

INSPECTION REPORT

WHITGREAVE JUNIOR SCHOOL

WOLVERHAMPTON

LEA area: WOLVERHAMPTON

Unique reference number: 104297

Headteacher: Mrs V Currall

Reporting inspector: Alan Blank
8358

Dates of inspection: 21st – 24th May 2001

Inspection number: 192600

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Goodyear Avenue Low Hill Wolverhampton
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss B Nutall, MBE
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8358	Alan Blank	Registered inspector	Science Physical education Design and technology	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
19335	Susan Dixon	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19897	Arthur Evans	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
2063	Judith Hicks	Team inspector	English Music Special educational needs Equal opportunities	
19765	Pauleen Shannon	Team inspector	Geography History Religious education	How high are standards? Pupils attitudes, values and personal development.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Whitgreave Junior School has 224 pupils on roll between the ages of 7 and 11. It is situated in the district of Wolverhampton known as Low Hill. It has above average figures for pupils receiving free school meals (47%) and for pupils on the special educational needs register (55%). Only one pupil has a statement of educational need. Currently there are no pupils who have English as an additional language, there are 15 pupils with black Caribbean heritage and 18 from other black minority ethnic groups. Pupils enter the school with very low standards of attainment. The school is part of the Wolverhampton Education Action Zone (EAZ). The proportion of pupils who do not complete the whole of their junior school education at the school is high, approximately 50%.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Though standards are low there has been a significant improvement since 1998. The school is currently well led, but has suffered from too many changes of leadership in recent times. The quality of teaching is good and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- There has been a significant improvement in standards as measured by test results since 1998.
- The current leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy is very effective.
- Standards in art are good and higher than those found in most schools.
- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- The priorities for development are very appropriate and the action taken to meet targets is very effective.

What could be improved

- Standards remain low, especially in mathematics, despite the efforts of the school.
- Provision to support pupils who have significant learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural needs is unsatisfactory.
- Inappropriate behaviour and poor listening skills slow down learning in some lessons.
- High staffing turnover affects the management of the school, teacher-pupils relationships and pupils' sense of security.
- Levels of attendance are well below average.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1997. Since then it has had a very unstable pattern of leadership and management with several headteachers or acting headteachers. Despite this, the school has improved results in national tests in English, mathematics and science. Standards appear to have risen in art and fallen in information and communication technology and design and technology, though the demands in information communication technology (ICT) have grown since 1997. The current leadership is stronger than at the time of the last inspection. There has been a dramatic improvement in the quality of teaching. At the time of the last inspection 25% of teaching was unsatisfactory, whilst during this inspection this figure was 4%. Provision for the support of pupils who have significant educational and emotional needs has not improved sufficiently and is still unsatisfactory.

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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	E*	E	E	C
Mathematics	E*	E	E*	E
Science	E*	E	E	D

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

When the school's results are compared with schools nationally they are well below the average and in mathematics they are still very low, in the lowest 5% of all schools. The grades in the table above mask the magnitude of the improvements in the school's results between 1998 and 1999. In English and science the percentage of pupils reaching the expected levels doubled and in mathematics there was an increase of 40%. In 2000 results in English and mathematics fell back somewhat whilst in science they continued to rise. Results to some extent reflect the many changes in leadership. In 2001 the school received a national award for the improvement in its results. The school has agreed targets for 2001 and these have been devised to include an extra 8% expected of schools that are part of an educational action zone. Inspection evidence suggests that standards are currently well below average in English and mathematics and below average in knowledge and understanding of science. Raising standards remains the school's first priority. When the standards that pupils enter the school with are compared to those they attain on leaving, nearly all pupils make satisfactory progress and some make good progress. Comparisons with schools that have similar circumstances indicate that standards in mathematics are those most in need of improvement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes to school are satisfactory overall and most pupils are enthusiastic about their work. There are a significant number who sometimes appear physically tired and unable to listen carefully and concentrate.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Standards of behaviour are lower than those found in most schools. Pupils who have special emotional and behavioural needs are sometimes disruptive in lessons. The behaviour of some pupils in the playground is challenging for the adults who have to control and manage them on a daily basis.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are satisfactory, there is no evidence of racism or sexism. Pupils do fall out at times. Pupils find the changes in staff difficult to cope with and this can affect their behaviour. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory.
Attendance	Attendance levels are well below the national average despite the very real effort made by the school to improve them.

Good behaviour cannot be taken for granted at Whitgreave. Teachers work hard to shape and improve behaviour and in some classes this is a very demanding task. Behaviour is best where

teachers have had time to build trusting relationships with pupils and where rules are clearly stated and understood.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. In 58% of lessons teaching was judged good and in a further 8% very good. In 30% teaching was satisfactory and in 4% teaching was unsatisfactory or poor. Teachers are well prepared for lessons and they set out to make them interesting. Teachers are very aware of the different abilities that are present in their classes and they prepare work that is appropriate to match this range. Teachers are very patient and understanding of pupils who have poor listening skills and concentration. Nevertheless this sometimes means that learning is not as good as it should be given the quality of the teaching. The unsatisfactory teaching observed was a result of a teacher who had not had time to develop a relationship with the pupils, working with a very demanding class. In many classes there are pupils who have significant emotional and behavioural needs, teaching and learning would be more effective if these pupils received extra support. Pupils learn best when working in small groups or individually; whole class sessions are less effective. Literacy and numeracy are taught well, teachers are confident in their approach to these lessons and have adopted the national strategies successfully. Teachers have to work very hard to maintain acceptable levels of behaviour and to ensure that effective learning takes place.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curricular opportunities is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. The range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits is limited.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with SEN is unsatisfactory and does not meet the requirements of the national code of practice. Some pupils with emotional and behavioural needs require greater support to help them to make better progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for personal development is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Teachers try hard to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem; they seek to foster respect for people of differing faiths and cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Whitgreave is a caring school that caters well for most of its pupils. Some pupils with special educational needs require greater support.

Whilst the school generally has effective links with parents some of the information given to parents is unsatisfactory. The quality of written reports on pupils' progress is variable, some are unsatisfactory and information in the governors' report to parents has inaccuracies regarding attendance rates. The involvement of parents in their children's learning at home and at school is underdeveloped, the school is aware of this and has plans to develop this relationship. Parents need to help the school to improve attendance rates and ensure that pupils come to school well rested and ready for lessons.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The current leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is very effective. They have focused on the need to raise standards by improving the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning. The rate of improvement has increased since their arrival.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well informed and committed to improving the school. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors need to monitor more closely the provision for pupils with special educational needs.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Many of the school documents are relatively new and will need to be evaluated when they have had time to be fully implemented. Systems for measuring and recording pupils' progress are good. The EAZ requires the school to monitor its performance closely.
The strategic use of resources	The school has clear priorities for development and these are supported by wise financial planning. The school needs to review its use of support staff.

There have been too many changes in the leadership of the school since the last inspection. This has made it difficult for the school to implement its policies consistently and to improve. The instability in leadership has led to low morale amongst parents and some feelings of insecurity in pupils. The appointment of a consultant headteacher for the last academic year has led to very good leadership and good progress in school improvement. The school is about to enter another phase of leadership with a new headteacher and deputy appointed for September 2001. Staff turnover is high and several teachers seen during the inspection were either temporary or will move on at the end of the school year. Too many changes are not good for pupils who need to have stable relationships with their teachers to do their best. There are not enough learning support staff and they lack training in how to support pupils who have special educational needs. The site manager, who shows great ingenuity, is improving the accommodation constantly. The maintenance of the playing field needs to be improved and more could be done to make the most of playtimes. Governors seek the best value possible for services and equipment, with good day-to-day administration, this makes the school an efficiently run institution.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils like school. • Pupils are making good progress. • Teaching is good. • The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities available outside lessons. • Parents would like more information on what homework is given to pupils and how they can support them. • Parents feel that behaviour could be improved. • Parents would like to know more about what their children study at school.

The inspection team agrees with the parents in all respects. The range of activities outside lessons could be improved through more extra-curricular activities and a wider programme of educational visits. Behaviour is sometimes a problem in and out of lessons, there could be more for pupils to do at playtimes.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 At the time of the last inspection in 1997 standards were judged below average in English, mathematics and science. Results in tests in the same year revealed much lower standards than this. In all three subjects the results were in the bottom five per cent of all schools. Results in 1998 were little better. Then, in 1999 results improved dramatically in all three subjects. The percentage of pupils reaching the expected level 4 doubled in English and science and increased by 40 per cent in mathematics. This improvement coincided with the one relatively stable period of leadership and management of the school. In English and mathematics the results fell a little in 2000, but in science standards continued to improve.

2 When the results from tests taken in 2000 are compared to those achieved by schools similar to Whitgreave, English is in line with the average, science is below average and mathematics is well below. Standards in mathematics are the main cause for concern and their improvement features prominently in the school's plans for improvement. The number of pupils reaching the higher level 5 is small and this affects the school's overall average in comparisons with other schools. Neither the school nor the inspection team has identified any gifted or talented pupils.

3 There are quite large differences in the performance of boys and girls in national tests, but these swing from year to year and there is no unusual pattern or trend. Differences appear to reflect the composition of various year groups. The performance of pupils who complete the whole of their junior school education at Whitgreave is better than those who join the school at a later date. The movement of pupils within the school year and junior stage means that their education becomes fragmented and lowers the standards overall.

4 The school has set targets for improvement, on the basis of information on individual pupils' attainment and progress. The setting of targets is rigorous and made more so by the school's inclusion in the Wolverhampton Educational Action Zone (EAZ). In response to the support the school receives, the EAZ expects the school to improve results by an extra eight per cent.

5 The attainment levels of pupils who enter Whitgreave are very low. When these levels are compared with the levels achieved by the same pupils leaving the school, it shows that nearly all pupils make satisfactory progress and some make good progress during their time at the school.

6 Very large numbers of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, more than half the total in some classes. Most of these pupils are making progress that is similar to the others in their class for most of the time, and hence overall achievement is satisfactory. Some specific groups and individuals are not making the progress they might, however, because there is not enough support to meet their needs and because that support is not always effective. In particular there is not enough intervention to help pupils with significant learning difficulties in basic skills, especially those with marked problems in reading and writing. Pupils with emotional and behavioural problems that affect their concentration also lack the right kind of support in some lessons.

7 There is no evidence of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or mixed race performing any differently from the overall attainment in the school. These pupils make progress similar to others and they are not over represented on the register of special educational needs. There are no pupils at an early stage in learning English.

8 Current standards are well below average in all the elements of English, speaking and listening, reading and writing. Though progress is satisfactory, it means that standards are maintained, not raised, and pupils leave with standards well below the national average. Reading standards are low throughout the school. Pupils' technical skill in word building is better than their understanding of what they read because of their restricted vocabulary. Standards in writing are similarly low. Pupils are reluctant writers and lack confidence. Work however is generally well presented, pupils are careful about the neatness of their writing.

9 Current standards in mathematics are very low. Pupils find it difficult to use numeracy skills to solve problems posed in the form of words and they do not make sufficient use of mathematics in other areas of the curriculum. Whilst more able pupils use quick mental recall of the four number operations, other pupils remain unsure of multiplication tables. Raising standards in both mental and written mathematics is a priority because currently they are lower than standards in English and science.

10 Standards are below average in pupils' understanding of science. Their knowledge in several areas of science is below average. For instance pupils' understanding of forces, human biology and ecological systems is lower than expected. Their understanding of electricity is in line with expected standards. Pupils' practical skills in experimental work are well below average. They require more frequent opportunities to develop these as part of their ongoing work in science.

11 Standards in design and technology, geography and music are below those found in most schools. In history, physical education, religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) standards are in line with national expectations. At the time of the last inspection ICT was judged to be above average; however the expectations are now far more demanding and this explains the apparent fall in standards rather than any real deterioration.

12 Standards in art are good and above average. Pupils produce interesting designs and are able to use the work of famous artists to stimulate their own creations. Pupils basic skills are good and they link their art work with other subjects imaginatively. The school is rightly proud of its achievement in this area of the curriculum.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13 Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally satisfactory and in many lessons are good. Pupils are personally welcomed in the morning by the headteacher and staff, which makes them feel valued. Most pupils enjoy school, arrive on time and are enthusiastic in lessons. Most pupils respond well to the good teaching and interesting lessons and participate fully. Pupils take pride in their work, which is usually well presented. Pupils say they particularly enjoy art and using the computer and history lessons. Whilst most pupils are positive about learning, show interest and stay on task, there are too many disruptions in lessons by a significant minority of pupils, who have behavioural difficulties and are unable to work independently. There are examples of poor attitudes to learning in every year group and in many lessons, particularly in music lessons. Pupils identified by the school with particular behavioural difficulties have very little additional help and therefore the class teachers' time is taken up in most lessons dealing with low level disruptions and incidents of more challenging behaviour. This regularly slows down the progress and learning for all the pupils. A significant minority of pupils in each class has difficulty listening and some are tired, which also affects their ability to concentrate. This inattention is particularly noticeable during the introductions to lessons. Most pupils respond better when they are involved in the group activities and when there is additional support.

14 Behaviour is unsatisfactory because there is too much disruption in lessons affecting learning, and because of the number of behaviour issues outside the classroom. There were also behaviour issues identified in the last inspection report. Parents feel that although there have been real improvements, there are still behaviour issues, such as fighting and inappropriate language. Inspection evidence supports their views. The school has worked hard over the last few months to improve behaviour and the updated policy has resulted in real improvements. There is a marked reduction in the number of incidents logged in the playground and during dinner times. The majority of pupils are well-behaved in break and dinner times, although some behaviour is very boisterous and there are regular incidents of misbehaviour to deal with. Staff make sure pupils move around the school in an orderly way and although it is often noisy at dinner times, most pupils enjoy the opportunity to chat to their friends.

15 Pupils like the recent improvements such as the new 'buddy support' system, the different times for breaks, and the football clubs; but many want more to do at break and dinner times. Most pupils understand the behaviour policy, are enthusiastic about the rewards and certificates and generally think the sanctions are fair. However some pupils feel that it does not work for a number of pupils. Pupils are concerned about disruptions in the lessons, name-calling and incidents of fighting, but know what to do if they have a problem. There have been some incidents of bullying but these are dealt with quickly by the school. Teachers and dinner supervisors all work hard to apply the revised behaviour policy. Staff deal sensitively with a number of pupils who regularly have severe emotional outbursts in and outside of classes, but this takes up a great deal of their time. Three boys have been responsible for seven temporary exclusions during the year.

16 Relationships within the school are generally satisfactory, as they were at the time of the last inspection. In lessons and discussions the majority of pupils show interest in the views and feelings of others. Most pupils form positive relationships with each other and with staff and are welcoming to visitors. Some pupils feel insecure about the number of staff leaving the school. In religious education and history lessons pupils show interest in the beliefs and traditions of different cultures around the world. There is no evidence of racial disharmony. Pupils enjoy personal education sessions and 'circle times' because they give them further opportunities to think about and discuss how to deal with situations that are difficult for them. Some pupils identified as having emotional and behavioural needs also have sessions with outside agencies that can help them when they get angry. They enjoy these sessions and respond well. However, too few pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties have these opportunities. There are some occasions when pupils do not all show enough respect for staff; for example ignoring requests to line up quietly, talking during assemblies and challenging staff requests.

17 Pupils enjoy the opportunities to help in the school and usually behave responsibly. Younger pupils take registers and look after equipment. Older pupils have a range of school tasks as monitors. These include collecting litter, watering plants and taking phone calls. Pupils also volunteer to help in the dining hall. The recently trained peer support buddies are responsible for doors, toilet and cloakroom areas and take their responsibilities seriously. They have a mature attitude to helping pupils who are having difficulties during breaks and dinner times. In practical lessons like art and science all pupils are encouraged to look after equipment and are generally careful and co-operative.

18 The levels of attendance are well below the national average. Most pupils have levels of attendance that are satisfactory. Any absences are due to illness or for holidays during term time. There are, however, a considerable number of pupils whose attendance records are a cause for concern. Absences are often frequent or prolonged and this has a serious effect on their learning. Most pupils arrive at school on time but a significant number of pupils

are late and miss the start of the school day. Registration is none the less efficient and this time is well used for a variety of activities and personal study.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19 The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. In eight per cent of lessons the teaching was very good, 58 per cent good and 30 per cent satisfactory. In four per cent teaching was unsatisfactory or poor. This is a dramatic improvement on the quality of teaching recorded at the time of last inspection when 25 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory.

20 Where teaching is good or very good teachers are well prepared for lessons. Lesson plans are detailed with clear learning objectives and good account is taken of the full range of pupils' abilities, so that activities are appropriate and relevant. Teachers make introductions lively, demonstrating good knowledge themselves and a confidence with lesson content across a range of subjects. Teachers manage behaviour well and respond sensitively to the significant special needs of their pupils. For example in a Year 3 class when a pupil became upset and disaffected the teacher went through the behaviour management strategies, asked the pupil to write down what is unacceptable about his behaviour and then allowed the pupil to take responsibility for making amends. The pupil was soon through the episode and back on task and a situation that could easily have been inflamed was resolved.

21 Where teaching is most effective, successful teachers have developed a caring relationship with their pupils, have a clear system of rewards and sanctions to shape behaviour and have learning objectives that challenge all pupils. Teachers have begun to use homework in a more systematic way to extend pupils' learning, employing a specific homework book.

22 Where teaching is less than satisfactory it is as a result of unfamiliarity with the class and the fact that teachers have not had time to build a relationship with the pupils. As a result pupils with significant emotional and behavioural needs feel insecure and their behaviour deteriorates, the pace of the lesson is slowed, standards of behaviour generally fall and pupils learn very little.

23 During the period of inspection approximately half of the teaching staff were on temporary contracts and several teachers are due to leave the school at the end of the school year. This high staff turnover has a significant effect on teaching and learning. It makes it difficult to establish good teacher/pupil relationships and to ensure the consistent application of school policies.

24 In many lessons where teaching is good the quality of learning does not correspond directly. Many pupils appear tired and apathetic despite the efforts of teachers to make lessons lively and interesting. Pupils have poor listening skills so that instructions and explanations have to be repeated. This slows down the pace, means the more able become frustrated and learning and achievement are restricted. At other times pupils who have significant emotional and behavioural needs disturb lessons and distract their classmates. Despite some skilled intervention by teachers lessons are interrupted. In these cases good teaching is needed to obtain satisfactory levels of learning and achievement.

25 Pupils' learning tends to be more effective during group work rather than during the whole class introductions and conclusions, where pupils' listening skills and levels of concentration are poor. In science teachers are not sufficiently aware of the need to develop scientific skills, and these are not well taught.

26 Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well throughout the school. Teachers are familiar with the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In English teachers plan lessons well and use marking to help pupils to improve. Learning is inhibited by the lack of support for some pupils who have special educational needs. In mathematics, teachers structure lessons well to provide opportunities for mental operations and written work. They use time targets effectively to keep lessons moving at a good pace.

27 Teaching in all other subjects is good except in geography where teaching is satisfactory and in design and technology where not enough teaching or evidence of teaching was available to make a secure judgement. Teachers ensure that all pupils are included in lessons. Sometimes teachers make references to pupils' own culture using their language and terms such as 'cool'. In one English lesson in Year 4, pupils find this very motivating.

28 Most teachers are alert to the special educational needs of the pupils in their class, but individual education plans are not often of sufficient quality to provide a secure basis for planning. As far as possible teachers organise suitable activities for all the pupils, including the lower attainers, but because there are so many with special educational needs even the best organised members of staff become over-stretched at times. Sometimes individual pupils have to struggle for a while because the teacher is necessarily engaged with another group, slowing down the learning. This is particularly marked when the pupils are engaged in writing activities. Whilst some additional adult help is available, support staff time is often wasted at the start and end of sessions. The extra teaching provided is of mixed quality. Though it is sometimes good, on other occasions classroom assistants lack the necessary expertise in teaching basic skills and group sessions are conducted at a pedestrian pace.

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

29 The school provides a broad and reasonably balanced curriculum, offering the pupils a satisfactory range of worthwhile learning opportunities, particularly in art. A lack of appropriate resources means that not all areas of information and communication technology are covered at present. Religious education conforms to the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and the school meets its obligations to provide all the pupils with a daily act of collective worship. There are swimming lessons for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6. Some pupils take advantage of opportunities for instrumental brass tuition.

30 Total weekly teaching time is still below that recommended for pupils of this age, which reflects the findings of the previous inspection report. A key issue of that report was to provide more effective leadership of the curriculum. This has been successfully addressed. The acting headteacher has developed an appropriate teaching and learning policy and a system for the rigorous monitoring of planning and teaching. Subject coordinators now have clearly defined roles and the governors have set up an effective curriculum monitoring committee.

31 There is an appropriate emphasis on the teaching of English and mathematics. The school is implementing the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) well and opportunities are provided for the pupils to use their literacy skills in a number of other subjects. Implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) is satisfactory, though too few opportunities are provided for pupils to use their numeracy skills across the curriculum. Schemes of work for other subjects, based largely on national guidelines, have been implemented only very recently. They have not as yet been in place long enough to ensure continuity and progression in the pupils' learning. Nevertheless, the teachers plan thoroughly for the work which the pupils will do each term and each week.

32 Provision for special educational needs is highly unsatisfactory in certain respects and does not meet requirements set out in the national Code of Practice. Responsibility for writing individual education plans for pupils on the register of special educational needs lies with class teachers and there are, in the absence of a special needs co-ordinator, very marked variations in the quality and hence the educational value of these plans. Needs identification is inconsistent, with some pupils included on the register for trivial reasons whilst real problems are inadequately described. At worst, plans and targets bear little relation to the reality in the classroom. Whilst there are a few notable exceptions, many of the targets set are over-general and hard to quantify. Attempts have been made to work through and improve some class files, but this is at an early stage. Requirements for regular reviews of progress that involve the parents of pupils with significant problems are not being met. This is an unacceptable position.

33 In general the school makes every effort to provide pupils with equal opportunities to participate and to succeed in all activities. The school runs a representative girls' football team that is involved in competition with other schools. A lunchtime football tournament played during the inspection involved teams of mixed gender. Boys and girls make a similar contribution in lessons and, although boys do not perform as well in areas such as writing, the trend is no more marked than in most other schools. Girls do participate far more in extra-curricular music; there are no boys in the school choir and only one boy in the brass ensemble. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those of mixed race participate equally and are not over-represented amongst the groups of lower-attainers. Pupils with significant special educational needs are not always satisfactorily supported so that they have full access to learning opportunities, and this is an issue for the school.

34 A majority of parents replying by questionnaire feels that the school does not provide a wide range of activities outside lessons. Inspection findings confirm that the range of extra-curricular activities is, indeed, very limited; the only clubs are for football, choir and art. There are football teams for both boys and girls and three girls were selected for the Wolverhampton primary schools' girls' football team. There is a lunchtime choir and an art club. Fifteen pupils, all girls, were observed participating in the choir. Very few educational visits are organised.

35 The school makes satisfactory use of the community in order to enhance pupils' learning. Links with Corus Steel have benefited pupils in Years 5 and 6 with their reading, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Three employees were observed participating in board games with some pupils prior to morning registration.

36 The teachers regularly take the pupils to the local library. Some senior citizens have talked to the pupils about life in their early days, in order to enhance learning in history. Harvest produce collected by the pupils has been donated to senior citizens and to the Good Shepherd Centre.

37 There are good links with the local secondary school, one of whose staff is timetabled to take music lessons at Whitgreave for an afternoon a week. During the inspection, other secondary school staff supervised a lunchtime football match between Years 5 and 6. Use is made of the secondary school's drama theatre for Christmas productions. Staff and pupils from the secondary school have led a Christmas Roadshow for Whitgreave's pupils, involving music, drama and dance. During an 'induction week' in the summer term, all Year 6 pupils have the chance to spend time in the secondary school to which they are transferring. There are developing links with the adjacent infant school. Subject co-ordinators are beginning to liaise with colleagues there. The infants have the opportunity to visit the junior school prior to their transfer.

38 There is no formal policy or scheme of work for the pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE), but, in practice, provision is satisfactory. Relevant issues are discussed in assemblies, in PSHE sessions and in 'circle time', when the teachers try to raise pupils' confidence and self esteem. Issues related to healthy eating and to the dangers of drugs misuse are dealt with in science lessons and a visiting roadshow also contributes to drugs education. Human growth and body changes are taught as part of science and formal sex education is offered to pupils in Year 6, with help from the school nurse.

39 Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is satisfactory and this reflects the findings of the previous inspection report. Provision for the pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. In religious education, the pupils have thought about God's world and about issues of suffering, hunger and pollution. They have talked about people who have had great faith in God and who have used this faith to help others. Good art displays encourage the pupils to think and to respond. Good work is celebrated in the main corridor and achievement, both in and out of school, is celebrated in a special weekly assembly. In literacy, Year 4 pupils have reflected on stories such as *The Suitcase Kid*, which raise family issues and which make them stop and think. Acts of collective worship make a sound contribution to spiritual development, on themes such as feeling good, being 'good Samaritans' and working together to make the world a better place. The creation of a more spiritual atmosphere in assemblies and time for deeper reflection would improve the provision for spiritual development. A stimulating Year 4 class assembly made a good contribution to the pupils' development. There is a small, useful collection of books on emotions in the school library.

40 The school makes satisfactory provision for the pupils' moral development. Implementing strategies to improve behaviour is a priority. These now include split playtimes. A clear behaviour management policy has been developed, which includes the school's stance on bullying and which emphasises the development of self-discipline. An appropriate system of stars, merits and prizes rewards positive behaviour and effort. The teachers make the pupils well aware of what is right or wrong and the pupils are conscious of the consequences of poor behaviour. Codes of conduct are clearly displayed in classrooms. Class teachers nominate a 'pupil of the week', to serve as an example to others. Individual education plans for some pupils with special educational needs include appropriate targets to improve behaviour and the school makes effective use of the local authority's *Reducing Disaffection Team* and an after-school 're-entry' project.

41 Provision for the pupils' social development is satisfactory. Most parents believe that the school helps their children to mature and to become responsible. Older pupils can exercise responsibility by manning the school office at lunchtimes, by helping in assemblies and by distributing milk and registers. Opportunities are provided in many subjects, such as mathematics, art and information and communication technology, for the pupils to work collaboratively. The school places great emphasis on the need for pupils to work together as a team: 'together, everyone achieves more'. A useful 'peer support' programme enables pupils to act as 'breaktime buddies' to those who need a friend. The teachers encourage pupils to respect the elderly and harvest produce is distributed to local senior citizens. In lessons such as geography and religious education, teachers encourage the pupils to think of the need for environmental conservation. Pupils can develop social skills by participating in Christmas productions and in class assemblies.

42 Provision for the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. In history, they learn about the cultures of Ancient Greece and Egypt and the legacy of the Romans. They visit the Black Country Museum, in order to appreciate the culture of their own locality. The teachers attempt to foster a love of reading by taking the pupils to the local public library and by holding annual book fairs. Pupils develop cultural awareness through art and through participation in a small brass band. The teachers develop in the pupils an awareness of the

cultural diversity of Wolverhampton, Britain and the world. There is a clear policy for education for ethnic diversity, which seeks to promote cultural and racial harmony. In religious education, the pupils learn about a number of major world religions in addition to Christianity and the festivals of some of these are celebrated. In literacy, the pupils have read poems from around the world and in geography, they learn about aspects of Jamaican culture. Year 6 pupils were observed exploring the artistic culture of the Australian aborigines.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43 The school has satisfactory arrangements for the care and protection of its pupils. Adults show themselves to be sensitive and caring with a high level of commitment to the well being of all in their care. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory and the governing body is becoming increasingly involved in conducting risk assessments and taking any necessary action. However the school field is not maintained to a satisfactory standard. Stones are beginning to protrude from the surface and there is some general debris on the site. The school building presents an attractive and well maintained environment. Child protection arrangements are also satisfactory. There is a suitable policy and good written guidance is available to all staff. There is an appropriate level of awareness amongst the members of staff.

44 The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. The recently introduced system of rewards and sanctions is well understood by pupils and is proving effective although at present there is some inconsistency in its use across the school. Good and unacceptable behaviour are closely monitored and detailed records are maintained. These allow the school to identify problems and provide appropriate support. Parents and pupils report significant improvements in behaviour since the new policy was introduced. There are clear codes of conduct throughout school and other displays also promote good behaviour. For example a display in the dining hall reminds pupils to be well mannered and considerate to each other and to the staff. The procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are satisfactory. Any incidents of threatening behaviour or bullying are closely monitored both in lessons and at lunchtimes. Detailed records are maintained by class teachers and midday supervisors. Issues surrounding bullying are discussed in 'circle times' and the school has plans to extend the provision for personal, social and health education to provide better support for this area.

45 The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The school meets with statutory requirements and the administrative arrangements are efficient. The school works hard at improving the levels of attendance and punctuality. There are many initiatives in place although they are too recent to have had a significant impact. These include attendance rewards and the efficient investigation into absences at an early stage. The school is well supported by the education welfare service where attendance gives cause for concern.

46 The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good. Pupils are provided with good individual targets that are readily available in the classrooms. They are involved in regular discussions about their progress and success at meeting their targets. This motivates pupils well and has a positive effect upon their learning. Targets for pupils who have special educational needs are not always written with sufficient precision or monitored closely enough.

47 The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are satisfactory; their behaviour, health and well being are monitored carefully. As yet there are no formal systems for monitoring personal development but pupils are well supported in their

personal development. This reflects a similar situation to that found at the time of the last inspection.

48 Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory, some of them are quite new and have yet to reach their full potential as sources of information. However the efforts made by the current headteacher to develop this aspect of school practice and the use made of outside agencies are already being used well to inform teaching and learning. The school has clear evidence of how pupils are progressing in English and mathematics and teachers are able to set short term-targets and goals for pupils so that learning becomes more purposeful and they know how well their pupils are doing. This information is also used to set whole school targets for different year groups. The school has good information on levels of entry to and exit from Whitgreave so that it can monitor progress of its pupils over time as well as in the short term.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49 The parents' views of the school are satisfactory. Parents are generally supportive of the school and are pleased with the good progress their children make and the high expectations held by teachers. Some parents expressed concern about the information they receive about their child's progress, the amount of homework provided and the range of activities provided outside lessons. Some parents also felt that behaviour was not sufficiently good but recognised that significant improvement had been made recently. At the meeting held with parents prior to the inspection parents expressed their concern about instability in the staffing and the effect of this upon their children's learning. There were also some concerns about the provision for pupils with special educational needs. The inspection findings support the positive views of parents and also their concerns.

50 The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is satisfactory. The headteacher and the staff are approachable and the relationship between them and the parents is open and supportive. Parents are welcomed into school and the staff are on hand for the exchange of daily information. Parents are invited to performances, to celebration and class assemblies for example when Year 4 pupils played musical instruments to accompany singing and demonstrated playground games. There are too few opportunities for parents to gain insight into their children's education or to be involved in the life of the school. Parents are not involved sufficiently in the writing of some individual education plans for pupils who have special educational needs. This represents a similar situation to that found at the time of the last inspection.

51 The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is satisfactory. A small number of parents are able to provide regular help in school. Parents have welcomed the recent formation of a Parents' Association and the opportunities this brings to provide support for the school and to raise additional funds.

52 The quality of the information provided for parents is unsatisfactory. Whilst the school brochure, the governors' report and regular newsletters keep parents well informed about day-to-day events and school procedures there is insufficient information overall. Parents do not presently receive information about the curriculum and the work that their children do, and do not receive sufficiently clear information about the purpose or requirements of homework. Information about pupils' work and progress is conveyed in annual written reports. These do not meet statutory requirements and are of unsatisfactory quality. They are inconsistent in their content and many provide little useful information. The school has well advanced plans to improve the quality of the written reports this year. Parents of pupils with special educational needs have not been involved in regular reviews of their children's individual education plans, this is also a breach of statutory requirements.

53 Parents do not make a satisfactory contribution to their children's learning at home or at school at present. They are insufficiently involved in supporting reading at home or homework generally. At the parents' meeting held prior to the inspection parents expressed a wish for clearer information about the expectations and requirements of homework in order to provide better support at home. The school is currently developing a home/school agreement.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54 The headteacher and deputy headteacher are both short-term, temporary appointments. They have combined to provide very effective leadership for the school. The headteacher in particular has been responsible for the increased rate of school improvement in the current academic year, establishing a well-documented curriculum and introducing good systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. Through regular monitoring the headteacher has helped to raise the quality of teaching and learning and begun to establish a consistent approach to behaviour management. Having identified the needs of the staff and the school, a systematic regime of in-service training has been started.

55 The headteacher has made good use of the school's inclusion in the Wolverhampton Educational Action Zone (EAZ), using their resources and financial support wisely. The school had a deficit budget until recently. Prudent management has turned this deficit into a small surplus for the coming year. Other grants have been used effectively to raise standards, for instance by having booster classes in mathematics and English, to meet targets set by the local education authority and the EAZ.

56 Subject co-ordinators have begun to take responsibility for planning the curriculum and there are several new schemes of work that have been produced recently. Their role in monitoring standards in subjects and pupils' work in general is underdeveloped and the high staffing turnover has meant that few staff have held responsibility for significant periods of time. However new documentation has been produced in many subjects and co-ordinators have developed their role despite the many changes in senior management.

57 The arrangements for the management of special educational needs are unsatisfactory, and current provision does not meet the requirements of the national Code of Practice. It is a shortcoming that the governing body is not aware of the present position. Whilst the school generally provides equal opportunities for pupils to learn and develop, it does not support those pupils with acute behavioural problems sufficiently. The governing body is effective in carrying out most of its responsibilities and members demonstrate a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors take a very active role in shaping the development of the school through the school development plan and its related budget. Governors are clear about the requirement for them to seek the best value possible in obtaining goods and services; they currently have three quotations under scrutiny for the replacement of fencing around the school playground. There are some weaknesses in the annual report to parents including inaccurate reporting of attendance.

58 The very effective leadership has identified priorities for development. These have been agreed by the governors and, where relevant, the EAZ. Progress towards these goals has been very good of late, but since the last inspection overall improvement has only been satisfactory. Throughout this period the school has suffered from too many changes of headteacher and this has led to a loss of direction, low morale amongst parents and feelings of insecurity amongst pupils. There has also been a high turnover of teaching staff in recent times and this has had a significant impact on the school's capacity to implement policies consistently and maintain high standards in teaching and learning. Current procedures for the induction of new staff are good, and this helps to limit the negative impact of staff change.

59 The levels of support staff are inadequate, as are the opportunities for training existing staff, in how best to support pupils who have special educational needs. Lunchtime supervisors work hard to manage behaviour, but they too would benefit from further training in how to get the best out of their interactions with pupils. The site manager is very effective in his role. His special skills in building and repairs have enabled the school to carry out alterations and improvements that would otherwise have been financially unviable.

60 The accommodation is satisfactory overall and it has been improved since the last inspection in several ways that make better use of space and improve the security of the site. The playground could be developed to provide a greater range of playtime activities for pupils including somewhere quiet to sit and talk. The school field was not maintained to a satisfactory standard during the inspection and the playing surface is poor. Resources are satisfactory in the main, there are some shortcomings in ICT and special educational needs. Some subject co-ordinators have fairly generous budgets to spend on equipment, reflecting the improved financial position of the school. The school needs to invest in equipment for pupils to use at playtimes and lunchtimes in order for these times to become more active and purposeful.

61 At the time of the last inspection the leadership and management of the school had several weaknesses. The school has benefited from the strong leadership and direction provided over the last year. However, ahead lies another period of change with the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher and several other teaching staff. Clearly, the school's capacity for improvement will depend on the effectiveness of this team. Governors and all members of the school community need to be aware that Whitgreave is a challenging place to work and the new leadership will need all their support to continue the current trend of improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

62 In order to raise standards, especially in English, mathematics and science, the school should:

1. Improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs in line with National Code of Practice, by improving:

- a) arrangements for the management of special educational needs and the support of pupils;
- b) the quality and quantity of support for pupils on the register of special educational needs;
- c) the individual education plans for pupils, making them consistently accurate and detailed;
- d) resources, particularly the use of information and communication technology;
- e) regularly involving parents in the review of their children's individual education plans.

(Paragraphs: 6, 13, 22, 26, 28, 32, 33, 46, 49, 50, 52, 57, 65, 73, 78, 98, 99, 102, 110, 116, 119, 133)

2. Ensure that the behaviour management policy is consistently applied especially working to improve pupils' listening skills.

(Paragraphs: 13, 14, 15, 22, 24, 25, 44, 49, 60, 82, 89, 98, 102, 128, 133)

3. Explore strategies to ensure the recruitment and retention of teaching staff.

(Paragraphs: 1, 16, 22, 23, 49, 54, 56, 58, 77, 97, 107, 129)

4. Raise levels of attendance.

(Paragraphs: 18, 45)

Governors should also consider how to enrich the educational experience offered to pupils by extending the range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	8	58	30	2	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	NA	224
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		108

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y3– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		132

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.9
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	25	30	55

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	7	18
	Girls	19	11	21
	Total	30	18	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	55 (62)	35 (49)	75 (51)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	N/A (53)	N/A (53)	N/A (53)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	15
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	18
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	194
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	7	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	28

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	56

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	370408
Total expenditure	358055
Expenditure per pupil	1599
Balance brought forward from previous year	-6217
Balance carried forward to next year	6136

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	227
Number of questionnaires returned	36

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	44	11	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	44	42	11	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	39	19	14	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	42	25	8	0
The teaching is good.	36	44	11	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	17	44	36	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	39	3	3	8
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	50	3	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	19	50	25	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	33	39	17	3	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	50	14	3	11
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	14	25	22	17	22

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

ENGLISH

63 When pupils enter the junior school at the start of Year 3, their literacy skills are well below average for the age-group. Although steady progress is made by most of the pupils, standards in the present Year 6 remain well below the national average for eleven-year-olds in speaking, listening, reading and writing. This is consistent with the school's performance in recent national tests at the end of the key stage. There has been a steady upward trend, with a marked improvement in results between 1998 and 1999, but over a five-year period the gap between Whitgreave pupils and the national average has shown no sign of closing. In last year's national tests (summer 2000) only around half the pupils reached the standard that would be expected by eleven (level 4), with just a handful reaching the higher level 5. These results did, however, broadly match those of other schools with a similar intake. Girls performed slightly better than boys, in line with national trends.

64 The last inspection report judged standards in English to be broadly average, but this does not accord with the school's national test results in the relevant year when they were very low.

65 Although standards are low, the progress made by all pupils in speaking and listening is satisfactory. Year 3 pupils are reluctant communicators. Some tend to use gestures and single words when they can get by in this way. Most of the older pupils enjoy conversational exchanges, however, and many are open and forthcoming when talking informally about matters that interest them. In one Year 5 lesson the pupils worked in pairs to set out arguments about a proposed by-pass development from various perspectives. The results showed a common sense ability to talk through issues and sort out the main points, with some original, if simple, lines of argument. Where problems were experienced, this was the result of limited vocabulary and understanding of the written text on which this activity was based. One pupil asked to think about the viewpoint of residents, for example, could not recall what the word 'resident' meant and was at sea with the exercise as a result. Older pupils lack confidence in talking when on unfamiliar ground. In one of the Year 6 classes the teacher had to work very hard to get a response to a poem, with the few pupils who did answer offering only brief observations. In small group discussion Year 6 pupils find it difficult to respond to questions or to elaborate on their answers. This is partly because listening skills are under-developed, and the pupils do not 'think on their feet' well. Even those who speak more fluently than the rest adapt little to formal situations and their speech shows many non-standard features.

66 Sometimes pupils are helped to achieve higher standards than usual in speaking, and progress is then good. During the inspection Year 4 pupils presented a class assembly on the theme of co-operation, in the course of which some spoke, unscripted, in clear, audible voices and with good projection. Communication with the audience of pupils, staff and parents was good on this occasion. In several lessons active and enthusiastic encouragement by the teacher eventually persuaded reluctant pupils to contribute ideas, including ethnic minority pupils and those with special educational needs.

67 Reading standards are low in Year 3 and remain well below average by Year 6. Achievement is broadly satisfactory. The pupils make good gains in their technical reading skills as they progress through the school, so that average pupils in Year 6 can tackle words such as 'narrowed' and 'sorcerer' competently. Their understanding of what they read does not develop as well, mainly because of limited vocabulary and a failure to grasp meanings that are not strictly literal. Some pupils with significant reading problems do not receive the

consistent, high calibre support they need in order to catch up, and in their cases progress is unsatisfactory. A small number of pupils in Year 4, for example, are still struggling to build regular three-letter words from the sounds. These findings do not match those of the last inspection report.

68 In Year 3 many pupils read mechanically, with little expression and limited understanding. The higher attainers in this age-group read accurately, applying their knowledge of letter sounds to help with unfamiliar words, but even they have difficulty in understanding the text at an appropriate level. The pupils' ability to read with attention to the punctuation improves from Year 4 onwards, largely as a result of effective guided reading in the literacy hour. As a result reading aloud becomes gradually more expressive. By Years 5 and 6 most pupils tackle their reading books competently, but some of these texts are very simple for the age-group. Learning in lessons is sometimes slowed down when pupils struggle to read instructions or work sheets that most in the age-group would take in their stride.

69 Average and above average pupils name favourite authors such as Roald Dahl and can describe the kind of books they like, animal or adventure stories for instance. Most of the higher attainers belong to the local library and read regularly and with obvious enjoyment. Even these pupils, however, have difficulty in deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases from the text, and cannot attempt to define words such as 'dejected' that they read aloud with apparent confidence. They do show some insight into the feelings and motives of characters in the stories they read, especially when the teaching has been good. In Year 4, for example, the pupils readily identify with characters in *The Suitcase Kid*, offering sensitive explanations for their responses. In considering the hero of another children's novel, one Year 6 pupil, wrote 'Although Ruskin might look the same as his parents, his personality is very different'. Older pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how to use reference books, but limited experience of researching information for themselves in subjects such as science, history and geography.

70 The writing of most pupils is well below average on entry to Year 3 and at the end of the key stage. In Years 3 and 4, most pupils are not writing fluently enough for their age-group. Up to half the pupils in each class write reluctantly, with a need for constant adult support and encouragement. Tasks have to be carefully structured, and only a few abler pupils work independently without prompts. When the younger pupils do write independently, the work is loosely organised, sometimes just strung together with repeated 'and'. The spelling of below average pupils is particularly weak, with unlikely mistakes in common words, such as 'sain' for 'said', and 'whant' for 'went'. Some pupils fail to hear all the sounds in the words they write, as in 'horted' for 'haunted'. A few abler pupils write relatively fluently with far better organised sentence structure than the rest. One high attainer in Year 3, for example, begins a narrative: 'One day in a gutter by some shops lay a man who had a disease...' Even the abler pupils do not usually write at enough length for their work to develop quality and style.

71 Most pupils make steady progress in their writing development, but this is not enough to raise standards far. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 become familiar with writing in many formats, such as charts and bulleted lists, and with different genres including drama scripts, diaries, poetry and persuasive writing. Good opportunities are provided for extended writing, but writing nevertheless remains a slow and unrewarding task for many pupils. Average and below average pupils in Year 6 still tend to write as they speak: 'We got on the carpet easy. It was very hot when we was walking around' or 'I went to see my baby cosin and I holded him'. Because few pupils write fluently and at length there are limited opportunities to develop skills such as redrafting and paragraphing, and they regularly have difficulty in sustaining a consistent 'voice', sometimes slipping from one tense to another. Spelling improves considerably in Year 6, and a few high attainers are starting to use more

adventurous vocabulary and ideas in their writing. In the course of a successful poetry lesson, for example, one pupil eventually wrote:

*'I would like to draw the sourness and the bitterness of a lemon,
I would like to find the key to my heart.'*

72 Presentation is a relative strength in most year-groups. Many pupils, including the lower attainers, learn to write neatly in joined script in their handwriting books, but some tend to lapse into print at other times. In Year 6 there is a welcome insistence on work looking neat and presentable, with dates and headings underlined. This helps all the pupils, including those with special educational needs, to take a pride in their work.

73 English was mainly well taught during the inspection, with one very good lesson. Scrutiny of the pupils' exercise books suggests that this is typical of recent months. The pupils' completed work shows a consistent level of planning and broad coverage of the curriculum, with detailed and constructive marking in some classes. Despite the best efforts of the staff, pupils' learning - although satisfactory - does not match the good quality of the teaching seen, and this is having a direct bearing on the progress made. The main reason why good teaching is not having quite the impact that would be expected is that there is not enough additional adult support to meet all the needs of pupils with significant learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural problems. The recent turnover of staff and, to a lesser extent, pupils is a contributory factor.

74 Teachers have a secure grasp of the subject and teach such technical aspects as subordinate clauses and compound nouns in a way that makes them accessible to the pupils. Skills such as handwriting and spelling are effectively taught, but some teaching of basic phonic skills to pupils with special educational needs is unimaginative and lacking in pace. This includes some group work that is funded from Additional Literacy Strategy sources. The deployment of support staff tends to be inconsistent and is not always organised in the best possible way to support the needs of all the pupils. Support staff sometimes do not use their time effectively when by sitting through lengthy introductions, for example.

75 At best the teaching of English is lively and enthusiastic, with good relationships and a pleasant working atmosphere in the classroom. Teachers set high standards, yet are positive and encouraging, managing a minority of challenging pupils very effectively. The results are seen in improved standards. In one very successful Year 4 lesson, for example, the teacher made clear links between the current topic and the previous day's work so that the pupils knew just what was expected from the start. Key vocabulary was carefully defined and the pupils were encouraged to articulate the new words introduced. Very effective use was made of a well chosen children's novel to capture the interest of the class. With sensitive encouragement, they focused well on the themes of domestic unhappiness and broken relationships raised by the author. There was challenge for the higher attainers, who were asked to distinguish between questions that had a literal answer and those that required the use of inference. They found this difficult. Similarly effective teaching of literature was seen in two Year 6 lessons, where short poems were used as a successful basis for the pupils' own writing.

76 Staff have a secure knowledge of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). This has been implemented in a thoughtful and flexible manner that meets the needs of the pupils well. A successful feature is the switch from reading to an extended writing focus on alternate weeks. With additional time built in for writing each week, pupils have enough time for the extra practice that should in the long term help to improve standards. Writing has been identified as a particular weakness on the basis of school analysis, but staff are tackling the issue purposefully. Implementation of the NLS has enabled some new reading

resources to be acquired, but there is further to go to ensure that all reading materials, including library books, are of the same good quality. The school is aware of the need to supplement present arrangements for assessing reading by introducing a regular programme of testing. In this way individual progress can be more accurately tracked.

77 With no literacy co-ordinator currently in post, the subject is being led by the headteacher on a temporary basis. This has not been a disadvantage. A useful analysis of strengths and weaknesses has been undertaken and classroom practice has been effectively monitored and improved. A secure basis has been established for further development.

MATHEMATICS

78 By the time the pupils leave the school, standards in basic numeracy and in other areas of mathematics are well below average. The previous inspection report judged standards to be below average though subsequent test results in 1997 indicated that attainment was lower than this. Inspection findings reflect attainment in the 2000 end of Key Stage 2 national tests, when standards were very low compared with schools nationally and well below average compared with similar schools. Very few pupils achieved the higher National Curriculum level 5. Standards rose steadily from 1997-98, with a sharper rise from 1998-99, though they fell back slightly from 1999-2000. The gap with national averages has not been narrowed. There have been no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls and this remains the case. An ambitious target for improvement has been set for 2001. Standards on entry to the school are low and most pupils achieve satisfactorily; some, in fact, achieve well. Most pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in relation to their individual targets and in relation to their previous attainment. However, those with the most acute learning and emotional difficulties make less progress, as a result of insufficient specialist support.

79 By the age of eleven, more able pupils can use quick mental recall of the four operations of number. Others lack confidence and are unsure of their multiplication tables. The major weakness is pupils' inability to use and apply their numeracy skills to solve word problems. Weak literacy skills mean that many do not understand what information is provided in the problem and what it is that they are being asked to find out. They are often unsure as to which number operation is required to solve the problem. Most pupils understand and use decimal notation of money and they have measured the lengths of classroom objects and have weighed them, using standard units of measurement. They find the concepts of equivalent fractions and the area and perimeter of irregular shapes difficult. The pupils are able to collect data, such as the number of smoke alarms in classrooms, and to record their findings by means of accurate bar charts. They have used computers to generate some of these charts.

80 The pupils do not use their mathematical skills widely in other subjects. In science, however, there are examples of Year 4 pupils having drawn accurate bar charts of the effect of friction on different surfaces and of the stretchiness of tights. Year 5 pupils have drawn similar charts of pupils' hearing distances and of pulse rates after exercise.

81 Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers are confident with the three-part daily mathematics lesson. Lessons are planned thoroughly and teachers ensure at the outset that the pupils know what is expected of them. In a Year 6 lesson, the teacher made effective use of a 'race against the clock' activity and this helped many pupils in speeding up their mental recall of multiplication tables. Tasks were well matched to pupils' abilities, both in the introductory mental mathematics session and in later group work. She used questioning well in order to make the pupils think carefully about problem-solving strategies: "What told you that this was the two-times table?" In another Year 6 lesson, the

teacher encouraged the pupils to look for repeated addition in number patterns: "What rule can you see here?" The lesson moved along briskly, the teacher reminding the pupils of time limits for activities. In a Year 4 lesson, the teacher used a 'loop card' activity well, in order to help pupils develop quick mental recall of addition and subtraction facts. Later, she stressed the need for the pupils to read problems carefully and this had an impact on their ability to solve problems related to the quantities required for baking ingredients. In a Year 5 lesson, the teacher gave clear explanations and used questioning skilfully to develop the pupils' understanding of the concept of probability. She involved them in practical activities, using dice and spinners, and she encouraged the skill of prediction. Teachers mark work regularly and positively, often with pointers for the pupils to note such as, "You must include the decimal point in your answers". They have high expectations of presentation, with the result that most work in exercise books is carefully and neatly laid out.

82 Some teachers have less successful management strategies in the classroom. This results in less effective teaching, as not all the pupils are engaged fully on the tasks in hand. Whilst many pupils have positive attitudes to work, there is a significant minority who can, at times, be disruptive to the learning of others and which needs skilful handling. At times, work is not matched sufficiently to pupils' varying needs, so that some pupils receive work which is beyond their capability, whilst more able pupils are given rather undemanding tasks.

83 Raising attainment in mathematics is a priority for the school and the co-ordinator has a good understanding of what needs to be done to achieve this. She has developed a good policy that meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Planning is soundly based on the National Numeracy Strategy, supplemented by a commercial scheme. Effective use has been made of the expertise of numeracy consultants from the local education authority and from the Education Action Zone. There are sound procedures for assessing pupils' progress and assessment is being used well to plan future work and to set group and individual targets for improvement. The co-ordinator has monitored planning, samples of work and classroom teaching, with a view to sharing good practice and to evaluate the subject's performance. Learning resources are adequate and are neatly stored for easy access. There is a need for more information and communication technology resources to support work in mathematics and more mathematical games. The subject makes a sound contribution to the pupils' social development in the opportunities it offers for collaborative work.

SCIENCE

84 Results in national tests taken in 2000 indicate that attainment is well below the national average. When the results are compared to schools that have similar circumstances to Whitgreave the results are still below average, though significantly better than at the time of the last inspection. In 1999 and 2000 there was an extraordinary improvement in these results. In 1999 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level 4 or above rose from 26 per cent in 1998 to 51 per cent. This improvement continued in 2000 to reach 75 per cent. Over time, boys and girls perform equally well. Though there are differences in specific years, there are no consistent trends.

85 Observations throughout the inspection indicate that the attainment of current pupils in Year 6 is below the national average in relation to their knowledge and understanding in science and well below in terms of the practical skills associated with the subject. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of electrical circuits, but in other areas of science such as understanding forces or ecological food chains pupils' understanding is rudimentary only and they require more opportunities to deepen their understanding of the concepts involved in these and other science topics.

86 In terms of practical skills pupils need to be given more frequent opportunities to devise tests, carry them out and then record their results. In carrying out their tests and experiments pupils need to be taught how to observe closely, measure changes and make sense of results as part of their everyday experience of science.

87 When pupils' attainment at the age of seven is compared with their results aged eleven, nearly all pupils make satisfactory or better progress. Overall, progress is satisfactory in the development of knowledge and understanding in science. In the development of skills, progress is unsatisfactory overall, though there are examples of good work. For instance in Year 5, pupils investigate friction looking at the effect of different surfaces on the movement of toy cars. In Year 4, pupils investigate different types of paper to test for absorbency. In Year 3, pupils investigate the permeability of rocks. This type of work needs to be carried out more frequently with a gradual increase in complexity to build on earlier experiences.

88 Only a limited amount of teaching was observed in science. Of this, the majority was good and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Lessons were well conceived and planned to be appropriate and interesting. For instance in Year 6 pupils set out to test the effectiveness of different types of washing powder. The preparation included different types of planning and recording sheets for pupils to match the different levels of ability in the class. The teacher had clear objectives that were shared with the pupils and a good understanding of how to get the best out of this type of practical investigation. In this lesson the learning matched the teaching and pupils achieved well.

89 This is not always the case. In other lessons pupils appear tired and listless and are unable to concentrate or listen carefully. This restricts their learning so that it does not reflect the quality of teaching. At other times the behaviour of pupils who have significant emotional and behavioural problems limits their own learning and distracts other pupils. Teachers demonstrate real skill in managing these situations, but cannot totally compensate for the effect this disruption has on overall learning and progress in lessons. At these times learning would be improved by the presence of trained classroom assistants. In general pupils work better when in small groups or when working individually. Pupils' listening skills are poor and concentration levels low so that whole class introductions and conclusions to lessons prove very difficult for teachers to execute effectively.

90 The curriculum in science is very well documented. The detail in the scheme of work for the whole school is very supportive so that the time needed for planning by individual teachers is reduced. However the scheme is relatively new and its implementation has yet to have a full effect on teaching and learning. The management of science as a subject needs to be improved to include a rigorous monitoring of the implementation of the scheme of work, standards of work produced by pupils and results obtained from assessments.

ART AND DESIGN

91 By the time the pupils leave the school, standards in art and design are above average. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection report, which judged standards to be average, and is the result of good teaching. All pupils achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs make progress similar to that of others and boys and girls attain equally. The pupils clearly enjoy their art lessons and work with enthusiasm. They share resources sensibly.

92 Pupils in Year 6 have used their skills in art and design to illustrate aspects of work in other subjects. In work linked to tangrams in mathematics, for example, they have produced some effective bird designs, made from 'magic' eggs. They have also used a range of regular polygons to draw intricate patterns illustrating rotational symmetry. In work linked to

geography and science, they have produced colourful, annotated drawings of the water cycle. The pupils have experimented effectively with colour and pattern. They have produced some good paintings, embellished with decorations, based on Golesworthy's picture, *Moonshine*.

93 Observation of lessons and of high quality work on display indicates that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good throughout the school. Teachers introduce the pupils to the work of many famous artists. As a result, the pupils produce imaginative and stimulating paintings in a variety of media, based on the work of people such as Klee, Magritte, Kandinsky, Van Gogh and Clarice Cliff. Teachers pay particular attention to the importance of pencil drawing. Year 5 pupils draw accurate pictures of humans and animals. These were enlarged several times on the photocopier, with the pupils adding more detail each time. They use colour wash techniques effectively to give contrast and depth to their work. In Year 4, the teachers make good links with literacy and the ways in which animals can move: creeping, hopping, prowling. The pupils made their own stencils to create imaginative 'animals in action' pictures, using wax crayons. They superimposed the images, so that the animals appear to be moving. In work linked to a history topic on ancient Egypt, these pupils created images of gods and hieroglyphs, which they transferred on to fabric, in the style of an ancient papyrus picture. The results were most effective.

94 The teachers plan their lessons thoroughly. In a Year 6 lesson, the teacher made very good use of Aboriginal artefacts, paintings and background music to enhance the pupils' understanding of the cultural art forms of Australia's first inhabitants. The pupils used dowel of varying sizes, dipped in paint, to create imaginative 'dreamtime' paintings through combinations of dots. The teacher monitored progress carefully, encouraging the pupils to experiment for themselves, but intervening as necessary, for example when she noticed that some pupils were putting the dots too close together and others were leaving empty spaces in their designs. In a Year 4 lesson, the teacher used various visual stimuli, which helped the pupils learn how to weave effective patterns on to cloth. She linked this effectively with art work that the pupils had done previously on the Bayeux Tapestry. Well phrased questions helped the pupils appreciate the importance of texture in design and of the different characteristics of the wool which they used. The teacher encouraged the pupils to experiment with buttons and beads to decorate their weaving; "Borrow my ideas, but come up with your own".

95 The acting deputy headteacher is temporarily responsible for co-ordinating the subject. She has developed a clear policy, which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Planning is thorough and is based on national guidelines, adapted to meet the school's particular needs. The co-ordinator monitors planning and displays of work in order to oversee performance in the subject. Opportunities for assessing the pupils' progress are included in teachers' plans, but, in practice, this assessment is informal and incidental. Learning resources are adequate overall, though more are needed to support work in areas such as clay and sculpture. The subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, both through high quality displays of art work, which provide a stimulating learning environment throughout the school, and through the attention paid to the work of famous artists and to diverse artistic cultures. The teachers are well supported by a classroom assistant in mounting art work and in running a worthwhile lunchtime art club.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

96 Standards are below national expectations in design and technology. The quality of designs and the products made by pupils is lower than that expected. Discussions with pupils confirm that opportunities to design and make products using a range of materials are limited. As a result skills in both designing and making products using related tools and

equipment are underdeveloped and overall pupils' progress is unsatisfactory in this area of the curriculum.

97 The planned curriculum included in the new scheme of work is comprehensive and it reflects national expectations closely. However, this new scheme has yet to have an impact on practice throughout the school and this has led to a fall in standards since the last inspection. The co-ordination of the subject needs to promote and monitor the work covered within projects and ensure that skills in planning and building are developed systematically. The school has some problems relating to food technology because of the accommodation and these need to be resolved so that this area of the curriculum can be covered. There is some evidence to suggest that the high turnover of teaching staff has meant that some topics have not been covered or they have not been completed, as in Year 5 where the project was making wooden chariots.

98 Only one lesson was observed during the inspection, taken by a temporary teacher who was covering for staff illness. The quality of teaching was good. The lesson was well organised with a good range and quantity of resources to choose from. Pupils made musical instruments from recycled containers, demonstrating their ability to work independently and creatively. A number of pupils in this class have significant emotional or behavioural problems and the teacher managed the situation very competently demonstrating a developing relationship with the class in just a few days. However the impact of the behaviour and poor listening skills leads to only satisfactory levels of learning and achievement, despite the good teaching. Good control and management skills were required to keep the practical lesson moving forward and very good skills needed to get pupils to share in an evaluation of the finished instruments.

99 The number of pupils with emotional and behavioural needs in all classes makes the teaching of a practical subject like design technology very challenging. Yet, given good organisation, stable relationships and consistent behavioural management strategies, this subject has a very important part to play in pupils' education. Classroom support and good subject leadership are needed to raise standards and improve progress in this subject.

GEOGRAPHY

100 Standards at age eleven are below national expectations. However, pupils including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress, given that the standards they enter the school with are very low. Since the last inspection, the achievements of the pupils have remained the same but the progress of the pupils and the quality of teaching, both judged to be unsatisfactory, have improved and are now satisfactory.

101 During the inspection week four lessons were seen. In two of these the teaching was good and in the other two satisfactory. Scrutiny of pupils' work throughout the year indicates that teaching is satisfactory overall.

102 Teachers explain what they want pupils to learn and this provides a focus for them. Teachers manage behaviour well most of the time. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning geography. However the pace of learning in all lessons is slowed down by constant interruptions by some pupils with behavioural difficulties, who find it difficult to listen or concentrate. These pupils have very little additional support in the classes and this affects the progress of all pupils, as teachers deal with this behaviour.

103 Due to the organisation of the timetable no geography lessons were seen in Years 3 and 4. However, a discussion with pupils and scrutiny of work show that Year 3 pupils make simple maps and plans and have some awareness of the features of Wolverhampton. There are, however, differences in the amount of work covered in each class.

104 Year 4 pupils have undertaken appropriate investigation work on settlements, identifying towns and villages, using an Ordnance Survey map. In a well-taught and effective lesson in year 6, most pupils made good progress because the teacher provided interesting resources that were well matched to pupils with different ability. The teacher's use of focused questions also extended pupils' learning. As a result, pupils were able to discuss the differences between climate and weather and the impact of being near to the equator.

105 Mapping and compass skills are taught across the school but need to be more sharply identified within the planning of each topic so that there is a progressive build up of skills. While pupils enjoy geography, discussion with older pupils shows that many struggle to express ideas accurately. By Year 6 most pupils can draw maps and plans and use atlases with increasing confidence. They have some factual information and can explain the rain cycle and the implications of erosion on the environment. Many can name towns, cities and continents and have some understanding of the differences between a town, city, and village. They have a satisfactory grasp of environmental issues that affect living in different parts of the world, such as pollution and transport.

106 Throughout the school literacy skills support the geography curriculum, but because they are low this has an impact on standards. Teachers' written comments encourage pupils to take care with their presentation, therefore the majority of written work is neat; however some pupils with less developed writing skills struggle to record their findings. Text books are used to gain information and from discussion with pupils it is clear that they enjoy using computers. When it is used well, for example Year 4 accessing the Internet to gain further information about Jamaica, it has a significant impact on learning. Generally, however, pupils do not get enough opportunity to use information technology on a systematic basis.

107 The curriculum provides good links with history and pupils develop both history and geography skills in a number of topics. The subject is well led by a co-ordinator who also has responsibility for history; however there will not be a co-ordinator from September. In the short time she has had responsibility for the subject the co-ordinator has updated the policy and revised the scheme of work so that teachers can plan their lessons more effectively. However her monitoring role is limited and there is no formal system in place to assess pupils' progress, which is a weakness. Planned trips, such as in Year 5 to Brewood, provide a good starting point for geography work; however, while there is some local fieldwork, it is limited and pupils do not have a residential experience to apply their geographical skills. This is identified by the school as a priority. The resources are satisfactory although a few maps are out of date and need to be replaced. The reference books in both key stages are in good condition and pupils enjoy using them. The geography curriculum makes a good contribution to the pupils' appreciation of different places throughout the world.

HISTORY

108 Standards are in line with national expectations. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs make good progress to reach these standards because they enter the school with very low levels of attainment. Since the last inspection, the achievements of the pupils have been maintained, and the quality of the teaching has improved.

109 Pupils enjoy history and say it is one of their favourite subjects. This is largely because the teachers make it interesting and exciting for them and they adapt their style of delivery to meet pupils' needs. The way the curriculum is timetabled also contributes, as pupils have enough time to study each topic in real depth. Pupils make good progress because the teachers throughout the school provide an appropriate balance between historical knowledge and historical enquiry.

110 Pupils are provided with information from a range of sources and encouraged to ask useful questions about the lives and conditions of people who lived in different times and societies. The pupils enjoy using videos, books and the computer to find out about the past, however the school does not provide enough systematic opportunity for pupils to use the Internet for independent research. While the majority of pupils are enthusiastic about learning history there is a significant minority of pupils in most classes with behavioural difficulties who make less progress, because they find it hard to concentrate or listen. These pupils respond better to the practical group sessions, but still require a lot of support from teachers, as additional support is limited.

111 The majority of teaching seen was good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. In the best lessons teachers are enthusiastic about the subject, plan well and use a range of teaching strategies that include good behaviour management. In a particularly effective Year 3 lesson the children were totally engaged in researching their local area and responded well to the high quality of resources. By the end of the session they had a basic understanding that different sources of information (maps, photos, plans and the school log) all provide useful information. Some pupils used the term 'archives' accurately. Most were able to provide ideas about the differences between living in Low Hill in the past and in the present. In another good lesson in Year 4 the enthusiasm for the subject by the class teacher also ensured that the pupils were motivated and interested in their work on the Ancient Egyptians. Pupils made good progress because they had high quality resources, and the teacher asked questions that excited and challenged them and built on their previous learning. By the end of the lesson pupils had an accurate understanding of the Egyptians death rituals, could name artefacts accurately and were able to debate which animals were sacred.

112 Due to the organisation of the timetable no history lessons were seen in Years 5 and 6. Scrutiny of work shows that pupils have studied the curriculum in appropriate depth. They have gained historical knowledge about invasions and settlements in Britain and have studied the Ancient Greeks and the Victorian period in increasing depth. From discussions with pupils in Year 6 it is clear that they enjoy the history curriculum, are able to use appropriate historical terminology and are able to make connections between the implications of living in one period or another. Pupils can discuss concepts such as poverty at different times, the impact of different technology and inventions on peoples' lives and can compare their lives and the lives of children in Victorian times.

113 Teachers throughout the school encourage the pupils to use a range of different recording methods, graphs, charts, timelines and therefore presentation is good. This effective strategy ensures that historical learning is not slowed down for pupils who have special needs in reading and writing. Literacy lessons are also used to encourage pupils to think and write as local historians. There are also good links with other subjects, particularly geography and art. Throughout the school the history displays are of a very high quality. What really brings history to life are trips to places like Shugborough Hall. Enrichment activities like these are, however, too limited across the school.

114 The subject is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who, in the short time she has been in the school, has revised the policy and updated the scheme of work. However her monitoring role is limited and there is no formal system to assess pupils' progress accurately. The resources are satisfactory and history makes a good contribution to the pupils' cultural development and appreciation of people who live in different times and places.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

115 By the time the pupils leave the school, standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are broadly average. The previous inspection report judged standards to be good. Pupils' skills in word processing have not declined; in fact, they are often good. However, the school has not kept pace with all the recent developments in ICT nationally. Although the new ICT suite is a valuable facility, the pupils have not yet had experience of exchanging information by electronic mail. A digital camera has only just been purchased. The twelve computers in the suite, together with eight recently purchased laptop computers, allow pupils to work in pairs and sometimes even independently. Control and modelling aspects of the subject need to be developed further and there is insufficient use of ICT to enrich learning in music. There are no electronic keyboards in school.

116 All pupils, including most of those with special educational needs, achieve well. Those with the most acute learning and emotional difficulties, however, make less progress, as they lack sufficient specialist support. Most pupils clearly enjoy using computers and some show additional competence from having computers at home.

117 By the age of eleven, most of the pupils load programs, save and print their work and retrieve it. They combine text and graphics effectively. Year 6 pupils, for example, have used text and clip art imaginatively for the covers of their 'Scare Yourself To Sleep' booklets. Pupils delete mistakes in the text and move, relocate and exchange graphics. Work in literacy is frequently well supported by ICT. Year 5 pupils use attractive borders to edge pieces of extended writing. Year 3 pupils use their word processing skills effectively to describe fantasy creatures, using fonts of varying styles, sizes and colours. In art, these pupils have used computers to generate effective night scenes and eye-catching abstracts.

118 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Direct teaching of specific keyboard skills on both personal computers and laptops is impacting well on pupils' progress. In a Year 6 lesson, the teacher emphasised correct technical language, such as 'cell', 'active cell', 'cell address' and 'floppy disc', and this helped the pupils to complete spreadsheets of multiplication tables. In a Year 4 lesson, the teacher used ICT to enhance learning in history and literacy. She emphasised the need to write for an audience, making work bright, bold and interesting to read. This helped the pupils to generate appropriate titles, layout and borders for a newspaper article about Howard Carter's discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. The teacher encouraged independence, but intervened appropriately, using a classroom assistant effectively. In a Year 3 lesson, the teacher also made useful links with literacy, as the pupils altered the size and colour of fonts to create effect. She used questioning well to make the pupils think carefully: "Where would you use that style of writing?" "What sort of font would you use to make scary writing, like in Goosebumps?"

119 The co-ordinator has developed a clear policy, but the full requirements of the National Curriculum are not yet being met. The co-ordinator has begun to implement a formal system for recording pupils' progress in ICT skills. She has co-ordinated external training for colleagues and has led some training in school for staff. Links have been established with Corus Steel and with the Staffordshire Building Society, with a view to enhancing pupils' knowledge and understanding of ICT in the world of work. The subject makes a sound contribution to the pupils' social skills, in fostering paired work. However, ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance the learning of pupils with special educational needs.

MUSIC

120 Standards in music are below average as the pupils approach the end of Year 6, and have declined since the last inspection. On the basis of the work seen during the inspection, the pupils are now making satisfactory progress, including those with special educational

needs. However, in some year-groups teaching has in the past been inconsistent and fragmented. This is the main reason why standards are not high enough now.

121 Pupils in Year 6 sing familiar songs such as *Yellow Submarine* with obvious enjoyment and gusto, most joining in whole-heartedly. The ensemble tends to be ragged, but the pupils sing broadly in tune, respond to a lead and pay good attention to dynamics, as shown by a well-controlled long crescendo at the end of the song. With prompting from the teacher, the pupils improve their performance in the course of the session. Most singing is in unison; however, pupils in Year 5 are working on a simple piece that combines four different phrases. They show that they can, with practice, sustain an independent part with a limited range of notes. Year 4 pupils sing alternating phrases in answer to the teacher's solo, combining dramatic gestures with strong dynamic contrasts in their rendering of the *Mosquito Song*. Later the same pupils work on a graphic score, clapping on the basis of written symbols with a reasonable degree of accuracy and later working on the score with percussion instruments. In this lesson attainment is well up to standard for the age-group. Performing and composing skills are a little below average by eleven, but the main weaknesses are in listening and appraising. Most pupils in Year 6 have not had the chance to listen to a wide range of music from various traditions, and their analytical skills and musical vocabulary are very limited. Insufficient use is made of electronic keyboards and ICT equipment generally to support the music curriculum.

122 The school has a small but flourishing choir and almost twenty pupils play a brass instrument. Both these activities are dominated by girls, including some from minority ethnic groups or of mixed race. Good standards are achieved by these pupils who show concentration and commitment in their work. Those learning a brass instrument are confident with staff notation. A musical performance involving all the pupils was successfully organised during the Christmas period, with the final performance attended by many parents.

123 During the inspection the teaching seen was satisfactory overall, but varied widely from very good to poor. In the least satisfactory lesson, younger pupils were unsettled following a song practice in the hall and the teacher failed to gain enough control of the situation for any worthwhile learning to take place. Although this is far from typical, a lack of self-discipline on the part of the pupils often limits the pace of learning even when they are enjoying the activities and participating enthusiastically. This can be difficult for even the most skilled teachers to manage and sometimes not enough is demanded of the pupils as a result. When teaching is very good, subject knowledge is strong, the approach is lively and the work is challenging but enjoyable.

124 Because of more pressing priorities, music has been a relatively neglected area until recently, but some positive steps are now being taken to develop the subject. Links with a local secondary school have been established and a specialist teacher spends an afternoon each week providing a short lesson for each year-group, later followed up by class teachers. This is giving music a useful impetus right through the school. These sessions ensure that the pupils' performing and composing skills are being effectively developed, whilst providing experience of key musical elements such as texture and timbre. Music is now regularly played at the start and end of assemblies but the pupils have very limited experience of live music in school. Some good quality instruments have been purchased recently.

125 An appropriate curriculum plan is on paper but has not been fully implemented. In particular the pupils do not have nearly enough experience of listening to and talking about a wide range of music, and resources for listening and appraising remain very limited. Even pieces mentioned specifically in the guidelines are not available in recorded form. Extra-curricular activities make a good contribution to the musical development of the pupils,

mainly older girls, who are involved. More generally music is not making the contribution it should to the pupils' creative and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

126 Attainment in physical education (PE) is in line with national expectations. Pupils demonstrate satisfactory ball skills overall, though girls' footballing skills are above average. In swimming most pupils reach the expected level of competency and a significant proportion exceed the basic requirement of swimming 25 metres. No gymnastics was observed during the inspection, but pupils demonstrate a familiarity with appropriate gymnastic skills. Pupils experience a satisfactory range of dance through lessons using music and movement and through learning folk and country dances. Pupils make satisfactory progress in all aspects of the subject.

127 In the two lessons observed during the inspection teaching was good or very good. Teachers prepare well-structured lessons that have a warm up before moving on to the main activity. In one Year 3 lesson pupils work in pairs mirroring each other's movements, getting used to watching carefully and moving together before going on to the steps and sequences of country dance. In this lesson the teacher demonstrated good control and management skills particularly when the tape recorder malfunctioned!

128 In another lesson in Year 6 the teaching was very good. The teacher developed throwing and catching techniques very skilfully. Clear demonstration and attention to detail helped pupils, whose skills were formerly rudimentary, to progress well. Naturally talented pupils demonstrated above average skills as they worked in groups of four practising bowling, hitting and fielding skills in rounders. This very good teaching was met with a less than enthusiastic response from some pupils, who talked and interrupted explanations or did not listen carefully to instructions. Some pupils seemed tired, distracted and disaffected. The teacher demonstrated very good skills in overcoming this apathy, but even so the learning overall in the lesson was only good instead of being a direct reflection of the very good teaching that took place.

129 The scheme of work in PE is new and current pupils have not benefited from the full range of experiences planned in it. Pupils say that they would appreciate more opportunity to play basketball, hockey, cricket and rugby and to experience a wider range of athletic activities. Clearly this broadening of experience needs to take place in lessons, but it could also be reflected in the range of extra-curricular activities that are mainly limited to football at present. The co-ordinator is fairly recently appointed and she is about to leave the school. This is part of the school's larger problem of providing settled management that leads to consistent provision.

130 During the inspection the school field was not maintained to a satisfactory standard. The grass was too long, in some places stones were beginning to break the surface, making it poor for games, and there were odd bits of debris. Whilst none of these things were a serious risk to pupils' health, it is clear that regular checks need to be made as part of the school's health and safety monitoring procedures. The general condition of the field needs to be improved.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

131 Standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and provision for religious education meets its statutory requirements. Overall, pupils, including pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Since the last inspection, the achievements of the pupils have been maintained, and the quality of the teaching has improved.

132 At the beginning of Key Stage 2 pupils' understanding is satisfactory, although some lower attaining pupils have difficulty using the correct terms. As they move through the key stage, pupils study the major faiths in more depth and most are able to use religious terms with increasing accuracy. By the age of eleven, the majority of pupils have satisfactory factual knowledge of the major religions.

133 Generally most pupils show interest and enthusiasm in the lessons; but pupils with behavioural difficulties find it hard to concentrate, particularly during the introductory sessions. Many of these pupils become restless and inattentive. These pupils have very little additional support in lessons. Their behaviour often affects the rate of learning and progress of all the pupils because the flow of the lesson is disrupted as the teachers deal with behaviour needs. Most pupils achieve better learning during the focused group sessions, as the activities are interesting and well matched to their ability. Teachers encourage pupils to record their learning in a variety of attractive ways, for example a flow chart to illustrate the Australian Creation story. As a result pupils' work is usually neat and well presented.

134 Older pupils consider in depth more complex concepts, such as similarities and differences in religious practices. From discussion with older pupils in Key Stage 2, most have gained and retained appropriate knowledge of different religions although their factual knowledge of Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism is stronger than their knowledge of Sikhism. Most talk with interest and enthusiasm and many use correct terminology. Some lower attaining pupils struggle when trying to explain their ideas accurately.

135 The curriculum also provides both younger and older pupils with opportunities to study broader themes such as justice, fairness, conservation and human rights. For example in a particularly well taught lesson in Year 5, most pupils made good progress and could appreciate and discuss in a complex way the different viewpoints of a range of conservation groups. They could explain the impact people and groups make to issues such as pollution, and endangered habits in the rainforest. There is a particularly effective link between personal and social education and religious education, as both provide opportunities for pupils to discuss spiritual and moral issues, which the pupils enjoy. They discuss personal feelings such as being lonely and behaviour issues such as respect. They also learn about the work of special people like Mother Teresa and Gandhi and have time to reflect on their own personal contribution. The pupils generally respond well to these sessions, and many provide appropriate and thoughtful ideas, with confidence.

136 The teaching of religious education is good overall and during the week of the inspection there was no unsatisfactory teaching. In the better lessons teachers have appropriate subject knowledge, use good questioning to extend pupils' thinking, use correct religious terminology and have an effective range of behaviour management strategies. The teaching of religious education across the school makes a positive contribution to the pupils' speaking skills, however more strategies are needed to develop their listening skills of pupils. In a particularly good lesson in Year 6, the teacher used a range of questions skilfully to draw out and extend the pupils' knowledge and understanding of Judaism. She also provided attractive posters, information booklets and artefacts, so that the pupils had access to information at an appropriate level. As a result most pupils were very interested and fully involved in the lesson.

137 Since the time of the last inspection the scheme of work has been revised, and the policy statement has been updated by the newly appointed co-ordinator; however very little monitoring of the subject has been undertaken and there is no formal system to assess individual pupils' achievements. Overall the resources are just adequate; teacher resources and pupil books are satisfactory but more religious objects would help to make lessons more meaningful. There are few visits to places of worship or guest speakers to enrich the pupils'

experience. Religious education encourages the pupils to respect the values, customs and beliefs of various cultures and makes a good contribution to their spiritual, moral and cultural development.