

INSPECTION REPORT

GRENDON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Kings Heath, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103205

Headteacher: Mrs D Fisher

Reporting inspector: Mr David Carrington
15414

Dates of inspection: 14th – 17th February 2000

Inspection number: 190700

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Junior and infant with nursery

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Grendon Road
Kings Heath
Birmingham

Postcode: B14 4RB

Telephone number: 0121 474 2460

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R Green

Date of previous inspection: 2nd – 5th December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mr David Carrington	Registered inspector	Information technology	What sort of school is it?
			How high are standards?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Dr Mike Freeman	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mrs Carole Bond	Team inspector	Geography	
		History	
		Areas of learning for children under five	
		Equal opportunities	
Mr Ian Chearman	Team inspector	Mathematics	
		Religious education	
		Special educational needs	
Mr Ted Cox	Team inspector	English	How well are pupils taught?
		Music	
		English as an additional language	
Mr Barry Gill	Team inspector	Science	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
		Physical education	
Mrs Jo Greer	Team inspector	Art	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
		Design and technology	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Grendon Primary School is situated close to the southern boundary of Birmingham and is near the main Alcester Road which runs south from the city centre. There are 205 boys and 186 girls in school plus a further 45 part-time children in the nursery. Just over 8% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and nine of these speak English as an additional language. These are above average proportions, and nearly half the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is very high. About 20% of pupils have special educational needs, including five with statements. This is not very different from the average proportion found in primary schools. Pupils have average levels of attainment when they start school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

School effectiveness is at the heart of Grendon Primary School. Everyone works hard to make improvements, not least in the standards achieved. Over the past few years, standards have risen, though in some cases there is still much to do. Managers, staff and the governors are not afraid of the challenges they face and have developed very successful strategies to build on the strengths of the school and to eliminate weaknesses. The school has adopted challenging targets for attainment in English and mathematics and is well on track to achieving these. The headteacher is the driving force in this and is a very capable manager. Because the school is successful, it gives good value for the money invested in it.

What the school does well

- The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and key staff and the governors carry out their duties well.
- Standards in information technology are good and are a strength of the school.
- Pupils with special educational needs are given a very good education and they benefit very well from this.
- Pupils like coming to school and they show this by their good attitudes and relationships and their orderly behaviour.
- The personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a strength.
- Teaching is good through the school, including literacy and numeracy.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, particularly writing.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop the appropriate level of independence, responsibility and creativity in their learning, for example in design and technology, are not as good as they should be. This also includes children under the age of five who often start work from the National Curriculum too early and who do not have enough structured play experiences to explore the six areas of learning for pupils of this age.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

There are many more strengths in school than are shown on the grid above. There are one or two less important areas for development too. It is, however, very evident that the list of what the school does well is much longer than the list of items for improvement.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected towards the end of 1996 when the following key issues were identified:

- Make substantial improvement to information technology.
- Raise standards in music and geography, especially in Key Stage 2.
- Check planning and teaching regularly so they are the best they can be.
- Improve the levels of attendance and punctuality.

During the current inspection it was evident that information technology is becoming a strength of the

school, standards in music and geography are at the expected level and subject managers do a good job of leading their subjects. Planning and teaching are strengths, and attendance rates are getting better each year. The school has made good progress with its improvements and is set well to maintain this advance.

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	E	D	E	D
Mathematics	E	E	E	C
Science	E	D	D	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In 1999, the standards reached by eleven year old pupils were well below the national average in English and mathematics and below average in science. In relation to similar schools, the position was stronger because pupils at Grendon Primary School did well in science and matched the average of similar schools in mathematics. Things were not as good in English as pupils did not meet the levels found in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Standards at Key Stage 1 in 1999 were above the national average in reading and writing and well above in mathematics. Against similar schools they were well above average in all three subjects and in the top 5% of similar schools for reading. The school has been working hard to improve standards and there is evidence of its success to date. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were good in reading and writing and very good in mathematics. Many major changes have been made to the ways that English and mathematics are taught and pupils are now more successful in their learning. Inspectors judge that standards are at the expected level in mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2. There is still work to be done in English, particularly in writing where standards are below average. The school has set itself challenging targets for improvements in standards and is closing the gap between its actual results and the target level well. In religious education, attainment is at the expected level and, overall, it is evident that the trend in attainment is upward. Information technology standards, which have risen from unsatisfactory to good over the last four years, are an indication of the potential for success.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils like coming to school and most of them do their work cheerfully and with interest.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The behaviour of most pupils is orderly. A few older pupils do not behave as well, though the staff deal with this successfully and there is very little disruption to learning.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils get on well with the staff and the other pupils, and learning is settled because of this. Most pupils grow in maturity as they pass through the school, and are well prepared for secondary school. The staff are successful in helping the pupils develop into pleasant people who are good to talk to.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The level of attendance has improved over the last few years and is approaching the national average.

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.

Teaching has improved much since the previous inspection. Inspectors observed 88 lessons or part lessons and judged that teaching is good overall. Teaching is good or better in about two thirds of all lessons and is very good or better in a fifth. These proportions are much better than is usually found in primary schools. There was less than 2% unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection, all in Key Stage 2. This is a figure that is much better than last time. There are many strengths of teaching, not least the knowledge and understanding of the subjects taught, control and discipline in lessons, the teaching of basic skills in English and mathematics and the good range of methods used. Some elements of planning and everyday assessment would stand improvement, though these are both satisfactory at the least. The school meets the needs of all pupils well. Those with special educational needs are given a very good education and the higher attainers have work that is hard enough for them. The support staff give very good support in lessons and when working with pupils who have been withdrawn from lessons. They are very successful in their roles. Since lessons are taught well, the quality of learning is also good. The pace of learning for some pupils slackens towards the end of Key Stage 2 because they think the right image is to dislike work. Teachers deal well with this on the whole. Pupils build skills and knowledge at the expected rate and they try hard. They also get much pleasure from their own successes.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Good attention is given to the core subjects but some non-core subjects have less time than is usual, and pupils could be given more opportunities to work independently and creatively. Under-fives sometimes work too quickly through the work that covers the six areas of learning so they do not develop their experiences to the full. Design and technology is not given enough attention though art, geography, history, information technology and music show improvement since the previous inspection.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. This is one of the school's great strengths. There is a very good level of support from teaching and support staff and the pupils learn at a good rate.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The few pupils who speak other languages at home are given effective support that helps them to make good progress with their work.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Spiritual development is well taken care of and pupils' moral and social education is very good. There are some good opportunities to learn about the works of famous artists, poets, authors and musicians but the emphasis given to the richness of other cultures is limited.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school has very good measures to deal with child protection and welfare matters and it has a good system for checking attendance, behaviour and personal development. Assessment of pupils' work and progress is also good and the information this produces is used successfully to bring improvement. One of the school's main strengths is the consistency with which staff take good care of pupils and check that their needs are supported well.
Links with parents	The school works hard to draw parents into their children's education and some take a good part in this, though others stay at a distance.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher involves other staff very successfully in management, but the school would not be the school it is without her own personal qualities as a very effective leader.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors are increasingly taking on the role of a critical friend who asks the right questions at the right time. This keeps the school on track to make good improvement. Governors uphold the principles of 'best value' well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. All staff have a key role in checking how well the school is succeeding in its task to raise standards and improve the quality of the curriculum. Managers know full well the school's successes and shortcomings.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Money is spent wisely and the staff give good service. The accommodation, time and learning resources are all put to good use.

There are ample resources, though there is no school library and this restricts pupils' independent research and study. There is ample space in school, the new computer suite is very good and is used effectively and the buildings are very well maintained by the buildings and site supervisor and his staff, and the secretary carries out the day-to-day administration of the school very well.

All of the school's many strengths can be traced back to the quality of management. The headteacher is the foundation of this, her deputy is the keystone and the staff are the building bricks. The mortar to bind it all together is provided by the procedures and strategies to support the staff in the work that they do.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects the best of their children. • Teaching is good. • The school welcomes them and deals well with their questions or problems. • They get good quality information about their children's work and progress. • Their children like school and are well cared for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons.

Parents hold very positive views of the school. The inspection team have no hesitation in agreeing with parents' positive views and agrees that the range of activities outside lessons is not as wide as in many schools. It is, however, very clear that the pupils get a good deal at Grendon Primary School.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 The previous inspection identified two key issues that related directly to standards. These concerned information technology, geography and music where attainment was too low. In other respects, standards were at the expected level at the end of both key stages and progress was good, particularly for the under-fives and pupils with special educational needs. During the last three years, the school has maintained productive working conditions in lessons and attainment has improved significantly in the subjects singled out in 1996.

2 In the 1999 Key Stage 1 National Curriculum tests, standards achieved at Grendon Primary School were above the national average in reading and writing and well above in mathematics. When these standards are set against those for similar schools, the Grendon results are well above average in all three subjects, indeed, in reading, standards were amongst the top 5% of similar schools. The trend in attainment at Key Stage 1 has been of continued improvement in reading, writing and mathematics during the last three years.

3 Improvement is also apparent across the same three years in the results at Key Stage 2, though this has not been as pronounced. On first impressions, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been low since 1997. Last year, standards were below average in science and well below the national average in English and mathematics. The school stands better comparison against similar schools though. In 1999 Key Stage 2 standards were below average in English, average in mathematics and above average in science on this count.

4 Further analysis of National Curriculum test results shows that there are some significant differences in the performance of boys and girls. In Key Stage 1 the difference is most marked in reading where boys have done much better than girls over the last three years. At Key Stage 2, the differences are pronounced in English where, again, boys do better than girls. There is some substantial evidence to show that there are similar differences in mathematics and science, at least in 1999. The school has monitored these differences well and knows that the difference in performance in English goes against the national trend. During the inspection there was less evidence of differences, as boys and girls mostly gave the same effort and showed the same interest in their lessons.

5 A purely numerical interpretation of the National Curriculum test results suggests that standards decline in Key Stage 2 after a good start in Key Stage 1. This is not the case. When these results are placed in complete context, a picture of improving standards emerges, particularly at Key Stage 2. Senior managers complete a very rigorous analysis of standards as part of their ongoing monitoring of the school's work. Weaknesses in standards are detected very quickly and effective action is taken. For the current Year 6, standards are average in mathematics and science, and whilst they remain below average in English, this is largely because writing is not as well developed as it might be. Standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 2 are at the expected level. In earlier years of Key Stage 2, the picture is better still and there is every reason for the school to be confident that it will meet its rigorous targets for attainment in the coming years. It is already closing the gap in attainment in all years.

6 The school has made several major changes to the way that English and mathematics are taught, particularly at the end of Key Stage 2 where booster classes and the literacy and numeracy hours are having a particularly beneficial effect. Earlier in the key stage, additional literacy support is also impacting well on standards. Writing remains a weakness, though the school identifies this clearly in its priorities for improvement and is working soundly to boost standards. Overall, the school's literacy and numeracy strategies are good and are already showing positive results in terms of improved quality of learning and better standards.

7 Pupils achieve at steady levels throughout the school. Skills and knowledge are built at appropriate rates and consistent progress is maintained in most subjects. This means that the

average level of skill and knowledge that pupils bring with them to school at the start of their education is built upon systematically. By the age of seven, and again at eleven, pupils have held their own in the work. Some pupils do better than this, for example, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress because of the strengths of the support they are given. Pupils with special needs reach good standards of attainment against the learning targets set for them in their individual education plans and their progress is good as seen in their reviews and in their class work against the targets set. Pupils are keen to learn and most take full advantage of the very good opportunities offered by the school. Their learning attitudes are good and they have pride and satisfaction in their accomplishments. They work and co-operate well within groups in class or those they join in support area.

8 School managers are determined that all pupils should progress at such levels and they check carefully to identify discrepancies for individual pupils. Staff know exactly what the individual child should be achieving, they monitor this well, and are quick to identify any under-achievement. Personal targets are set for each pupil and these are reviewed regularly for success.

9 As shown elsewhere in this report, standards in other subjects share the upward trend. Those for information technology, geography and music are much improved since 1996. The school has created and equipped a very good computer suite and its intensive use is bringing better quality of teaching and learning and standards are rising. Overall, pupils attain above average levels in information technology by the end of Key Stage 1 and 2. In geography and music, standards are now at the expected level, as they are for all other subjects at the end of both key stages.

10 The parents were clear in their judgements that the school expects and achieves good standards when they spoke to inspectors and completed their questionnaires. In return, inspectors judge that standards are improving at a good rate and that the school provides worthwhile learning experiences. Staff not only work hard to boost standards but they ensure that standards of behaviour and personal development are good. In this way, pupils at Grendon Primary School develop into well-rounded individuals who are good to know.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11 In 1996 it was identified in the previous inspection report that attitudes, behaviour and pupils' personal development were aspects that the school promoted well. The pupils were shown to be the prime asset of the school at that time. It is very clear that the school has sustained its good work to help pupils develop into thoroughly pleasant people and that they remain the best ambassadors that the school has. Pupils' attitudes to their learning and their personal development are consistently good. Behaviour and relationships are also good.

12 The good standard of behaviour shows clearly the settled nature of the school and the good all-round response of pupils. There are very occasional slippages in the overall good standard of behaviour, mainly in Key Stage 2, but these are handled well by staff and there is very little disruption to the learning process. There are good strategies in place for supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties and these pupils try hard to improve their behaviour as a result of this. There have been a number of exclusions in recent years but the school only uses this as a last sanction and the overall system to support good behaviour is effective.

13 Pupils are polite and helpful and they value each other and collaborate well. They work hard and conscientiously and take pride in their work. Lessons are enjoyable as a result. As they move around the school, they show respect and care for the environment and they walk in a safe and orderly way.

14 The school's system to include pupils in its organisation and everyday running is good. There is a school council, older pupils serve as prefects and there is a head boy and girl. This gives pupils things to aspire to. It also develops a good sense of responsibility and independence in those who take part in the elections or who stand for office. The investigation and research activities provided in mathematics, science and information technology enhance personal development. However, there are not the same opportunities for this in other subjects, particularly in design and technology as there are too few chances for pupils to work independently in such subjects.

15 The rate of attendance is improving steadily and is approaching the national average. The school has made good progress in boosting attendance rates since the last inspection and it takes good measures to ensure that pupils arrive punctually. Parents say that their children enjoy coming to school. This is undoubtedly the case.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16 In December 1996, teaching was satisfactory or better in 88% of lessons. In 36% of lessons, teaching was good or very good. 12% of lessons were unsatisfactory. During the current inspection, 88 lessons or parts of lessons were seen and of these, 2% were unsatisfactory. The remaining lessons were all of satisfactory or better teaching, with 20% judged to show very good or excellent teaching. 64% of lessons were good or better. These statistics indicate the significant improvement made to teaching over the last three years.

17 The overall good quality of teaching has an important effect on standards. When pupils start school, they have average levels of attainment. Teaching for the under-fives is good and standards improve and this is continued into Key Stage 1 where teaching is predominantly good or better. This results in end of key stage standards in the National Curriculum tests that are well above average in reading and mathematics and close to the national average in writing. In Key Stage 2, teaching is still good overall but there is a greater proportion of satisfactory teaching.

18 Teaching is good in seven out of the eleven subjects, including English, mathematics and science, and satisfactory in the other four. The teaching of basic skills is good, with notably good practice in Key Stage 1. This enables pupils to build skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate to the age of seven. At Key Stage 2, unsatisfactory progress is made in writing, despite the considerable efforts of teachers, and this is due to the low attainment of pupils. The teaching of reading is at least satisfactory throughout the school. At Key Stage 1, pupils achieve better than expected skills but at Key Stage 2, although the more able pupils show good skills and knowledge, a significant number of pupils show little interest in reading as a pastime. The teaching of science at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory, but the pace of lessons is often slow. This means that pupils do not get sufficient work done.

19 A major contributing factor to the large amount of good teaching seen is the teachers' expectation levels. In most lessons, across the school, teachers have good expectations of work and behaviour and pupils respond by working hard and learning well. Children in reception classes become used to being challenged to extend their thinking. This continues in Key Stage 1 where pupils are expected to gather information by asking questions of teachers and classroom assistants. In Key Stage 2, pupils are challenged to work independently. In all these lessons, pupils find the work stimulating and are keen to succeed. There are times, however, when expectation is low and pupils are not sufficiently involved in the lesson and do not make as much progress as they should.

20 Teachers use a good mix of methods and activities. This ensures that all pupils receive equal opportunities to succeed. Because of this, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language work well and make good progress. Teachers use questions very well to build on pupils' previous knowledge and use both correct and incorrect answers to increase learning. They provide separate, linked tasks for pupils of different abilities. These allow pupils to succeed and encourage a positive response to work. Teaching is less successful, however, when pupils are not given sufficient information to build their ideas on or teachers control too closely what pupils are allowed to do. In these cases, pupils are not able to work to their best potential and become frustrated at their lack of success.

21 Most teachers manage pupils well throughout the school and this contributes to the overall good learning. Control and discipline are good; teachers are firm but fair in keeping order and handle easily distracted pupils sensibly. In some lessons at the end of Key Stage 2 a number of pupils lose interest easily and their behaviour suffers. In a very small number of lessons where control is unsatisfactory, again, largely in Key Stage 2, the teacher spends time correcting pupils who do not keep to class rules about calling out and the teacher does not seem to notice that small groups of pupils are inattentive. Because of this, pupils make little progress in their learning.

22 Teachers use resources well in most lessons. They make good use of the time available and the pace of teaching is often brisk. This keeps pupils on their toes and challenges them to work hard at their tasks. At Key Stage 1, teachers make particularly good use of support assistants in classrooms, involving them fully in lessons, so that pupils have constant contact and help from adults. This enables pupils to seek advice and develop confidence in their own abilities. Learning resources such as the new information technology suite are put to good use in helping pupils collect and interpret information for themselves. However, the lack of library facilities restricts the opportunities pupils have to research and study independently.

23 Teaching for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils with English as an additional language is good when withdrawn for extra support and when they are taught in the classroom. The activities planned have clear learning objectives, which match the requirements in their individual education plans, and these help pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy. Support staff help pupils to gain basic skills and this enables them to take an active part in class activities. The benefit pupils gain from this help is seen in improved reading by pupils in the early part of Key Stage 2. Some pupils have individual plans to help them improve their behaviour and teachers take these into account when teaching groups of pupils. This helps more pupils to make an active contribution to lessons.

24 Teachers' ongoing assessment of pupils' work is good. Many teachers use questions well to encourage pupils to say what they know. They use this information and observations as pupils work to identify how well pupils are working and achieving. In the best literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers use the conclusions of the lessons to evaluate the success of the lesson. They use the information they gain to plan the next lesson more effectively. Assessment of learning is less successful when teachers tell pupils too many facts without asking questions to see if they have understood.

25 Targets are set for pupils after the results of the National Curriculum tests have been analysed. When they mark work, some teachers point out to pupils how they can improve their writing. However, although teachers tell pupils when they have done good work, they do not tell them what is good about their work. This would boost pupils' knowledge of their own learning and help to contribute to the positive image the school is trying to promote. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge of their own learning. In some cases, they have a good idea of how they are learning. For instance, in a Year 2 music lesson pupils produced animal sounds confidently and had a good sense of achievement; under-fives take a real pride in their artwork.

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

26 The 1996 inspection report judged that there was a broad and balanced curriculum with the pupils at its centre. In most cases it met the requirements of the National Curriculum, the exception being some aspects of information technology. The curriculum for the under fives was appropriate and, overall, the curriculum was designed to ensure that learning was systematic, continuous and cohesive. In the intervening period, the school has adapted well to national initiatives and today, the curriculum continues to reflect the above qualities, and in many respects, to show improvement, though design and technology is not as strong.

27 The curriculum meets the statutory requirements and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Children under five are moved too quickly on to work from the National Curriculum. They do not have enough chances to build basic creative, physical and personal skills. Good attention is given to the core subjects especially the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Some of the

non-core subjects have less time than is usual; in particular design and technology is not given enough attention. There has been an improvement in art, music, information technology and geography since the previous inspection.

28 Teachers evaluate the planned curriculum regularly in order to monitor that it develops skills and knowledge systematically and progressively. Co-ordinators monitor their subjects through pupils' work and teachers' evaluations and use these to revise the planned programme. Most subjects follow the national schemes of work, but more work needs to be done to adapt these to the school's specific needs.

29 There are not enough opportunities in lessons for pupils to develop independent learning and research skills. Lessons in art and design and technology are too prescriptive so that pupils do not develop their own ideas and imagination or express themselves creatively enough. There are some opportunities for older pupils to show responsibility and initiative, for instance helping younger pupils and running the school bank.

30 There is good provision for pupils with statements of special educational need, including work to match abilities and careful monitoring of their progress towards their individual learning targets. This ensures that statements are implemented. The school meets the statutory requirements in their provision for special educational needs very well indeed. Pupils usually receive a broad and balanced curriculum; however, there are occasions when pupils miss foundation subjects such as religious education when withdrawn for learning support. Contacts with external agencies are good and key staff are well informed about pupils' particular needs. Documentation shows that annual and transitional reviews of pupils' statements meet the necessary requirements.

31 The curriculum for pupils with English as an additional language is also well thought out. There are few pupils who speak languages other than English at home, but their individual needs are well provided for by both the teaching and non-teaching staff. These pupils progress well, and by the end of school they speak with confidence and accuracy and their written work matches that of the other pupils in quality.

32 Homework is used very effectively throughout the school to support English and mathematics. Older pupils also have tasks to support science, history and geography lessons. Homework is set, collected and marked regularly.

33 Good use is made of the learning resources available though the lack of a school library impacts on how independence and personal study are developed. Good use is made of visits to support learning and other activities, such as the artists who helped create the millennium frieze and the large outdoor book. Every class visits a place of interest, for instance the local museum to support history and a local farm by younger pupils. Older pupils have a residential visit. There are a limited number of extra-curricular clubs.

34 Equal opportunities are satisfactory. Where pupils are withdrawn for extra support, the school monitors this and takes appropriate steps to minimise the effect on other areas of the curriculum. All pupils have an equal opportunity to participate in the other activities provided although the programme for extra-curricular activities is not as good as found in other schools.

35 There is a caring and supportive ethos in school that makes very good provision for pupils' moral and social development within a community in which each individual is seen as a valued member. Provision for spiritual development of pupils is good and there is satisfactory provision for their cultural development. Social and moral development is very good and is a strength of the school.

36 The fostering of spiritual development in the curriculum is good and has improved from the last inspection. Pupils are enabled to consider their own values, explore traditions and reflect on their own and others' beliefs through work in art, English, history, science and religious education. Awe and wonder were experienced by reception children observing the effects of the wind on blowing bubbles and first experiences using charcoal in art. Displays of art and natural materials give pupils the opportunity to explore the beauty and wonder of the world around them. An act of collective worship begins each day for each key stage with a suitable atmosphere for worship created and time

for prayer and reflection. As well as observing festivals and celebrations, themes are appropriately chosen which support the school's strong emphasis on personal responsibility, caring and respecting differences. Excellent input to these occasions is given through the visits of the local vicar and other visitors. At some assemblies pupils' successes in and out of school are shared and celebrated by adults and children.

37 Pupils' moral development is very good. It is fostered through the school's behaviour policy. Children are encouraged to understand the difference between right and wrong. Teachers use rewards and sanctions very effectively to handle potentially very difficult behaviour by some pupils and are supported ably by the very good learning assistants. School, playground and classroom rules are well displayed and clearly understood by pupils. Codes of conduct are effectively implemented both through direct teaching as in the case of the treatment of insects, handling of resources and safe use of apparatus, and through the good role models set by all staff. In their management of children sensitively and considerately, illustrated beautifully by the nursery teacher faced with a very difficult situation, pupils are led to value opinions, work co-operatively and develop a respect for others and materials.

38 The provision for pupils' social development is very good. Relationships between pupils, staff and all staff involved in the life of the school bring a strong sense of community and shared ideals and are important factors in securing pupils' good attitudes to behaviour and self discipline. Year 6 pupils are given opportunities to assist with infant children at playtimes, act as monitors and prepare the hall for acts of collective worship. Year 6 pupils are elected for the positions of head boy and head girl. The school council is comprised of pupils chosen from Years 2 to 6 to represent their classes. Opportunities are provided for pupils to work co-operatively in many subjects such as literacy, science and physical education. The school organises residential visits where pupils learn social and life skills. Pupils are encouraged to think of others and visit the local home for the elderly. Many parents agreed that the school made their children more mature and responsible.

39 The cultural development of pupils is satisfactory and efforts have been taken to address the criticisms of the previous inspection. Understanding and appreciation of the multi-cultural nature of society has been fostered but for a school set in an urban city like Birmingham it remains limited. The range and quantity of books about other cultures have been improved significantly with sets of story and guided readers available in all classrooms. Religious education makes a strong contribution by children learning about different faiths, traditions and festivals. Cultural experiences are broadened through the study of artists from many cultures, through insights into their own heritage from history and literature and through trips to the theatre and museums. Children learn about other countries and communities in geography. The school has benefited from a number of visitors who are invited into the school to present talks on a number of topics.

40 There is some involvement with the local community, including charities, churches and the local bank, but much of this is in its early stages of development. There is, however, a well established and productive relationship with the Grendon Community Project which is very helpful in integrating the school and the local community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41 The previous inspection report identified that Grendon was a caring school with effective means to ensure that pupils were looked after properly and that they were given good support and guidance in personal and educational matters. The school has more than maintained these good procedures and today, it cares well for all its pupils and provides good support, welfare and guidance for them. This is a tangible strength, much appreciated by parents.

42 Staff know all the pupils well and there are good systems in place to monitor pupils' academic progress and personal development. This means the pupils can make the most of the educational opportunities offered to them and learn at good rates.

43 Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for. The special educational needs co-ordinator, in co-operation with the headteacher, is responsible for the implementation of the very successful behavioural policy. The school was chosen to pilot the 'Framework for Intervention' that

promotes positive discipline and focuses attention on learners. It involves local authority support services in giving advice and training and teachers are trained in the implementation of the policy in practice. Staff are released from classes to monitor practice in other classrooms. This process has had a very good effect on learning for pupils with special educational needs.

44 The day-to-day pastoral care of pupils is centred around the individual class teacher who provides a good level of care, support and guidance. Pupils get on well with their teachers and know they are people to trust with problems and concerns. The staff respond well to this and are seen regularly to be talking to pupils about different matters at all times of the school day.

45 Effective child protection measures are in place which are understood by all staff and the school pays good attention to the health, safety and welfare of its pupils. There are good fire safety and first aid provision, for example.

46 The various systems in place for checking and promoting good behaviour and improving attendance are well structured and successful, complete with a well designed and well understood array of rewards and sanctions. Any bullying or inappropriate behaviour is dealt with swiftly and effectively. The result is seen in an orderly school where hard work is the usual run of things.

47 Staff have good knowledge of how well pupils are learning. The systems to assess attainment and rates of progress work well. Good interpretation is made of the results of National Curriculum tests and assessments and a number of other useful means of assessing pupils' standard of achievement. The data produced is evaluated carefully, presented in easily understood ways and is easy to use. This leads to the setting of good targets for learning, whether for whole age groups or individual pupils. The consistency of use of the information produced by assessment is good. All staff have clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils and take effective action to help them improve and progress well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48 In 1996, inspectors stated that the school and parents were equal partners in the education of the pupils. There were good systems in place to keep parents informed about their children's progress and parents played a good role in school. Today, these things are still evident, there is a good, well structured partnership with parents, they are welcomed into school and they receive good quality information about what is happening.

49 Communication with parents is of high standard, with good, clear and easily understood information, including advance notice of curriculum topics. This is provided on a regular basis and parents value and welcome this helpful information warmly.

50 The school has established good links with parents of pupils with special educational needs and they are involved positively in the reviews of their children's progress. Parents are able contribute to assessments and reviews of statements and a clear record is kept of the discussion and decisions of these meetings.

51 The parents and friends association plays a useful role by organising appropriate social and fundraising events and parents are generally supportive of school, though not all of them take a greater part in school life. However, attendance at parent-teacher meetings is high and parents welcome the useful and up-to-date information given to them at these events. The governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus are well arranged, readable and informative and meet statutory requirements. Similarly, the annual written report for parents about their children's progress is clear and informative and gives good pointers for future improvement. The school carries out annual surveys of parents to establish their concerns and views. It takes good action where appropriate and informs the parents of the results well.

52 Homework provision is well organised and parents are encouraged to support their children's learning at home, with good effect. A few parents help in school on a regular basis, though it is proving difficult to attract more parents to help with learning and out of school hours activities. Few parents have complaints, though some make helpful suggestions for ways to improve the school. Management acts courteously and well when contacted in such ways. Parents talk very positively of

the school's openness and the helpfulness of all staff.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53 Management came out well in the previous inspection report. Many strengths were identified in 1996, not least the effective leadership given by the headteacher and the effective support afforded by the senior management team and subject co-ordinators. All staff and governors played a good role in management and everyone shared the same goals. This is just as much true today. The many very good qualities of management are the reason why Grendon Primary School is the successful place it is.

54 The headteacher is one of the school's major assets. She has determination, insight and personality in equal measure. Staff and governors respond well to the very good lead she gives and are very willing and happy to contribute to the overall management of the school. Other key staff, including the deputy head, have very effective qualities as managers, they work hard with very good effect and together, they move the school forward at a good rate.

55 The visitor to school is struck immediately by the positive, productive yet welcoming feel to the school, whether in classrooms, offices or other places. Everyone has an important role that centres on providing the best for the pupils. The school operates like a completed jigsaw. All the pieces are in the correct place and are well bonded together. The interlocking is strengthened by good procedures for monitoring, evaluating and boosting standards and by the efficient web of communication that keeps everyone well informed of core priorities. The school's major strength is its united stance to bring improvement, a willingness to discuss shortcomings openly and the celebration of success which rewards and energises staff to even better things.

56 Subject co-ordinators carry out their duties well. They have good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of their subject or aspect and they give good support to colleagues in making improvements. The school's system for monitoring provision and performance is well bedded in and the information produced is put to good use. The overall provision for teachers' in-service training is good. This has been especially well deployed to support literacy and numeracy, having a significant impact on school improvement.

57 The special educational needs co-ordinator leads her aspect very well indeed. She is well qualified and has developed very good relationships with external support agencies, and ensures that pupils get the best available in terms of resources and expertise. Classroom assistants are well trained and have a clear role in supporting these pupils. Good planning and organisation results in a very efficient provision in the use of time and resources. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and this enables her to support teachers throughout the school in providing a good learning environment for pupils. She is a member of the senior management team and has a strategic influence on developments and priorities in planning for special educational needs provision. The headteacher is very involved in developments and considers this an area of prime importance in promoting school improvement and higher standards. She supports the special educational needs co-ordinator and staff very well.

58 The provision for English as an additional language is well managed. This ensures that staff know the particular needs of the pupils and enables them to provide good support in lessons. The progress of these pupils is tracked regularly and any under-achievement identified clearly. There is clear and shared commitment to good standards for pupils whose home language is not English.

59 The governors take a central role in the school. Governors make sure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities by publishing all the necessary information and by conforming to the requirements of the National Curriculum amongst other charges. They are well informed, give good support and increasingly ask questions to establish whether decisions taken are the right ones at the right time. Governors ensure that the provision for special educational needs is adequately funded to achieve the priorities set. The governor with responsibility for the area has the expertise to assist governors in the decisions they must make in the strategic management of special needs in the school. The governors are effective critical friends of the school, they know its strengths and weaknesses well and are alert to the need to work for best value, and to build it well into their procedures. Overall, governors are pursuing the principles of best value effectively.

60 The process of identifying, setting and prioritising targets for school improvement is shared very well amongst the staff and governors. The school development is crisp and well focused on what matters and the action taken to meet the targets is very successful. The result is a good level of teaching and learning quality, a well thought-out curriculum that provides well for all of the needs of the pupils and improving standards. It also ensures that the school's aims and values underpin the work of the school well and that they are met in full.

61 The school puts finance and other resources to good use. Financial planning is very well tailored to the school's key priorities and funding is spent wisely. This includes the considerable additional funding that the school receives for pupils with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language. New technology is utilised well to support administrative and management tasks and to bring added efficiency to procedures.

62 There is a sufficient number of appropriately qualified staff to meet the needs of pupils and to teach all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Overall there is a satisfactory match between the number and experience of teachers and the needs of the pupils. There is very good provision for special educational needs and the special needs co-ordinator works closely with other staff to the benefit of pupils. The staffing provision for the under-fives is good. The numbers and qualifications of non-teaching staff are good and this enables the work of teachers to be effectively supported.

63 There is enough accommodation for all requirements of the National Curriculum. The buildings and site supervisor ensures that the building is kept very clean and the site free from litter. Learning resources are satisfactory overall and are very good for information technology. Staff ensure that the environment is made pleasant with lively and attractive wall displays that promote standards well. Although there are sufficient books in classrooms, there is no school library.

64 There is no dedicated safe area for children under five in the reception class where they can develop physical and spatial skills with equipment such as three-wheeled toys. However, there is an adjacent fenced area available to the nursery for this purpose. Hard and grassed areas are otherwise adequate for pupils' play and learning. The recent provision of wooden playground furniture, the ball scoops, seating, small apparatus, and the playground markings make the outdoor areas an adventurous and secure learning environment for pupils. There is adequate provision for pupils who have limited mobility.

65 Staff take a pride in the school, so, for example the buildings and site supervisor and secretary, who are key members of staff, carry out their duties very well and help to present the school as a caring, well turned-out establishment where people matter. This influences the pupils who are pleased to come to the effective school that Grendon Primary School is. Parents support this judgement, they told inspectors that the school is well managed. This is obviously the case and parents receive good value for the money that is invested in the school for them.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66 Grendon Primary School is an effective organisation. The headteacher has ensured all staff are committed to the best for the pupils. As in any school, there are a number of things that can be improved. With this in mind, the school should continue its good work to raise standards by:

Improving standards in English, particularly writing, by:

- Providing ample opportunity in English lessons to develop different forms of writing.
- Including more extended writing in the curriculum.
- Making sure that different forms of writing are incorporated into a range of other subjects.
- Monitoring carefully the rate of improvement.

(Paragraphs 5, 6, 18, 25, 89 and 124)

Providing more opportunities for pupils to develop the appropriate level of independence, responsibility and creativity in their learning by:

- Promoting such skills more in subjects such as design and technology;
- Allowing pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, more opportunities to research information for themselves;
- Giving more chances for pupils to select their own resources and materials in lessons;
- Letting pupils choose their own ways of recording their work more often;
- Ensuring that children under the age of five have ample enough opportunities to investigate and take part in structured play experiences related to the desirable learning outcomes.

(Paragraphs 14, 20, 22, 27, 29, 33, 69, 73, 77, 78, 116)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	88
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	17	44	33	2		

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)	22.5	391
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		184

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		76

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.2
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	35	63

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	24	27
	Girls	34	31	35
	Total	58	55	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94	87	98
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	25	26
	Girls	33	32	32
	Total	58	57	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92	90	92
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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	29	22	51

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	18	21
	Girls	11	11	15
	Total	29	29	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	57 (60)	57 (47)	71 (51)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	20
	Girls	10	11	13
	Total	26	28	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	51	55	65
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	305
Any other minority ethnic group	22

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	7	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)	18
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	197

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	52

Number of pupils per FTE adult	12
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998-9
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	£
Total income	786593
Total expenditure	769352
Expenditure per pupil	1733
Balance brought forward from previous year	24906
Balance carried forward to next year	42147

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Number of questionnaires sent out:	437
Number of questionnaires returned:	124

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	63	33	3	0	1
My child is making good progress in school	59	36	4	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good	49	44	4	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	40	52	6	2	1
The teaching is good	67	31	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	53	45	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	71	28	0	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	74	26	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents	44	52	3	0	0
The school is well led and managed	63	31	2	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	58	37	5	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	20	47	19	2	12

Other issues raised by parents

Seven parents wrote comments on the reverse of the questionnaire. One wrote that there was not enough homework, one wanted more extra-curricular clubs and societies and one felt there should be more support for pupils with special educational needs. Otherwise, the response was very positive. Parents feel their children settle well and make a good start to school, that they are encouraged to do their best and that all the staff, led by the headteacher, work hard to provide the best education possible. In addition, they felt that Grendon Primary School is improving all the time. The inspection team agrees with the views of parents wholeheartedly.

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

67 In the 1996 inspection report, the education of children aged under five was deemed to be effective, though there were some differences in provision in the nursery and reception classes. The reception year was singled out as a strength of the school. During the current inspection it became evident that the school has made good progress in ironing out the differences between the two, though there are still a number of improvements to complete.

68 Forty-five children under five attend the nursery class part-time. There are also children under five in the two reception classes, where children move to full-time education from the age of four. Two thirds of the children in the reception classes were under five at the time of this inspection.

69 The quality of provision for the under-fives has generally been maintained since the last inspection and is continuing to give children a good start to their education. Standards of teaching have improved in the nursery, there have been some effective initiatives in the recording of children's progress and some useful new links have been set up with parents. The over-direction of activities by teachers, and the lack of structure in free-play sessions remain areas for improvement in both year groups, however.

70 On admission to the nursery, the majority of children display expected levels of attainment, although an increasing number have speech and language delay. Pupils' achievements on moving to the reception class, when measured on the Birmingham accredited baseline assessment scales, again indicate average attainment overall, and all children continue to make good progress throughout the year.

71 Standards of attainment for children in the nursery and reception classes are satisfactory overall, and most will achieve the expected levels of learning in all areas by the time they are five years old. Standards in literacy and numeracy skills are good, giving children a strong foundation for their learning in these areas. Higher achieving pupils make very good progress in reading and mathematics, and children with English as an additional language, or those who have special educational needs develop quickly and make good progress because of the effective support they receive.

72 Children enjoy coming to school and show good enthusiasm for their learning. They are able to follow instructions well, and to work together with good concentration and perseverance, particularly in the reception classes, where they are expected to organise their own learning within a familiar routine. In both year groups, they demonstrate good manipulative skills, especially when using a paintbrush or a pencil. The nursery children produced some beautiful 'still-life' pictures of flowers in the style of Van Gogh, using colours well and naming flower parts correctly. Reception class children have a thorough understanding of the conventions of writing, as they work from left to right in their books, cheerfully pointing out the need for finger spaces 'to make sense.' Children are confident, well-behaved and friendly, reflecting the very warm and caring relationships that exist between the staff and children in both year groups. At times in the nursery, however, children find it hard to choose or develop an activity, looking to adults to guide them, and flitting from one activity to another when that guidance is not available. This is particularly so for some of the boys, and for children whose first language is not English. In the reception classes there is little opportunity for choice, as children follow the pre-arranged routine for the day. Children may therefore become over-dependent on the adults in their lives to guide and advise them, and lack opportunity to use their initiative effectively.

73 The quality of teaching is good overall in the nursery and reception classes, and teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievements. Most of the staff have a thorough knowledge of curriculum requirements both from the *Desirable Learning Outcomes* for children under five, and from the National Curriculum and the recently introduced national strategies for literacy and numeracy. This knowledge is evident in the daily plans teachers make for their lessons, and in discussions with staff. Very effective use is made of support staff who also share in the planning of

lessons. However, longer term planning is based almost entirely on the national strategies for older children, with a heavy emphasis on continuity and progression across Key Stage 1. Some areas of the *Desirable Learning Outcomes* are then added to the medium term plans, giving appropriate emphasis to the development of personal and social skills, to language and literacy and to mathematics. There is still too little reference in the planning to the development of children's creativity, where they learn to express their ideas or develop their imagination, and too little opportunity for children to experience this aspect with appropriate adult support, rather than adult direction.

74 There was some very successful teaching seen in both year groups, where children were able to achieve good standards of work. In the reception class, teachers encouraged children to develop some intricate patterns in their paper weaving, and in the nursery a music session gave children delightful opportunities to interpret sounds through their own choice of musical instrument. Although there was no unsatisfactory teaching at this stage, in some less successful lessons the learning objectives were not achieved totally because some group tasks were too difficult for pupils to achieve on their own, or because teachers' time was too fragmented. Sometimes tasks, such as the 'shapes' game in both year groups, did little to move learning forward. These are planning issues, which relate to the purpose of lessons, but they also present opportunities for the introduction of structured play sessions, where appropriate interaction with adults can exploit the learning potential of an activity.

75 The curriculum for the early years children is broad, covering all areas of learning, but at present lacks balance. Children have excellent opportunities to learn basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, and show good progress in writing their names, recognising letter sounds and in number operations.

76 They have stimulating activities in knowledge and understanding of the world, as they notice and record the changes that occur in the weather, or over the time since they were babies. Their experience of information technology is developing well, with suitable computer programs used to support learning. Children can generally operate the computer independently showing appropriately developed skills.

77 Physical development is well organised, with timetabled use of large apparatus in the hall for climbing and balancing activities, which children use competently. Nursery children also have access to a secure outdoor play area, where they can ride wheeled toys and play on slides or with bats and balls for a short period each day. These sessions are very structured, sometimes limiting opportunities for children to develop imaginative games, particularly in the winter. Reception children spend their break and lunchtimes in the playground with the older children in the school, where lunchtime supervisors play games with them. They have no access to the large toys and secure play area near the nursery, with limitations therefore on their opportunities to develop appropriate physical and creative skills.

78 There are few activities for either year group to use role-play, and very few dressing up clothes to enable children to re-enact stories or events in their lives. Creative activities are often adult-led, which encourages children's skill development appropriately, but does not emphasise the imaginative element. The stimulating and attractive displays in all the classrooms contribute well to children's spiritual development, as well as reinforcing their learning and valuing their work.

79 Teachers know the children well and check their learning systematically and effectively. They use this information to plan the next stages, ensuring there is appropriate progression in children's development. Newly developed links with parents in the Nursery through newsletters and homework sheets are providing helpful opportunities to enhance children's early learning. Reading diaries in reception provide useful home-school links. There is effective monitoring of the planned curriculum by the teachers concerned, with helpful evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of previous lessons. The nursery co-ordinator liaises with the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator to plan the curriculum. Discussions will be more effective when the *Desirable Learning Outcomes/Early Learning Goals* become the prime focus for the under-fives' planning. Such a step is likely to improve the curriculum, and enhance the good provision that already exists for the youngest children in the school.

ENGLISH

80 Since the last inspection in December 1996, the results achieved by seven-year-olds in national tests in reading have risen from below the national average to above the national average. In writing, results have risen to stand above the national average. Standards in Key Stage 2 have fluctuated more, showing a "W" profile without the last upstroke. The quality of teaching has improved at both key stages, in particular at Key Stage 1. The management of the subject is very good because the co-ordinator has comprehensive knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in standards. She has overseen the introduction of the literacy strategy and the setting arrangements at the end of Key Stage 2 well, and has spurred all staff to pursue improvement with enthusiasm and effort.

81 In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 or higher in reading was well above the national average and the percentage reaching the higher Level 3 was above the national average. In writing, the percentage reaching the expected Level 2 was close to the national average. The percentage reaching the higher Level 3 was above the national average. When compared to pupils from similar schools, the number of pupils reaching Level 2 or above in reading was very high and those achieving higher levels was well above average. In the writing tests, the number of pupils reaching Level 2 and above, and higher levels, was well above average in comparison with similar schools. Overall, pupils' performance in reading tests was very high in comparison with similar schools and well above average in writing. Girls outperform boys in both reading and writing tests and this reflects results nationally.

82 In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 was well below the national average. When compared to pupils from similar schools, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 4 and above was broadly in line with the average but the percentage reaching the higher Level 5 was below the average. There is no clear pattern for the difference in attainment between boys and girls. In two out of the four years since 1996, in 1997 and 1998, girls outperformed boys, but in 1996 and 1999, boys did better than girls.

83 Inspection findings are that by the age of seven, pupils' standards in English are above the national average. Given the satisfactory level of attainment of most pupils on entry to school, this represents good progress. By the age of eleven, inspection findings are that most pupils are working below national averages. However, taking into account the low level of achievement recorded by this group of pupils in the national tests in 1995, this represents sound improvement in standards during this period.

84 By the age of seven, most pupils make steady progress with their speaking and listening skills and the attainment of these pupils matches the expected level for their age. Some pupils have good speaking skills. Most pupils listen carefully during the literacy hour, take part in discussion and answer questions willingly. The average and higher attaining pupils talk about books they have read but less able pupils find it difficult to describe characters and events in the books. By the age of eleven, most pupils speak with confidence to adults and other pupils. They listen carefully to instructions and the stories they are read. Because of this, they retell the main points of many folk tales. Pupils are developing a wide vocabulary and by Year 6 are able to provide a large number of words in specific groups, for example, words ending in 'al'.

85 Attainment in reading by the age of seven is similar to the standards reached in the 1999 National Curriculum tests and is well above the national average. It is close to the national average by the age of eleven. By the age of seven, pupils enjoy reading books and many borrow books from the local library, as well as taking books home from school. Most pupils describe their favourite parts of stories and talk about the characters. Pupils use letter sounds to help them read unfamiliar words and some break the words into syllables. Although some pupils read in a flat voice, most try to put expression into their reading and take notice of punctuation such as exclamation marks. They know terms such as 'title', 'author' and 'illustrator'. High and average achieving pupils know that they use the contents and index pages to find information but lower achieving pupils are less sure of how to do this.

86 In Key Stage 2, pupils make sound progress in reading and by the end of Year 6, the

attainment of most pupils is appropriate for their age. Higher attaining pupils read with expression and are confident readers. These pupils show enjoyment in reading and respond to humour in books. They offer opinions about books, talk about the parts of books they have enjoyed, and sometimes give examples from stories to support their opinion. Average and lower attaining readers are less keen on reading. Fewer of them borrow books from the local libraries or were able to talk about their favourite books or authors. There is evidence, particularly in the early years of the key stage, that the additional literacy support given to some of these pupils is raising standards. Some lower achieving pupils have poor knowledge of how to build words. Higher and average achieving pupils use the contents and index pages confidently to find information and some understand the use of the glossary. About half the pupils understand the use of the library classification system but they get little practice in this skill in school as there is no school library.

87 At Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress in the development of their writing skills. By the end of Year 2, the attainment of most pupils is in line with that expected for their age. Pupils write about things they have done at home and write poetry about the weather. They write imaginative stories and learn to set down recipes for cooking simple items. The more able pupils write in sentences that are correctly punctuated with full stops and capital letters and they try to make their sentences longer and more interesting by joining phrases using commas. Lower attaining pupils write in much shorter sentences but these are usually correctly punctuated. Most pupils try to introduce speech into their stories, sometimes with the correct punctuation and many try to find interesting words to make their work more lively.

88 Writing is used appropriately in other subjects in Key Stage 1. For instance, pupils in Year 1 wrote in geography about an island in Scotland, comparing it with Birmingham. In Year 2 in history, they wrote about the Great Fire of London and Samuel Pepys' diaries. Spelling of simple words is usually accurate and they make good attempts at longer words. Handwriting is generally correctly formed.

89 Pupils at Key Stage 2 make unsatisfactory progress with their writing and achieve standards that are below national averages. Higher attaining pupils use a wide range of interesting words to make their writing more interesting and to create atmosphere, for example, 'bulging eyes' and 'I was speechless with surprise when...'. However, average and lower attaining pupils, although they often suggest interesting words during class discussions, do not often use them in their writing. This reflects the lack of interest that many of these pupils show in reading. Pupils separate their writing into paragraphs, use common forms of punctuation accurately and the higher attaining pupils use commas, exclamation and question marks and punctuate direct speech correctly. Although pupils write in a variety of styles, including poetry, re-telling stories, making up their own stories and book reviews, they do not get sufficient opportunities to write at length in subjects such as history or geography. By the age of eleven, handwriting is usually fluent, joined and legible and some pupils are developing a mature style.

90 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and follow a carefully devised course of learning that is stated clearly in their individual education plans. Pupils for whom English is an additional language receive good support. Most of these pupils speak and write a good standard of English.

91 Pupils enjoy English lessons. At Key Stage 1, pupils are keen to answer questions and become excited when teachers and classroom assistants act out parts of stories. In these situations their enthusiasm prompts them to ask their own questions and increases their understanding of the characters in the story. Pupils at this age settle down to work quickly and concentrate on what they have to do. At Key Stage 2, most pupils respond well to the firm and calm control of teachers. Towards the end of the key stage, they act sensibly when checking each other's work. They listen well and try to give sensible answers. No instances of silliness were seen when pupils gave answers and this shows that they respect and value the contributions of others.

92 Overall, the quality of teaching in English is good throughout the school. There is some very good teaching in both key stages and some excellent teaching in Key Stage 1. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in English. Teachers give priority to the literacy hour and they plan their literacy lessons very well. They have a good knowledge of English and teach the basic skills well. For example, in Key Stage 1, the teacher gave a clear explanation of what predicting what comes next in

the story means. In Key Stage 2, pupils are taught the elements that go to make up traditional stories, such as the need for good and bad characters and the inclusion of a moral in many of the stories.

93 In an excellent lesson, clear and detailed planning illustrated the teacher's very good knowledge of the subject. She presented the work in a simple way that enabled pupils to build up their understanding of the character of the wolf in *Red Riding Hood*. The lesson was brisk and the teacher used praise, encouragement and humour very well so that pupils were eager to answer questions. Pupils' interest, participation and enthusiasm were maintained to the end when the teacher and classroom assistant acted the part of Goldilocks and one of the bears while the children questioned them. Although there was no unsatisfactory teaching, teaching is less successful when the initial pace of the lesson is allowed to drop, teachers present confusing work and pupils are not sufficiently involved in the lesson.

94 The curriculum is broad and balanced and all pupils have equal access to it. The school monitors pupils' progress through the curriculum well. Each pupil has targets for his or her own improvement. In Key Stage 1, they are based on the results of the baseline tests taken at the age of five and in Key Stage 2, they are based on the results from the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1. Teachers assess pupils' progress towards these targets at the end of each year and amend the targets accordingly.

95 The subject co-ordinator has been in charge of the subject since last September and is a temporary replacement during the absence of the regular co-ordinator. However, in that short period she has worked hard to improve pupils' performance in English. In particular she has worked with teachers to ensure that they are aware of the standards pupils reached in both key stages. She has seen all her colleagues teach and given feedback on her observations. School-based teacher training to improve guided writing and reading resulted from these observations, as was the need to make teachers' learning objectives clearer. With the positive approach shown by the co-ordinator and the desire of the whole staff to do their best for the pupils, the school is in a good position to improve results in English.

MATHEMATICS

96 In the previous inspection report it was stated that standards in mathematics were satisfactory through the school, pupils made satisfactory strides with their learning and the subject was taught soundly. Since that time, standards in mathematics have fluctuated, though the school has made good improvement to the way in which the subject is taught and this is having a positive impact on standards.

97 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was well above national averages in the 1999 National Curriculum tests, for both pupils attaining Level 2 and Level 3. Inspection evidence indicates that this high level of performance is currently maintained and that pupils will attain at similar levels in this year's tests. At Key Stage 2 pupils' 1999 results were below the national averages, in line with those of similar schools, but with girls' results well below expected levels when compared with boys. Inspection evidence shows that the school has made a very good improvement. Standards are seen to be such that pupils are very close to the national averages in their attainment, and girls' attainment has improved compared to the boys' to near national average levels. It is likely that pupils will reach national average levels in this year's statutory tests.

98 Most pupils in Year 2 have secure knowledge of number for addition and subtraction to at least 20 and are able to identify number patterns to 100 using multiples of 2, 5 and 10. They can tell the time to half and quarter hours and use the fractions, half and quarter, with understanding. All pupils are beginning to understand place value for tens and units and the higher attainers work with numbers up to a thousand. They have good mental strategies and instant recall in mental mathematics for numbers up to thirty. Most pupils understand how to double and halve and many can use pattern to add or subtract numbers to 100. They multiply by repeated addition. The most able can partition numbers to 100 to add or subtract. Their knowledge of two and three-dimensional shapes is good, as is their use of measures. They are seen to record data on pictograms and bar graphs with understanding and the more able to use positional ideas on a co-ordinate grid to alter location in preparation for using the 'Turtle'. They have a good mathematical vocabulary that consolidates their

learning.

99 At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils skills in number are approaching satisfactory levels. Many have good mental methods for calculating amounts, understand long multiplication using the method of partition and are able to use appropriate numerical methods in arithmetic problems involving money, metric measure and decimals. They have a good knowledge of fractions and the important concept of equivalence, the higher attainers understanding the rules for operating on fractions for addition and subtraction. Pupils have knowledge of shape and position to the required standards with some able to use number pairs to record positions of shapes in the four co-ordinate axes under the operation of rotational symmetry. Sound knowledge of angle, data handling and the use of conversion and line graphs were observed.

100 Progress is good overall in Key Stage 1. For example, in reception, pupils learn to recognise shapes and solids using words such as 'corner' and 'side'. By the end of Year 2 pupils classify plane and solid shapes including pentagons and pyramids using language such as 'edge' and 'face'. They identify cuboids and can construct them from their nets. Pupils in reception count to 20 using counting boards and number lines. By Year 2 they are using these media to investigate patterns to 100 and explore ideas such as greater than, multiple, rounding up or down and equality. In Key Stage 2 pupils have made good progress to achieve the good improvement in standards of attainment. In Year 4 pupils plot points on a 10 by 10 co-ordinate grid. In Year 5 they construct bar graphs from data, and in Year 6 they can construct from given data and interpret line graphs. For example most were able to draw a graph of a journey and draw conclusions from the graphical display, some understand how to use conversion graphs degrees centigrade to Fahrenheit. The work on shape, measure and number shows good progress, amalgamated to their success in finding areas of mathematical figures up to parallelograms for the higher attainers.

101 Pupils are usually responsible and keen to learn, and have good attitudes to learning. They work well in co-operative groups and many examples of independent learning were seen where pupils supported each other and shared ideas. Most are attentive and only rarely was whole class discussion of learning interrupted by pupils. Pupils take care of the equipment provided and use it with care.

102 The quality of teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. Mathematics teaching is a strength in the school. In Key Stage 1 the teaching in seven out of ten lessons observed was good. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and match the work well to individuals' needs and abilities, including those pupils who have special needs. This promotes effective learning. Classrooms are well organised and resources used well to support learning. In Key Stage 2 teaching was again at least satisfactory in all lessons observed. In nine out of ten lessons the teaching was good or better. Half of all teaching was very good and one excellent lesson was seen. This indicates a high standard of teaching. Where teaching was very good the pace of the lesson moved smoothly and rapidly, and verbal feed back and the use of questioning to promote learning was very good. At the highest level an excellent knowledge of the subject was demonstrated along with the ability to involve pupils fully and to reach the targets set for learning. Overall, teachers use assessment well and plan learning effectively. They organise classroom assistants and volunteers well to support pupils' learning. Homework is used systematically at the end of key stages to consolidate class work.

103 The resources for learning are good and they have recently been supplemented to provide very effective support for the National Numeracy Strategy. The strategy has been adopted as the main core of the scheme used for teaching mathematics in the school. This has improved the continuity and progression of learning from year to year and for pupils of different abilities. The co-ordinator gives very good leadership and teachers' confidence in their ability to improve standards is high. He has non-contact time allocated to observe and assess teaching and is able to monitor teaching and learning. There is as yet little use of information technology in teaching. He and the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator have improved levels of co-operation and understanding between teachers in both key stages to promote better continuity. The establishment of sets for the teaching of mathematics in Key Stage 2 has had a marked effect on standards and has made a significant contribution to school improvement in the subject.

SCIENCE

104 Standards were average in the 1996 inspection report and science was taught satisfactorily, though there were not always enough opportunities for pupils to experiment and investigate for themselves. There is evident improvement in the way science is taught, as the overall quality is now good, though there are still a number of improvements to be made.

105 Teacher assessment in 1999 indicated that standards in science by the end of Key Stage 1 were broadly in line with the national average and above average for schools of a similar type. National tests by the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 show that standards are below in comparison with other schools but above for schools of a similar type. The trend shows a pattern of continued improvement in science over the last three years. Little difference in attainment is seen between boys and girls. Evidence from the inspection shows attainment at both stages to be in line with the national average and confirms the previous inspection findings. The difference in performance for Key Stage 2 can be explained. The school has examined weaknesses in National Curriculum test performance and strengthened the scheme of work by the addition of extra units, supported by the regular use of revision books for each of the attainment targets.

106 A very secure introduction to science is being given for pupils in the reception classes. Reception children can state that pushes and pulls are forces, describe the effects of the wind as a force and record in pictures the things which are moved by it. They are able to anticipate where objects will go when blown by the wind. Pupils in Year 1 carrying out an investigation into growing cress, make comparisons, measure its growth and describe what is happening. They can label, report differences and make observational drawings. Year 2 pupils match animals to designated habitats and know the conditions favoured by them. In earlier work they had recorded evidence by using histograms and Venn diagrams, could recognise a fair test and say what they thought would happen in their tests. At Key Stage 2 young children can see the purpose for fair testing in an investigation and show differences from 'before and after' measurements. Year 4 pupils can define solids, liquids and gases and are able to plan their own investigations into the separation of two solids. Scrutiny of Year 5 work shows that pupils have well developed skills in planning, make sensible predictions and conclusions and offer explanations for their findings. Year 6 pupils are able to use classification keys to identify living things and discuss the relevant questions and decision points when constructing their own keys. They can interpret text and diagrams to establish the order of planets from the sun.

107 Progress made by pupils is satisfactory across both key stages. In Key Stage 1 pupils are making gains in vocabulary and in the essential steps of enquiry. They are beginning to observe changes, link properties to their functions and develop the skills of writing investigations. In Key Stage 2 young pupils develop their recording techniques, are introduced to variables in experimentation and can offer conclusions for their results. At the upper end of the key stage, pupils consolidate the basic steps of experimental work, offer explanations for why things happened and begin to apply their knowledge of scientific issues. They are able to present very detailed and accurate definitions of scientific topics and concepts. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and receive good support from learning assistants. This is also the case for pupils with English as an additional language who make good strides with their learning because teachers support them effectively.

108 Pupils' attitudes towards science are good across the school. Pupils are attentive, interested and particularly enjoy practical work, as seen in the fieldwork on habitats carried out by Year 2. They approach work tasks sensibly and carefully, and collaborate well in the sharing of ideas and handling resources. There is a willingness to explain, take initiative and tackle their work purposefully. Behaviour is generally good but there are instances of inattention and disruption by a small minority of pupils as the previous report noted. In most classrooms there is a sense of effort and sustained concentration.

109 Science teaching observed in the inspection is good overall, ranging from very good to satisfactory. The approach in teaching is to develop science through enquiry and investigation, although in Year 6 classes the emphasis is directed to the strengthening of pupils' knowledge in preparation for the national tests. Lessons are invariably well structured, with the best having clear objectives, tasks which are graded for ability and good use made of a range of resources and methods. The management of pupils is generally good. Teachers have secure, and in a number of cases, very good subject knowledge. They make information relevant and understandable, challenge

children and through effective questioning make pupils justify their answers. For example a reception class teacher made the children answer questions of 'how' and 'why' when offering their answers. Several teachers make good use of assessment to match progress against learning objectives. Standards of marking are good with teachers providing supportive comments alongside observations that identify learning targets. In a few instances, teachers do not intervene enough to inject pace into lessons and, more importantly, assess children's understanding in order to set more demanding targets. Not enough emphasis is given to small group teaching in science rather than whole-class observation of demonstrations.

110 The policy and scheme of work ensure there is good coverage and balance across all aspects of the science curriculum. Planning is detailed and inconsistencies mentioned in the previous report have been addressed. The quantity and quality of pupils' work has much improved with a clear emphasis given to presentation and recording. Monitoring of planning and classroom practice has begun and is having a positive impact on the raising of standards. Assessment systems are in place to provide detailed information of pupils' progress and pinpoint learning needs. The school's analysis of pupils' performance and results has resulted in changes for the better in the curriculum and attainment. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through group work, field studies, handling and care of animals and displays. The subject is well resourced with good use made of the school grounds and local environment. The co-ordinator provides strong leadership and expertise in the subject, understanding the direction science should follow in the primary school. Standards in science are set well to improve because of the shared drive and direction seen in school.

ART

111 In 1996 standards in art were at the expected level at the end of both key stages and progress was satisfactory. Since then, there has been good improvement in teaching specific skills in sketching and drawing. There is a now greater emphasis on the artistic traditions of other cultures. Teaching has improved.

112 Pupils' knowledge of other artists and their work is good. In discussion a group of Year 6 pupils could recall a good number of famous artists and particular works which they had analysed. When presented with several reproductions the pupils compared the styles and techniques used and described the mood of different paintings. Pupils engaged in a lively discussion of reproductions of different styles of sculpture making some very astute observations of contemporary abstract works.

113 Standards of drawing and sketching from observation are good. Standards of painting are satisfactory. Pupils make sound progress through the school.

114 Pupils' attitudes are good. In the few lessons seen pupils enjoy the activities. They work with care, using the materials and tools sensibly. They are generally proud of their achievements. Behaviour in lessons is very good.

115 Teaching is good overall and can be very good. In a Year 5 lesson very good strategies were demonstrated enabling pupils to reproduce drawings in the style of L S Lowry. Pupils used variously shaped viewing frames to isolate a section of a black and white reproduction of their choice to focus on a small part of the work. In a Year 4 lesson pupils were asked to draw a subject first before painting in the outlines in the style of Renoir, the prior drawing made it difficult for pupils to achieve the painting style well.

116 Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to express themselves imaginatively through art. Teachers tightly direct much of the work. There are too few opportunities for abstract work, including creative abstract sculpture.

117 Art is closely linked to other areas of the curriculum, particularly literature and history. Large composite friezes using a range of media, including collage, are displayed throughout the school and changed regularly. These make a valuable contribution to the other subjects and the pleasant environment of the school.

118 The co-ordinator has worked hard to produce a very good policy file which includes a detailed

scheme of work and guidance for teachers. She sets a good example by the work undertaken in her own class. There is a good range of resources, which are neatly stored and easily accessible for teachers. Older pupils need opportunities to use softer watercolour brushes. Good resources are available to help teachers with specific techniques and skills.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

119 The previous inspection report judged that standards in design and technology were average, pupils made sound progress and that teaching was effective. Since then, teaching and learning opportunities have been limited by the demands of the literacy and numeracy strategies, and the work in design and technology is not as strong as it was.

120 It was possible to observe only one lesson during the inspection. Evidence was gained by discussion with pupils, a scrutiny of work available and the portfolio of previous work.

121 In the main, there are enough opportunities for pupils to meet the range of experiences specified by the National Curriculum, but some tasks can be too prescriptive. Discussions with Year 6 pupils suggest that, whilst pupils clearly have the skills and knowledge to design, make and evaluate a range of items, they are not given enough opportunities to take charge of their own learning and to select materials, tools and methods for themselves.

122 Design and technology is just about holding its own against other subjects in the curriculum, and a complete review of provision is overdue.

GEOGRAPHY

123 In the last inspection report, standards in geography were found to be satisfactory in Key Stage 1, but in need of some improvement for older pupils. Standards are now satisfactory in both key stages, although pupils' knowledge and understanding is inconsistently developed across Key Stage 2.

124 Only one lesson was seen during this inspection. Very little geography is taught across the school. Pupils' work was scrutinised and enthusiastic discussions were held with groups of pupils. Teachers' planning was analysed and discussed with the co-ordinator, as well as management of the subject. Pupils generally make satisfactory progress across both key stages, displaying an understanding of geographical skills by the end of Key Stage 2. For example, pupils enjoyed discussing the use of a compass to plan a route, and the use of symbols and keys to identify locations and geographical features. Pupils analyse their knowledge appropriately as they learn about the world beyond the United Kingdom, comparing the features of countries such as Nepal with their own local area. There is evidence of increasingly suitable use of the new information technology suite to enable pupils to discover information for themselves, but literacy skills are poorly developed in pupils' writing in geography.

125 Higher achieving pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress, particularly where lessons have a clear focus which reflect National Curriculum requirements, and where there is appropriate support or challenge, as there was in the observed lesson in Key Stage 1. Although pupils study a range of themes such as rivers and settlements, not all lessons are sufficiently closely linked to the National Curriculum. Where they are, they provide a systematic development of key geographical skills for all pupils in the class. There are some stimulating displays of pupils' work around the school, and many maps of different aspects of the world to reinforce pupils' learning, including a delightful display of Barnaby Bear's travels in Europe and America.

126 Teaching generally appears to be sound across both key stages, but it is clear that not all planning includes adequate reference to the learning that pupils have experienced before, particularly in Years 4 and 5. In these year groups, there is some confusion in pupils' minds about the relevance of information, and a lack of coherence and progression in their learning. Assessment opportunities are identified for all year groups, but as yet the information gathered about pupils' progress is not always used to ensure continuity in their learning.

127 Teachers have good subject knowledge, and the introduction of a new commercial curriculum document this academic year is enabling the co-ordinator to address some of the issues about progression. She checks pupils' work regularly across the school, and monitors teachers' planning. Systems are therefore developing well to improve further the teaching of geography.

HISTORY

128 Standards in history continue to be generally satisfactory across the school, as they were at the time of the last inspection.

129 Only one history lesson was observed during this inspection because of the limited amount taught, but it is evident from this and from discussions with pupils, together with analyses of their work, that pupils develop appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding of history by the end of Key Stage 2. There is some confusion in their learning during Years 3 and 4, and some lack of coherence in the curriculum, which reduces standards of attainment in the lower juniors, and has limited the development of history in the school since the last inspection. Pupils in other year groups make satisfactory progress, including the higher attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and also those with English as an additional language make good progress because they receive effective support.

130 Many pupils show enthusiasm for history, and are knowledgeable about the themes they are studying. Year 2 pupils demonstrated a good sense of chronology in their discussions about Florence Nightingale and the date of the Crimean War, and an understanding of the differences between life then and now. Year 6 pupils showed empathy for evacuees and their families when studying the Second World War, and some, particularly the boys, were able to give an appropriate account of the causes of the war. Pupils' work in books was less convincing, often showing a lack of care, with some poor literacy skills in Key Stage 2. Where pupils missed lessons, there is no indication that the work covered was made up later. This is contributing to the confusion of some pupils.

131 The quality of teaching in history is satisfactory overall. Teachers use a newly acquired commercial curriculum document for planning their lessons, which is enhancing their subject knowledge, and generally enabling them to identify clear learning objectives. Sufficient attention is not always paid to pupils' previous learning, however, particularly in Key Stage 2. This is limiting some pupils' opportunities to develop the appropriate skills in history in a systematic way as they progress through the school. The new planning documents are beginning to have a positive effect on the issue of progression in learning.

132 There is a well-organised supply of appropriate resources, particularly in information technology, and some very effective displays of children's work all around the school, which challenge an observer's knowledge. They make a significant contribution to the spiritual development of pupils, particularly those that reflect recent themes and topics studied by the pupils, such as the Millennium Window and the diaries written in the style of Pepys in Year 2.

133 Assessment of pupils' progress is generally based on the responses made in class and in books, and is still at an early stage of development. Recording of progress remains an issue to be resolved. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning and checks pupils' work regularly, advising appropriately where necessary. There is a portfolio of pupils' work, but as yet this is not linked to planning and assessment, as advised in the last inspection report. However, the school has a commitment to improving standards in history, which the planned and present systems underline.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

134 At the previous inspection, standards in information technology were unsatisfactory. This was largely due to lack of the necessary experiences across all strands of the subjects. Pupils learned to word process, but little else. Today, all this has changed. The school has created an impressive computer suite that is well resourced, used intensively and subject to continual improvement. Standards are much improved as a result, teaching is good and the curriculum is wide ranging, stimulating and well delivered. Information technology is a strength of the school and has been transformed totally.

135 Standards in information technology are good. From their earliest days in school, pupils have every chance to use the new computer suite. Reception pupils can be seen to switch the computers on, use the mouse to choose the program they want and then settle quickly to their tasks. They have the confidence that goes with good experience. In a Year 1 lesson, the pupils worked well together for lengthy periods, they put in much effort and built skills and knowledge well. By the end of the lesson they were skilled in selecting words from a word bank to use in simple sentences. They knew how to use the cursor to move to the insert point and make changes to existing text. This is work that is much beyond the expected level for such young pupils.

136 In Key Stage 2 these strong skills and basic knowledge of computers is extended well. Year 4 pupils, for example know how to use a program to help them classify animals. Their knowledge in this lesson was advanced in that they not only set out the work carefully on screen, but they imported pictures to enliven the presentation. By Year 6, pupils are completing quite complex tasks. In one lesson seen, they were compiling a spreadsheet using a commercial package, to calculate the cost of a school visit to Coventry Cathedral. They were coping with conventions such as “=D4/D2” and “format>cells>number” well. They were then fascinated to see how the cost was calculated so rapidly and that alterations to input values affected the overall result.

137 Pupils are enthusiasts for computers. The school meets this keenness well. Learning is fun, it is hard work, but pupils relish the challenges presented. They are not afraid of the hard work they are expected to put in and they concentrate very well on their tasks. Pupils settle to the work quickly, behave well and enjoy good relationships with other pupils. Their personal development is especially well fostered because of the investigative nature of much of the work.

138 Teaching has improved dramatically since the last inspection. It is of good quality in both key stages. Indeed, a high proportion is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are particularly successful in teaching basic skills of computer use. Lessons are motivating, challenging and enjoyable. Staff are enthusiasts for the subject too. A visit to the computer suite is usually enjoyable for teachers, pupils and outsiders alike.

139 Information technology is used very well to support studies in other subjects. English, mathematics and science are particularly well served. Much of the work seen in the computer suite was focused on developing pupils’ attainment in these key core subjects. Teachers also take every opportunity when teaching other subjects to use computers, CD-ROM and the Internet. This, in turn, helps pupils to progress well in the development of skills and knowledge in information and communications technology.

140 The subject is very well resourced. Besides the very good facilities in the suite, there are a good number of computers in classrooms. These are not used as intensively as in some schools, though the overall use of information technology is good. The subject is very well managed because the co-ordinator has good knowledge of how the subject is taught and learned in all parts of the school. The improvements made in information technology are testament to the successes of management.

MUSIC

141 Standards in music at Key Stage 1 have been maintained since the last inspection and are in line with national expectations. At Key Stage 2, standards have improved and are now in line with national expectations.

142 By the age of seven, pupils create fast and slow patterns of sound. They experiment with the sounds, using a range of instruments and learn to make their sounds soft and loud. Pupils produce sounds to accompany well-known stories such as *The Elves and the Shoemaker*. They use instruments to imitate the sound of snoring and hammers being used and use their voices to represent the sounds made by owls and cockerels. They learn to make sounds of differing qualities, producing clearer or quieter sounds to match the mood of the story. Pupils demonstrate their ability in reproducing appropriate sounds by giving a complete performance of the story.

143 At Key Stage 2, they sing tunefully when singing songs such as *Hairy, Scary Castle* and

accompany themselves with percussion instruments. However, pupils do not always listen to the words carefully enough to provide the correct accompaniment, although they make satisfactory progress in developing their performing skills. Pupils listen to music from other times, such as a Victorian dance written by Thomas Hardy. They pick out the rhythm very well by clapping and some pupils clap with one or more partners, showing the correct number of beats to the bar. Pupils identify the main instruments used are the violin, flute and drum, and recognise the importance of a drum in keeping the rhythm of the dance. When listening to the music for a second time, they identify the cello, tambourine and clarinet. Pupils also identify an instrument playing deep notes and make sensible suggestions that it might be a tuba or double bass. They learn that it is an old instrument called a 'serpent'. By listening carefully to the concluding bars of the music, pupils suggest the dancers were given time to bow and curtsy to their partners.

144 Most pupils enjoy music lessons. They respond well to the music that they hear and try hard to give sensible answers when asked to name instruments or talk about the rhythm. Pupils perform well in groups and show enthusiasm when offered the promise that they might perform for younger pupils. When choosing instruments, they take their turn and do not argue or become upset if they have to wait. Pupils try hard to do what their teachers ask. In a Year 1 lesson when they had to imitate animal sounds, pupils took an obvious delight in their achievements; in Year 5, they tried very hard to identify a mystery instrument and gave thoughtful answers.

145 Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some good teaching. Teachers have satisfactory knowledge of the subject. They pay attention to the quality of pupils' performances. Teachers show pupils how to hold instruments correctly to produce clearer sounds and make softer sounds to match the mood of the story they are accompanying. They plan their lessons well and make sure there are sufficient activities to last the lesson. Teachers have good relationships with pupils. In a lesson at the end of a busy morning when pupils were tired and restless, the teacher dealt with their inattention effectively so that pupils became interested and wanted to take part. In the most successful lesson, the teacher allows pupils to experience success by working from things that they know, for example, singing songs to the tune of *Frere Jacques*, introducing new techniques and instruments and finishing the lesson with a performance involving all pupils.

146 In addition to the music taught in lessons, the school provides opportunities for pupils to sing in the school choir. Visiting teachers teach groups of pupils to play the violin, guitar, flute, clarinet and saxophone. Between twenty and thirty pupils take part in these lessons but many drop out and do not complete the course. Pupils who sing in the choir enjoy what they do and sing well. They take part in events in the community, singing at Christmas in a local residential home and taking part in a production with other schools, *Led by the Star*, at the National Indoor Arena. They then sang this for parents in school. Whilst there is not a school concert every year, the choir takes part in services in school at Christmas and Easter. There have not been any visiting musicians since an Asian musician came to the school two years ago, but selected pupils attend concerts by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

147 The subject is led well by an able and well-qualified co-ordinator. She has produced a curriculum and syllabus for the school, and gives her colleagues guidance through the half-termly plans. Teachers, all of whom teach music to their own class, complete an assessment of work covered at the end of each term. The monitoring of standards is an area for development. The co-ordinator is not able to watch colleagues teach and has to monitor their work through their planning. She asks for tapes from each class so that she can judge standards but they are not always provided. The school is well equipped with instruments, including African and 'Latin' drums, and there are boxes containing sufficient small instruments for classes of thirty pupils. Information technology is not used sufficiently in music lessons. Pupils carry out research about musical instruments and composers using CD-ROM but there is no software to allow pupils to compose their own music. All teachers received training in music two years ago and the co-ordinator has identified the need to give her colleagues more training in work with pitch. The school is in a sound position to improve standards in music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

148 The previous inspection report judged that standards in physical education were satisfactory, including swimming, and teaching was sound overall. This situation has been sustained in the time between the two inspections and standards are at the expected level in all aspects of the subject.

149 Children in the reception class can combine two movements on apparatus and link these together safely and confidently. They are able to match actions to music in a dance lesson and through practice, show good imaginative ideas alongside improving control. In a Year 1 gymnastics lesson pupils were able to show different ways of travelling on apparatus, can carry out jumps with safe landings and rolling actions. They are developing confidence in the coordination of physical skills. Year 2 pupils show similar gains in interpretation and evaluation of each other's performance. Under good teaching, they increase in their understanding of pathways, gesture and body shape in dance. Pupils in Key Stage 2 carry out basic movement actions but their ability to transfer weight in different ways is mixed. Some show high quality gymnastic ideas and movements that they practise to improve but the poor behaviour of some children held back their progress.

150 The attitudes of pupils towards physical education are good. They participate enthusiastically, work purposefully in pairs and groups and approach activities with a strong determination to please their teachers and succeed. They show imagination, confidence and use apparatus safely and sensibly. They respond particularly well when teachers praise and encourage their efforts and in most classes behaviour is good. In the rare instance of poor behaviour choice of apparatus and the organisation and management of group work were ill-considered.

151 The quality of teaching is satisfactory but ranges from good to unsatisfactory. The most successful lessons have clear objectives, set realistic expectations for safety and performance, make good use of demonstration and encourage quality work which is identified for pupils to observe and evaluate. As the previous inspection noted this aspect of teaching continues to be missed in some lessons. Lessons are well managed and organised and effective use is made of resources to enable small group teaching. Pupils with special education needs are given good support from teachers and learning assistants.

152 The school policy and schemes of work are extremely detailed and provide valuable guidelines for all teachers ensuring progressive physical development for all pupils in the school. The co-ordinator is aware that the dance programme, which is based currently on the use of tapes, requires revision and this is in hand. The introduction of a checklist of physical skills will improve the monitoring of children's progress in physical education. The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' social and moral development. Resources and accommodation are good but the number of extra-curricular activities is limited. The subject is effectively led by a co-ordinator who has a clear vision of the subject's role in the primary curriculum.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

153 By the end of both key stages pupils are achieving the expected standards. Standards are, therefore, better than they were at the time of the previous inspection. This marks good improvement since 1996 in religious education and pupils now have better opportunities to reflect on religious and spiritual matters.

154 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have an appropriate knowledge of religious festivals throughout the Christian year. They also know familiar stories from the Bible, such as Noah's Ark. The importance of respect for the beliefs of others is central to their learning. For example, they learn about Hindu and Muslim customs. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have an appropriate understanding of the world's major religions and how caring and respecting other's beliefs has a central place in them. Year 5 know about the story of Rama and Sita and the importance of Diwali in Hinduism. Year 4 pupils are able to demonstrate their knowledge of the life and work of Jesus and in Year 6, pupils learn about important Christian ceremonies such as baptism and confirmation.

155 Pupils make good progress in understanding that all groups have rules to help them to live happily together or follow a particular religion. This knowledge is used well to deepen their understanding of the need for rules of behaviour in class and around the school that shows respect for others rights and their own responsibilities in the school community. In the reception class children learn about working together through the story of the elephants. In Year 4 they investigate important

events in the life of Jesus and how this gives evidence of the need to respect and care for each other. In Year 6 they learn about the important Christian rituals representing care and commitment between the church and the family, such as baptism. Their understanding of other religions demonstrates good progress. In Year 1 pupils learn about Muslim customs in showing care and respect in handling the Qur'an and in Year 5 they look with sound understanding of the religious symbolism of the Last Supper and the Passover. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

156 The overall quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers use questioning, rooted in good knowledge of the subject, to promote good levels of learning through clear learning objectives. One lesson seen in Key Stage 2 was unsatisfactory. This was because of inconsistent discipline in the application of rules of behaviour and poor control. Poor use of questioning to engage unmotivated pupils in learning was observed. Pupils are taught to value and respect each other's religions.

157 Pupils' attitudes to religious education are good in the main. They listen attentively taking pleasure in contributing to group discussion and listening to other pupils ideas and thoughts. They sustain concentration well, and enjoyed the lively, well-pitched assembly, by the local Christian minister on the theme of working together.

158 A useful up-to-date policy and scheme of work is in place and the co-ordinator's management of the subject is good. Clear planning throughout the school for learning, good organisation of resources made effective through very good subject knowledge, is evidence of this. There are good opportunities for pupils to reflect on values and beliefs. Good planning ensures that assemblies in both Key Stage 1 and 2 support the whole-school themes that are aimed to develop caring and respectful attitudes in pupils.