dance. They also learn games and gymnastic skills. In Year 2 they use the music 'Snowman Dance' to develop controlled sequences of actions with contrasting speed, shape and direction. They make good use of the available space. When working individually, in pairs or in small groups they work with confidence and safely. Working barefoot enhances the learning opportunities. They also relate their work to other areas of the curriculum as in the "Coalmine" dance, which was performed in assembly.
137. In Key Stage 2 pupils consolidate and extend the skills they developed in Key Stage 1 and, additionally, they follow units of study covering athletic activities, outdoor and adventurous activities and swimming. A Year 3 swimming lesson demonstrated the confidence pupils have in the water and in their teachers. Pupils are grouped in swimming according to their ability and only eight pupils out of 57 observed still need arm floats in the water. At least half of the pupils can swim 25 metres unaided, competently and safely. Progress is good. This was shown in a Year 6 gymnastics lesson on the theme of jumping, landing and flight using tables, benches, ropes and mats and involving individual, pair and trio work where the level of skill was already at least in line with national expectations for all pupils, with half achieving above this level and, in the case of two children, well above. Year 6 pupils know what is meant by moving in unison, in canon, symmetrically and asymmetrically. In an outdoor games skills lesson pupils demonstrated good progress through the key stage in catching and throwing - despite the cold and windy conditions.
138. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are such that the quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good or very good in half of the lessons. This helps to ensure that the attitude of pupils is good and the behaviour is also generally good. Pupils are enthusiastic and keen. Lessons start punctually. Individual lessons are well planned and teachers follow these plans closely, though in one case some variation because of the weather conditions would have been acceptable. All lesson plans include opportunities for informal assessment. Record keeping enables teachers to assess individual pupils in planning, performing, evaluating, health, safety and personal, social and health education. In the records teachers show whether pupils are working towards, at or above the required standard. This helps planning. The expectations of the teachers are generally high, which has a positive effect on the progress and quality of work of the pupils. Teachers use good management strategies notably in respect of the pace of work and the use of praise and demonstrations by pupils to raise the quality of performance. Also teachers involve pupils in observing and evaluating the demonstrations by other pupils: for example, in the Year 6 lesson on the theme of jumping, landing and flight, expressed themselves articulately, and then used what they learned to improve the quality of their work. It is school policy to involve non-participants in observing and evaluating. This was seen to good effect in one lesson, though the policy is not applied consistently. All teachers stress safety and they insist that pupils dress appropriately in line with school policy. The movement from the classroom to the hall is very calm and orderly, ensuring that pupils are able to make a good start to the lesson. In those lessons where apparatus is used pupils respond well to instructions and are able to set out the apparatus and put it away in a calm and orderly manner with a high regard for safety.
139. The policy and guidelines have been revised very recently and are in line with the overall school policy. The physical education scheme of work is based on the local education authority's Policy into Practice' document. All aspects of the national curriculum are covered in a well-structured series of modules, which facilitate medium and short term planning. The assessment and recording is also based on the local authority document. The budget allocation is adequate for the replacement of small apparatus. The parents' association funded the recent purchase of large wall bar apparatus. All of these factors have a positive bearing on the progress and achievement of pupils in both key stages.

140. The school is very proud that it has maintained its presence in all sport competitions in the area. Pupils also performed in the Millennium Dance Festival. Through Dudley Sportlink after school coaching is provided by outside specialists in rugby, netball, cricket, basketball, tennis and football. The school also has links with Halesowen Football Club. These opportunities are well received by the pupils and their progress in the associated skills is noticeable in the curricular provision in school.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

141. Pupils' attainments are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of each key stage. The teaching of the subject is good. Over both key stages very good relationships between teachers and pupils engender confidence in the subject and help pupils to focus on their work. The teachers use a wide variety of methods, including spellbinding story telling, group discussion, good questioning and short video clips to ensure that pupils understand their work and make good progress. In one lesson in Key Stage 1 for example, pupils sat in a circle reflecting on places that were special to them as an introduction to learning about sacred places in religion. They abided by the rule to stay quiet and listen respectfully whilst others speak as they passed a soft toy hand to hand. Pupils are well trained so that they know what to do and when to do it resulting in smooth classroom routines. Those who are shy or reluctant to participate are drawn in very successfully. All listen very attentively and enjoy their work. In another lesson on Old Testament stories, for example, pupils called out spontaneously, "I love this story", when the teacher told the story of David and Goliath. Pupils are managed well. Many young pupils have a good knowledge of the Christian story and parts of the bible. In their excitement they try to interrupt the teacher to extend the information being imparted. Such pupils are helped to make their contributions effectively so that they do not dominate classes but enrich them. For example, a pupil in Year 2 confidently offered the suggestion that 'the Old Testament is before Jesus and the New Testament after Jesus. Jews read the Old Testament and Christians read the New Testament'. High attaining pupils by the end of the Key Stage write very good extended accounts of their learning, for example of the narrative of Rama and Sita. Worksheets are much less evident than at the previous inspection, but when they are used the pupils involved are constrained by low level, less creative tasks such as filling in missing words and achieve less than in other situations. The learning of all pupils is further enriched by visits, for example to local churches, a synagogue and a mosque. By the end of the key stage pupils have acquired an elementary understanding of aspects of Judaism and Islam and a sound foundation in Christianity.
142. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils continue to demonstrate their enjoyment in lessons. Sometimes the introduction to lessons is very lively, bringing pupils to the threshold of new learning very effectively. This was a marked feature in a Year 6 lesson on the role of Ganesha, a form of the Hindu deity who is believed to remove barriers in people's lives. In another lesson at the start of the key stage the teacher used music very effectively to move pupils from a busy art activity to a quiet reflective mood for religious education. Pupils listened to Grieg's, "Morning", and focused on the feelings and ideas being communicated. They were then able to move on, ready to explore the way different religious symbols communicate to believers of the major world faiths. The teacher built up knowledge successfully. Sometimes very good story telling fascinates the pupils and holds them in rapt attention. For example in a lesson from Daniel when the class considered the fate and survival of the three friends, Shadrach, Mesach and Abed-Nego they enjoyed the repetitive sequences when the music called people to worship the idol. They realised what it is like to stand against the crowd and were able to reflect on and recount similar episodes in their own lives which increased their moral understanding. "Fire", the topic being studied, was seen to be a symbol of the presence of God in the bible.
143. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally sound but weakest on world faiths other than Christianity. When tested there is evident insecurity, for example about Hinduism or Sikh symbols. In one lesson this was turned to good account as pupils were invited to research

unknown features using the Internet. Before the end of the lesson they had acquired an understanding of Brahma as the supreme deity and the place of Vishnu. They and the teacher shared this knowledge with the class before the lesson ended and all learned together. Teachers respect pupils' answers and give them confidence to pose their own difficult questions and to respect each other's responses. Good and sensitive use of religious artefacts helps to engender respect for other faiths and the cultures in which they evolved. Some very good, well focused group work in a Year 6 lesson heightened pupils' learning as the teacher intervened perceptively, never disrupting but stimulating progress. Very good use is made of visitors from the community. In one very good lesson in Year 5, for example, a visitor led pupils very skilfully through the story of the Hebrew exodus as they re-enacted a Passover meal. The concepts of liberation, freedom and bondage were illuminated practically. Pupils understood the need for remembrance and gratitude. As part of the ceremony they prayed for others, including children still in bondage now across the world and increased their spiritual and moral awareness.

144. The locally agreed syllabus has been revised and is shortly to be published. The co-ordinator has been trained and shared her training with the staff. Good forward planning has set in place a working party of three teachers who will lead the planning of the new scheme of work. The current plan is weak on continuity, particularly in the development of the understanding of world faiths since pupils consider, for example, rites of passage such as naming ceremonies or marriage in several faiths at a time. In these episodes the links with pupils' previous learning are not clear, so that depth of knowledge of one faith is more difficult to acquire.
145. Overall, the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning and to their spiritual, moral social and cultural development.