

INSPECTION REPORT

**THE BROMLEY- PENSNETT PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Brierley Hill

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103812

Headteacher: Mrs Barbara Albert

Reporting inspector: Joyce Taylor
4275

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th September 2001

Inspection number: 197777

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Lindsay Newton
Date of previous inspection:	September 1997

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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27337	Sylvia Oultram	Team inspector	English Music History	
4295	David Dodds	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology	The quality and range of opportunities for learning
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30954	Brian Ashcroft	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Bromley - Pensnett Primary School has 468 pupils, including a 90 place part-time nursery. It is larger than most other primary schools. The school is situated in the centre of urban Dudley. Most of the children come from nearby council owned houses. The area shows a very high level of social deprivation. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is rising and is well above average at 36 per cent. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, is well above average and in all of the classes four or five out of ten children have special needs. This has a strong impact on the test results achieved by each year group. Each year about 5 per cent of pupils move into the school from other schools and about 8 per cent move out. The school has two special educational needs bases for children with learning or behaviour difficulties, who are drawn from a wide area. The overall attainment of the children on entry to the reception class is well below average. There is a small proportion of children with English as an additional language who understand and speak English well. The school is in an Education Action Zone.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a satisfactory education for the pupils and the provision for the children's personal development is very good. The teaching is good in most cases but there are unsatisfactory lessons when the children are not expected to work to a high enough standard. The headteacher and senior staff provide very good leadership in supporting the children's personal development. The children's standards are still below average in English, mathematics and science when they leave the school. The management approach to raising standards has unsatisfactory aspects and has not been effective enough. Improving the standards should have been a higher priority but the children have made up some of the lost ground and most achieve at a satisfactory rate. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The standards are above average in music and art.
- The provision for the children's personal development is very good. The children with special educational needs are supported very well.
- There are very good links with the parents and the wider community.
- The teaching is good in most lessons. The teachers get on very well with the children.
- There are very good opportunities for the older children to learn outside lessons.

What could be improved

- The standards in English, mathematics, science and design and technology are well below average and should be improved.
- Weaknesses in teaching in one in eleven lessons should be improved to provide the right level of work for all of the children.
- Assessments of what the children should learn next need to provide more accurate information.
- The improvement of standards is not always managed sharply enough.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The last inspection was in September 1997. Since then the school has made appropriate improvements in most areas identified as unsatisfactory. The standards and the curriculum provision in English are better and the quality of teaching has improved significantly. Improving the children's attendance has been given very good attention but it is still below average. In addition to this, the school has led a successful bid to create an Education Action Zone entitled The Dudley Partnership for Achievement. This has significantly developed aspects of care and links with the parents and wider community. The school has also improved the provision and learning for the children with special educational needs. There have not been enough improvements in making sure that all of the children are given work that matches what they can do and in raising the standards of the potentially higher attaining pupils.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	E	E	E*	E*	well above average A above average B
mathematics	E	E	E*	E*	average C below average D
science	E	E*	E*	E*	well below average E lowest 5% nationally E*

Over the past few years, the school has reported standards at the end of Key Stage 2 that have been very low or in the lowest 5 per cent nationally. The results of the Year 6 children in their national tests have not given an accurate picture of the real standards reached by the children. The school has not been providing help for the children with special educational needs in reading the test papers. A high proportion of the children have below average skills in reading. This means that they cannot understand written problems and questions well enough to answer correctly. In discussions and lessons they can calculate mathematical problems and answer scientific questions more accurately than is indicated by the test results. The school also has a unit for children with learning difficulties who, otherwise, would attend schools nearer their homes. The results for these children are included in the published standards. In Key Stage 1, the results have been fairly steadily well below average since 1997. During last year the school began to give additional support in English and this has substantially improved the standards of the current Year 2 children.

During the inspection, the children at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 reached standards that were below average rather than well below average as reported in their national tests. The high proportion of children with learning difficulties is mainly responsible for the lower than average standards although there are several children in most year groups who could achieve more. In both key stages, the children reach above average standards in art and music and below average standards in design and technology. In all the other subjects their standards are average. In the Foundation Stage the children's standards are well below average. Their achievements are satisfactory but few of them are likely to reach the typical standards by the time they move into Year 1.

The children's earlier work, and assessment data, show that they are achieving at a satisfactory rate. They make up some of the gaps in each key stage but not enough of them reach average standards by the time they leave the school. The children with special educational needs, including those in the special bases, achieve well. The school sets targets for the children in all classes. These need to be higher, as a few more children in each year group could reach average or above average standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The children like school, enjoy much of their work and feel their teachers like them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. There have been no exclusions and the children behave as they are expected to. They show good self control and those with difficulties are effectively included in the life of the school.

Personal development and relationships	Good. The children are helped to get on well with each other and they like their teachers.
Attendance	Below average. A small group have irregular attendance .

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good	Good

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

A total of 91 lessons were seen. Well over half of these were good or better and a quarter of the lessons were very good or excellent. One in three lessons were satisfactory and one in eleven were unsatisfactory. The teachers have many strengths. In particular, they manage the children very well and support less able learners skilfully. This means that most of the children concentrate well on their work and make satisfactory progress. The teachers tell the children what they have to learn and this helps them to understand how well they are doing. The best teaching is lively and includes a good range of different work to challenge children of different abilities and set high standards. The children are encouraged to think for themselves.

Where the teaching is unsatisfactory, there is too little difference in the work done by children of different attainment. This means that the children cannot always do the work they are given or sometimes it is too easy for them and they do not achieve as well as they could. Occasionally, these children become restless and lose attention.

English and mathematics are generally taught well. The school teaches the skills of reading and writing carefully and effectively. New ways of teaching small groups in Years 1 and 3 are proving successful through improving the children's spelling and comprehension. This is beginning to have an impact and has improved the standards of the present Year 2 children. Numeracy is usually taught well but some teachers do not give enough attention to the calculating skills that the children need. The children with special needs are taught very well by their teachers and support assistants.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is organised in a way that helps the children learn and understand their work through practical and lively lessons. The school has received a national award for its very good provision in art.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school is managing special needs very effectively. Planning and monitoring of the pupils' work is thorough.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. There are few children who speak English as an additional language. They are fluent in English and understand what is said to them.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. The excellent provision for moral and cultural development gives the children a strong understanding in these aspects. Social development is supported very well and spiritual development is good. These aspects help the pupils towards good citizenship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The children's personal development is supported very well. Assessments to show what the children need to learn next are unsatisfactory. The school has rightly identified the need to develop assessments further.

The school works very well with parents. The Education Action Zone work has strengthened the links with parents. The analysis of the children's tests is very thorough and results in good improvements of the curriculum.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall. Good leadership of the children's care, especially through the Action Zone work. Raising the children's standards has not always been managed to a satisfactory level. As a result, some of the children could do better.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have a clear view of what the school does well and what needs improvement. They monitor finances well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. The low standards have not been sharply targeted for improvement. Teaching has improved but more needs to be done. The school has already identified these concerns as areas to develop.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school has used new grants very well to support the pupils' personal development. Senior teachers are raising standards in year groups they support but standards are still not yet high enough across the school

The provision for staffing and accommodation is good and learning resources are adequate. The school knows how well it compares with others and works well to improve the children's behaviour and attitudes to school. Some of the pupils are not challenged enough in their learning. The school consults well and gets good value from its spending.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teaching is good. • The school expects the children to work hard. • The children make good progress. • The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how the children are getting on. • The school's work with parents.

The inspection team agree that most of the teaching is good and the activities outside lessons are interesting. Some of the children should be expected to work at harder tasks and should make better progress. More detailed information about how the children are getting on is needed. The school has very good links with parents and works well with them.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The children who are in the nursery reach well below average standards in most of the areas of learning, particularly in the development of spoken language and writing. Their standards are average in physical development and in aspects of personal development, such as independence and confidence. They enter the nursery with very low standards and they learn how to play together and listen to the staff. They enter the reception classes with well below average standards for their age and here they learn at a good pace. By the end of the Foundation Stage, they are likely to reach average standards in physical development but well below average standards in the other areas of learning. Overall their achievement is satisfactory
2. At the end of Key Stage 1, the children's test results over the past four years have given a picture of well below average standards in reading, and very low standards in writing. The standards in reading began improving in 2000 and although they are still below average, they continue to rise. This is because of the effective additional support given to small groups of children. In writing, 7 out of 10 children were below average in 2000 and 2001. The standards are now beginning to catch up because of the well designed activities taught to small groups but they are not yet rising as fast as in other schools. In mathematics, the test results show the standards in 2001 were also well below average. They began to improve from an even lower level in 1999 and are now higher than they have ever been before. This is due to the good teaching that has lifted the standards, although only to a below average level. The standards in science are also improving and are supported by the children's developing literacy skills. In all three subjects the numbers of children who have learning difficulties strongly influence the test results with almost half the children needing extra support. The potentially higher attaining children do not always reach high enough standards nor do they all learn quickly enough. They are not always expected to do well, and their lessons are not always planned as effectively as they could be. At the moment too few children reach the higher Level 3.
3. At the end of Key Stage 2, the children's test results over time show very low standards and unsatisfactory improvement. These results are misleading, as the school has not been aware of the available support to make sure that the children with below average reading skills understand the test questions. As a result, the tests over the past few years do not reflect the children's real standards. The teacher assessments have been inaccurate and too low, and this has led to an acceptance of the apparent low standards. The school's overall results always include the results of the children in the special needs learning unit. This has a considerable effect on the reported results and also gives a false impression of the overall standards and achievement of the children at the end of Key Stage 2. The standards appear to be lower when these extra pupils are included.
4. Since 1997, the school's Key Stage 2 results in English, mathematics and science have appeared to be falling away from the national standards. In fact, the children in the current Year 6 classes are reaching below average standards overall in English,

mathematics and science, as opposed to well below or poor standards. Their achievement is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. The determination and skills of the teachers who work with the oldest children indicate that more pupils are likely to reach the above average levels when they take their tests in the summer of 2002. The school builds on the children's earlier learning as they move through the year groups, but still too few of them are making rapid progress during their time in the school. The school sets targets for the children in literacy and these, with test results, are analysed effectively. As a result, the staff are able to identify weaknesses in curriculum coverage. There are no detailed assessments that show the short-term progress the children make or identify what is needed next in order to raise standards. The children work in ability sets for literacy and numeracy. In Years 2 and 6, the children in the top sets are challenged well and those who are able to, reach higher than average standards. In the top sets across the school the children usually reach average standards overall. In the middle sets the children usually reach below average standards overall, and in the lowest set they reach below or well below average. In most cases, the children are working at the appropriate level for their attainment, although in some of the sets there are children who could reach higher levels. Most children are achieving at a steady pace.

5. The school has recently identified a strong link between the children's speaking and listening skills on entry and their later standards in most other subjects. The inspection team agrees with this finding. The children understand what they are learning but, especially in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, are often unable to talk about it fluently. As a result their writing and their reading comprehension are progressing more slowly than they should. The Education Action Zone programme includes training for the Foundation Stage staff to improve the teaching and learning of spoken English. This is a well chosen initiative but has not yet had time to help the children make better use of their learning.
6. By the end of each key stage, the children's attainment in information and communication technology is average; they have an appropriate range of skills and a secure understanding. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were unclear. The children use information and communication technology appropriately to support other subjects. In music and art the children reach above average standards, but in design and technology the standards are below average. In the other subjects the standards are average in both key stages.
7. For the children with special educational needs, their work in English and mathematics is adapted to the right level. The work is carefully structured and based on an accurate assessment of what they need. Experienced and competent learning support assistants help the pupils to learn and concentrate. In these lessons they often make very good progress. Pupils are identified and helped at an early age, which contributes to the good progress they make. The children with emotional and behavioural difficulties make very good progress because they are learning to control their behaviour and work well in the lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Attitudes to school are good, and pupils enjoy the lessons and clubs that the school provides. Almost all of the pupils behave well and respect each other and the staff, although there are a few incidents involving children with recognised behaviour difficulties. The children's personal development and relationships are good overall.

The children say that the teachers allow pupils to get to know them and they feel liked. Most understand that teamwork implies a need to respect other people's feelings and opinions. There are satisfactory opportunities for the children in Key Stage 2 to have additional responsibilities. For example, the Year 6 pupils act as prefects, and the school council enables two pupils from each year group to represent their classmates and discuss areas like how to identify the school rules.

9. Attendance is below the national average, and has not improved over the last four years. Over 60 per cent of pupils have above average attendance and there are around ten pupils with very poor attendance. However, there remain many pupils whose attendance rate is lower than average because of higher sickness levels, or whose parents condone absence for shopping or other unauthorised reasons. Since the last inspection, the school has adopted a more rigorous definition of absence to try and encourage the children to be punctual. Pupils arriving more than 30 minutes late are recorded as absent for that session. This may hide a small improvement overall. The Education Action Zone budget has provided a member of staff who will visit the children at home or ferry them to school. As yet this has not improved the attendance overall.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

10. The quality of teaching is good overall. Of the 91 lessons seen during the inspection 30 were good, 16 were very good and 6 were excellent. There were 31 satisfactory lessons and 8 that were unsatisfactory. This is a substantial improvement on the previous inspection when there were more unsatisfactory lessons and fewer good ones. Since then, the headteacher has developed an effective system for the teachers to work together and watch each other taking lessons as a means of improving. Some teachers who needed support have been closely monitored and given advice that has helped them improve. This better quality of teaching is having a strong influence on the children's attitudes and standards are rising, particularly in English and information and communication technology. Overall, the teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding, apart from aspects of design and technology. More needs to be done to support the teachers in developing their skills in this subject. The coordinator is aware of this need and already has plans for improvement.
11. The quality of the teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The staff plan direct teaching sessions and also provide play activities. Some of the staff are less skilled at intervening to help the children develop their ideas through play and do not extend the children's spoken language enough. The curriculum planning is satisfactory overall. It shows what the children are to learn but gives insufficient attention to developing spoken language. As a result, the children are given too few opportunities to practice using longer sentences or new vocabulary. The warmth and care of the teachers, together with the close partnership between teachers and other classroom staff, supports the children well as it raises their confidence. Where the teaching is good, the tasks are planned to support different groups of children according to their attainment, their achievement is monitored during learning and they make good progress.
12. The good, very good or excellent teaching accounts for over half the lessons. It is spread across all subjects. The staff are keen to develop their work and respond well

to new information from each other and the subject coordinators. The best teaching is very effective. The teachers use very good strategies to extend the children, like teaching them to speedily work out computation in mathematics. The lessons move along quickly and the children become used to working at a fast pace. The teachers expect the children to reach higher standards and provide tasks that are hard for them, but the children are helped to be successful and praised for their achievements. This was seen in Year 5 where the teacher told the children how well they were doing and how pleased she was. The children responded well and worked as hard as they could.

13. Throughout the school almost all of the teachers maintain a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the classrooms at all times. This is a particular strength, as the children can sometimes be very challenging. The staff have responded very well to the training they have received on the behaviour management of the children. As a result, there are very few occasions when the pupils appear to be restless or disaffected and lessons are rarely interrupted. When this does occur it is because the children are unfamiliar with the teacher or the tasks are not matched accurately to what they need. Where the teaching is good, the teachers show a genuine fondness for the children and want them to do well. The older pupils, particularly, are aware of this and want to work hard to please their teachers. Most of the teachers are enthusiastic and this creates enthusiasm in the children.
14. Although there are considerable strengths, there are also weaknesses that occur in several lessons. The potentially higher attaining children in sets and classes are not always stretched appropriately. The teachers have good knowledge of most of the curriculum subjects but do not always have the highest expectations of the pupils. Some children could do better. The assessment procedures do not accurately show what the children need to learn next in order to make good progress. This does not help the teachers plan accurately. Some of the teachers show particular expertise in some subjects and less strength in others. The support the teachers have received through observing and planning alongside each other has improved their performance. However, some teachers have not been monitored closely enough by the senior staff. As a result, weaknesses have not been identified clearly enough and action to improve them has been insufficient.
15. The basic skills of reading and writing are taught regularly and effectively during literacy lessons. The staff have received thorough training in the teaching of English and this enables them to support the children well. The staff in the reception class are good at teaching the early skills and, as a result, most of the children make satisfactory progress even though their standards are below or well below average. In Key Stages 1 and 2, these skills are also taught well but the children's below average standards in reading mean that in all subjects their work is inhibited by a difficulty in understanding written tasks. The teaching of writing is improving but in Key Stage 1, there are few children who can record their own information effectively. The basic calculating skills of numeracy are taught systematically in most cases. As a result, the children are able to use a range of calculation strategies when working out problems. In a few lessons these skills were taught less effectively and the teachers were unclear how to provide the children with a good range of strategies to work out their calculations.
16. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. The children in the special needs bases are taught very well. The staff are strongly committed to moving the children's learning forward in a steady and systematic way. There is a suitably

challenging level of work for these pupils. The teachers are introducing the new code of practice. They give good support to the children with higher levels of concern and these pupils are helped to make significant progress in their learning and behaviour. For pupils who are withdrawn from classes, the activities are well planned and relevant to their individual needs, because of the quality of assessments carried out and the teachers' knowledge of pupils. The teachers write group education plans for those on earlier stages. These are not always specific as sometimes they do not provide enough information to show how the group of children will improve. In some lessons, the work planned is not always well enough matched to the different abilities of pupils within the groups or sets. This results in some pupils not achieving as well as they should. Learning support assistants, working with special needs children in the base and in the main classes, make a very good contribution and pupils benefit from this help.

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

17. The school has a good quality curriculum. It is stronger in Key Stages 1 and 2 than in the Foundation Stage, as there is not yet enough attention given to developing speaking and listening in the nursery. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the curriculum has been adapted well to cater for the needs of the pupils and is being supported by a good range of extra-curricular activities. The children are provided with many visits and visitors including sports coaches, a professional artist and musicians. These people enrich the children's learning. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs is very good.
18. The curriculum is broad and is balanced overall although in design and technology, food and textiles are under represented. The school has successfully implemented the literacy and numeracy strategies. Additional time is given for pupils to undertake extended writing for a variety of purposes in Key Stage 2 and for all the children to hear good literature read to them. The teachers work well in teams in Key Stage 1 for aspects of science, history and geography.
19. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by the very wide range of extra curricular activities. These include seasonal sports, and other physical activities, art, music and computer skills. The clubs are well attended and take place before and after school and at dinnertime. The children are able to use the experiences from the clubs to improve their learning
20. Provision for the children's personal, social and health education and citizenship is very good. A new scheme, implemented in September 2001, follows national advice and provides the staff with a detailed framework for teaching, with valuable advice on methods and learning resources. The pupils have a well-developed sense of ethics and morality, and previous work shows that they have learned effectively about drugs, personal safety and health. The community makes a good contribution to the pupils' learning. Partnerships with local shopping centres and other businesses, churches and charitable organisations are helping to widen the children's access to education about business; for example, by providing study trails around a local shopping centre. There are very constructive relationships with the local technology school, and with the partner primary schools within the Dudley Education Partnership and the Education Action Zone. Links with a nearby college are good, and a European link, looking at management of behavioural difficulties, is adding to the school's expertise.
21. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and has improved since the last inspection. It is planned exceptionally well, and good care is taken to make effective links between each aspect. The assemblies comply with the statutory requirements for the act of worship.
22. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. The daily acts of collective worship make an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Music is used to good effect to set the tone for the assemblies, and candles are used appropriately to remind the pupils that this is a time for reflection and contemplation. Teachers share their religious beliefs with the pupils and the pupils are encouraged to consider their own and others' feelings. In a Year 5 history lesson, for example, the

teacher presented information about life in Britain in the 1930s in such a lively and interesting way that the pupils began to think spontaneously about how difficult life was for some people and how they must have felt. They are also encouraged to explore their own feelings in response to music or works of art.

23. The provision for pupils' moral development is excellent. All the adults in the school community provide very good role models. The school has a very definite policy of supporting all children whatever their learning capabilities or needs. Although there are an above average number of pupils who present challenging behaviour, these pupils are welcomed into the school and helped, through special programmes, to overcome their difficulties. The warm relationships between adults and pupils, and the mutual respect that they show to one another, create a caring environment where pupils feel secure. From their very first days in school, the pupils become familiar with the simple school rules that are aimed at keeping everybody happy, safe and ready to learn.
24. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to become socially responsible through a good range of visits, including residential experience for pupils in Years 5 and 6. The children are encouraged to think about others less fortunate than themselves by supporting various charities. They are encouraged to play their part in the community, for example, by shopping for elderly people or taking part in environmental projects. They receive awards for such work and this is recorded in their personal records of achievement.
25. The provision for pupils' cultural development is excellent. Through a good range of visits to different museums, the pupils become aware of their own heritage. They learn to appreciate literature by being introduced to a good range of authors. They have plenty of opportunities to listen to and appreciate music; for example, background classical music is often played in the classrooms as pupils are working.
26. The pupils are prepared very well for life in a multicultural society. The school acknowledges that, because the pupils do not often see people from other cultures, they have to try much harder. The books in the school reflect diverse cultures and through the religious education programme, the pupils learn to accept the values and beliefs of others. The multicultural theme runs through a lot of the work that pupils do. In music, for example, they learn to appreciate and enjoy music from other cultures. A good illustration of this is their eagerness to take part in out-of-hours music lessons, such as African drumming taught by a visiting specialist. Recently, the school worked in partnership with a secondary school in presenting a multicultural community arts festival based on an African theme at the Civic Hall. This was prepared over a one-year period during which time the pupils worked with visiting artists, musicians and dancers. The enjoyment that the pupils derive from such activities helps them to appreciate the contribution made by all the different groups in a society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

27. The pupils' personal development is monitored well, and the children receive effective personal support and guidance. All members of staff show a close concern for the

pupils. For example, when a Year 1 pupil came into school in a distressed state, or when a special educational needs pupil ran out of school at the beginning of the afternoon session, there was immediate and appropriate caring action. The breakfast club is a social occasion as much as a mealtime, and the school provides cultural and educational activities for the pupils who attend. The school has established an inclusion unit to support children with more extreme behavioural difficulties. This is proving to be successful in helping the children manage their behaviour. The development of the 'Link Club', an initiative to provide for pupils who have been previously suspended, is a commendable addition to the level of care offered. It helps the school to successfully achieve its aim of providing an opportunity for all children to learn whatever difficulties they experience. There is good provision for pupils' health and welfare. Healthy diet options are provided at break and lunchtime, alongside more traditional food, and some pupils would like to see an even wider range of fruit available. Procedures for medical care, first aid and health education are good, and involve the school nurse as needed. Community liaison staff meet parents each morning to take charge of inhalers and prescribed medicines, and to discuss any concerns they have.

28. Child Protection procedures are good, and special educational needs teachers support the assistant headteacher who is the named person with responsibility. All of the staff have received training in recognising and handling potential child protection situations. The school area is secure and provides an attractive setting with trees and gardens.
29. The school has improved its procedures for monitoring and increasing attendance, which are now very good. The computerised recording system works well, and the school is planning, during the current term, to move to an even more effective system which will allow absence patterns to be monitored daily. Community liaison workers now follow up all absences on the first day, and regular non-attenders are targeted promptly to avoid a habit of truancy building up. Good relationships with the education social work service allow for even closer concentration on those few families with an attendance rate of less than 80 per cent.
30. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very effective, especially in lessons. The school emphasises positive behaviour and rewards, and the system for dealing with misbehaviour is well understood by pupils. Serious misbehaviour is dealt with initially by class teachers and support staff, with provision for it to be recorded and monitored by senior management weekly. The procedures for monitoring bullying are very detailed, but have not completely succeeded in eliminating all harassment and fighting from pupils with recognised behavioural difficulties and syndromes.
31. The systems for analysing the children's test results are satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection. The information that is collected is used appropriately to see how well the pupils are progressing each year. The school collects the data from the baseline and the national tests for five, seven and eleven year olds. Additionally, all the children in years three, four and five take annual literacy, numeracy and science tests. As a result, the school has a considerable amount of information about the children and can identify their yearly standards and progress. This enables the staff to make predictions about what national curriculum levels each

is likely to achieve by the age of seven and eleven. The school coordinators for English, mathematics and science examine the data for general features and give advice to the teachers. This is contributing to the rise in standards. Although, in English, individual targets are set and national curriculum levels are recorded, the information is not used to identify what the children need to learn next. In all of the subjects the pace of learning is not closely monitored and many children achieve at a slower rate than they should. The assessment data from the annual tests is not detailed enough to be used by the teachers to plan for further learning. As a result, some of the lessons do not sufficiently challenge all the children. The school has rightly identified the need to develop more detailed assessments as a matter of priority.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

32. The parents' views of the school are good. Almost all of the parents' responses in the questionnaire show that they strongly support the school. The parents have confidence in the teachers and are pleased with the work of the school. A few parents express some worries about behaviour, the information provided for parents and the closeness of the school's links with them. The school has very effective links with parents, and has put in place a number of schemes, partly with the aid of Education Action Zone funding. These are already improving communication, for example by providing staff to visit parents at home, and by providing additional learning opportunities for adults, including National Vocational Qualifications. The school runs helpful workshops for parents to give them the skills to help with, for example, initial steps in phonics, numeracy or literacy.
33. Parental involvement in school is satisfactory. Many parents who volunteer to work in the school have been supported in further qualifications like child-care and education, and the school has a sensible policy of employing these parents as support staff whenever possible. The 'Friends of Bromley - Pensnett' continue to raise additional funds for the school. The quality of information provided is satisfactory. The school aims are written in child-friendly language that makes them easy to read. The school brochure is satisfactory and there is a range of useful newsletters and other documentation. The parents are happy with the reports the children receive each year. These are clear and give appropriate information.
34. Parents' contributions to the children's learning and homework are similar to those found in most schools. The school has recently asked for the parents' opinions about various aspects of school life and the curriculum, and has valuable information on which to base the future programme of publications and activities for parents. As a result of this, the school holds a very useful reading workshop for parents to show how the children learn to read and what can be done to help them.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

35. The leadership in the school is satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear and purposeful approach to improving aspects of school life, particularly those that support the children's personal development. The headteacher and senior staff work well together. They have set up the systems and structures for management and communication which the school needs in order to move forward. The team structures for management in the school enable all staff to make their contribution and feel that

it is valued. Systems for meetings ensure that ideas and opinions are easily and freely communicated within the staff. The headteacher has built up a good sense of team spirit. She has ensured a shared commitment to develop the priority of teaching the children to work together well and show concern for others.

36. The management work linked to improving the educational standards reached by the children is not so well developed and is unsatisfactory overall. At the end of both key stages, standards are too low. The main reasons for this are linked to an acceptance of the standards based on the school's view of how well the children should be able to do. The on-going assessments are not accurate or detailed enough and have not identified the children's rate of progress. They have not been designed to show what the children need next in order to move forward quickly. The school has identified this as a priority for improvement and some work has already begun in English. The senior teachers review the curriculum planning and check the children's finished work. This is effective and has helped to ensure that the children make satisfactory progress overall.
37. Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has closely monitored the teaching where areas for development were identified. This has been effective and has improved the work of these teachers. There are still, however, some inconsistencies in the teaching and as a result some children, who could work faster, are not always expected to. These features have not always been identified by the senior staff. The children have now reached good standards in their personal development and this is a significant achievement by the school. However, the evaluation of how well the school is doing has not resulted in enough action to raise standards. The very successful strategies used to develop the children's personal skills could be readily adapted to help all staff work together to raise standards.
38. Some coordinators have appropriate responsibility for the standards and quality of learning in their subjects. They do not always have a significant impact on the teaching in their subjects across the school because they do not specifically monitor or evaluate this aspect. The management of special needs provision is good. The school has piloted the revised Code of Practice and the new systems used to identify pupils' learning requirements are proving to be very effective. The special needs coordinator is highly skilled and uses her insights very well. Her work to develop and train colleagues is very well supported by the governor with special needs responsibility, who is able to liaise closely with parents and the secondary school.
39. The governors fulfil their role well and provide the school with positive, well-informed support. They have a very good, perceptive insight into the school's strengths and weaknesses, and have a strong drive to improve the school. They have a good overview of the school's priorities and a good grasp of the budget that is needed to finance these. They are beginning to monitor progress towards the school's goals and evaluate the impact of their decisions. The governors carry out their statutory duties satisfactorily.
40. The school improvement planning process is satisfactory. The 2001 priorities are closely linked to both the school's needs and to national initiatives. This is a good development. Clear costings mean that the implications for the school's budget have been considered. The headteacher and senior management team have established a

programme of supporting the teaching and learning going on in classrooms. This is based on working with partners to plan and implement the curriculum. This programme has contributed to the improvement in teaching. The school system for performance management is good and has already helped the teachers to improve their work.

41. Financial planning and monitoring are good. In particular, the headteacher and governors are skilled in tracking down and making imaginative use of grants and additional sources of funding to meet needs in the school. Recent good examples of this are the targeting of the Education Action Zone money to develop very good links with families and prepare training for the Foundation Stage staff. Financial control is satisfactory. The school applies the principles of best value appropriately. Both the governors and the senior staff consider carefully the best way to use their resources to match the school's priorities. For example, the decision to use money saved in the staffing budget to employ more classroom assistants shows the school's decision to support children with learning or behaviour difficulties. The school rightly involves all members of its community in its consultation process, and the views of parents are sought by questionnaire and borne in mind when decisions about the future direction of the school are made.
42. The school has a good number of teaching staff who are suitably qualified and match the demands of the curriculum. The school also has a large number of learning support assistants who make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Staff have received training in literacy and numeracy and opportunities are given for them to attend other courses. This has improved the teachers subject knowledge. Newly qualified teachers and other new members of staff receive good guidance and support and are helped to adjust to the procedures of the school.
43. The school is large and provides good accommodation for teaching and learning and for the resources to be stored. The additional areas are used well for teaching purposes. The premises are very clean and tidy throughout and are well maintained by the caretaker and cleaning staff.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

44. In order to maintain and improve the standards achieved by the school the headteacher, staff and governors should:
 - (1) Raise the standards in English, mathematics, science and design and technology by:
 - ensuring that all staff are familiar with the national curriculum levels, particularly in English, mathematics and science;
 - improving the teaching and learning in developing the children's speaking and reading skills in the nursery;
 - using assessment strategies to assist accurate planning;
 - providing lessons that challenge all the children but particularly those at the top level in each set;

- monitoring the outcomes of any improvement strategies against clear expectations.

(paragraphs 1, 5, 11, 18, 53, 54, 63, 73, 87,)

(2) Improve the standards in teaching where weaknesses occur by:

- more rigorously monitoring and evaluating how effectively the curriculum is taught in classes and sets;
- providing targets for improvement where weaknesses are identified in planning;
- providing the correct level of work and class management;
- expecting high standards from the children and constantly, but sensitively, challenging them in lessons with more appropriate learning;
- monitoring lessons to ensure that improvements are implemented.

(paragraphs 2, 13, 14, 37, 40, 74,)

(3) Develop assessment strategies that provide details of what the children need to learn next by:

- identifying what the children can and cannot do;
- noting what they need to learn in order to reach the next small step within national curriculum levels and the Foundation Stage curriculum;
- noting the pace of improvements in the standards reached by individuals and groups of children in order to ensure more rapid progress.

(paragraphs 4, 31, 14, 50, 64,)

- (4) Refine monitoring and evaluation strategies by the headteacher and senior staff to check that the standards are improving by:
- identifying the key areas for improvement, agreeing clear action to be taken and setting clear criteria to judge the improvements;
 - setting up a range of regular and appropriately frequent monitoring strategies to check on the improvements in standards and the rate of progress.
- (paragraphs 14, 37, 73, 74,)

In addition to the issues above the following less important development points should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

- a) Improve the children's independence as learners. (paragraphs 61, 81, 88,112)
- b) Make the non-fiction library more welcoming and accessible for the children. (paragraph 68.)
- c) Ensure the Year 6 children are able to swim the required distance. (paragraph 108)

THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL NEEDS BASES

46. In the pre-school assessment unit, children with severe additional physical and learning needs are given an excellent start because of the outstanding teaching which they receive. Teachers and nursery nurses know the children very well. They fully understand how children learn and provide stimulating and relevant activities to match the learning needs of the individual. Relationships within the unit are excellent. There is a shared commitment amongst staff to provide the best education for the children. To that end, all fulfill a crucial role in the planning and delivery of appropriate learning experiences for each child. As a result, children gain the confidence to explore the world around them. For example, a severely visually impaired child was given the opportunity to explore a range of stimulating toys through touching. As his confidence grew, he began to locate objects in one bowl and place them in another, showing a growing awareness of space.
47. The children in the pre-school assessment unit are prepared very well for their integration into the main school or other special provision. For example, they have weekly visits to the nursery class in order to build up confidence and encourage interaction with larger groups. The quality of assessment is excellent. All staff have a role in recording thoroughly the children's progress and development in order to prepare for the next steps of their learning.
48. The quality of teaching in the Individual Needs Centre is consistently very good. Teachers and trained assistants prepare challenging tasks for individuals and small groups of pupils according to their needs. In one lesson, two Year 4 pupils responded very enthusiastically when learning letter sounds and linking them to initial word sounds. Expectations of pupils in these sessions are high, so they achieve very well in

relation to the targets set for them. A strength of the teaching overall is behaviour management. This is particularly evident in the newly established Inclusion Unit. Teachers and assistants have a very good understanding of pupils' behavioural needs. They use highly effective strategies to facilitate learning. A literacy lesson for five pupils, for example, began with a sharing activity that helped the children develop self-confidence and good social skills. There was very good individual support within the lesson. This ensured that the objective of describing their favourite character from the story they had heard was met. There have been improvements since the last inspection in the effectiveness of the Individual Needs Centre.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

91

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

55

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	16	30	31	8	0	0
Percentage	7	18	33	34	9	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	45	423
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	142

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	19
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	21	211

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	38

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	33	23

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	21	25
	Girls	14	14	17
	Total	34	35	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	61 (41)	63 (62)	75 (81)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	22	24	23
	Girls	13	13	14
	Total	35	37	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	63 (41)	66 (62)	66 (71)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	31	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	10	17
	Girls	17	13	17
	Total	30	23	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	47 (47)	36 (46)	53 (44)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	11	14
	Girls	10	17	18
	Total	15	28	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	23 (35)	44 (44)	50 (37)
	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	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	12
Indian	1
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	320
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	21.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3
Average class size	28.5

Education support staff: YR – Y 6

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	123

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	45
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	96
Number of pupils per FTE adult	11.25

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000
	£
Total income	1000912
Total expenditure	995439
Expenditure per pupil	2128
Balance brought forward from previous year	44341
Balance carried forward to next year	49814

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	468
Number of questionnaires returned	128

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	45	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	51	1	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	45	7	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	50	5	2	9
The teaching is good.	52	45	1	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	55	10	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	46	5	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	41	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	30	57	9	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	38	52	5	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	48	4	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	46	1	2	13

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

49. The provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is satisfactory overall. Children feel secure and happy in the pleasant environment, and, because of the very effective induction procedures, they settle quickly into the daily routines. When children enter the nursery at three, their attainment in all aspects of learning is well below the average expected for children of the same age. Their communication and language skills, and their personal and social skills are particularly weak. For example, many communicate by pointing and using single words. They find it particularly difficult to communicate with adults, especially if a question requires more than a simple 'yes' or 'no' for an answer.
50. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and this leads to satisfactory achievement for most children. Despite this, because of their low starting base, by the end of their reception year, the attainment of most children in communication, language and literacy, mathematical understanding, knowledge and understanding of the world and the creative areas of learning is still well below the expected levels. They attain close to these in their personal and social development, and physical development. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory. Teachers complete tick lists of when the children manage certain tasks, such as recognising individual letters, but these do not provide enough information about what each child needs to do next to further their learning. The school has recognised this and the Foundation Stage teachers have been trained in tracking children in their activities and planning further learning more effectively. These procedures have yet to be put into place. The current practice means that the children do not always achieve as well as they should. In particular, children who are capable of learning more are not always challenged appropriately.

Personal and social development

51. When children start in the nursery, many find it difficult to form relationships with other children or adults. Many of them are not used to conforming to rules or following routines. The teaching in this area is good. As a result, the children achieve well, and by the end of the reception year, standards are broadly in line with the expectations for their age. The teachers and the nursery nurses are sympathetic to the needs of the children and adopt a friendly but firm approach to establishing the ground rules that are the foundation for a secure and happy learning environment. The teachers are particularly skilled in dealing sensitively with children who present challenging behaviour. Their calm approach means that the rest of the children in the class learn to ignore any unsettling behaviour. This was seen in a nursery lesson when one child decided not to take part in the lesson and another began to be disruptive. The rest of the class carried on regardless. Teachers have high expectations of children's behaviour and the consistent approach by all the adults means that, by the end of their reception year, the children are very clear about the class rules.
52. The teachers put an appropriately high priority on helping the children to become independent in attending to their own personal needs. From their earliest days in the

nursery, for example, they are expected to take off and put on their own shoes and socks when they have physical education lessons. This means that, by the end of their reception year, they take full responsibility for their belongings and are able to change fully for physical education lessons, including putting their clothes into their bags and placing their socks inside their shoes. Most of the children can manage their own buttons and help those who still find difficulty with this. Throughout the Foundation Stage, the teachers give the children plenty of opportunities to work and play together. This means that, by the end of their reception year, they learn to work together and to take turns and share things fairly. In a mathematics class in the reception class, for example, a group of children playing skittles had a lot of fun and urged their friends to knock down as many as they could.

Communication, language and literacy

53. The children achieve at a satisfactory rate but their standards, by the end of the reception year, are still well below the expectations for children of their age. The teaching in this area is satisfactory overall. It is stronger in the reception class than in the nursery, where the adults do not engage the children enough in conversation. They tend to ask closed questions that require a one-word answer, and frequently accept a nod or a shake of the head. In independent role-play situations, there is not enough adult involvement. The effect of this is that, although the children communicate with one another, many of them do not progress beyond simple words and gestures.
54. In the nursery, children are introduced to books through story times, but they do not have enough opportunities to explore books for themselves. Although there is a good stock of suitable books, these are stored on shelves as opposed to being displayed to capture the children's interest. Tables with interesting displays, for example seashells, do not include books. The effect of this is that the children do not learn to handle books for themselves and become familiar with the layout. In the reception class, the children are encouraged to choose books for themselves. During the inspection, several children chose to sit and 'read' in the book corner when they had finished their other work. The teacher engages the children's interest in books by reading stories in a lively way and encouraging the children to join in at appropriate points. This means that the children associate books with pleasure. They are given good opportunities to develop the ideas in the stories, for example in the role-play area, which has been turned into Mrs Wishy Washy's laundry. The teacher is skilled at teaching children the sounds that letters make by linking actions to the sounds. Through the effective teaching of sounds, the children are able to recognise some rhyming words.
55. Throughout the Foundation Stage, the adults promote early writing skills effectively through a good range of well-thought-out activities. In the nursery, for example, the role-play area has become a travel agent and the children are encouraged to communicate their requirements by making marks. Good care is taken to cater for the preferences of all the children. For example, in the letter writing corner, when the teacher noticed that the boys were not really interested, she introduced the idea of writing to Bob the Builder. This is built upon effectively in the reception class. The children are also taught systematically how to form their letters. By the end of the reception year, most children can recognise and write their own names and a small minority are beginning to write simple phrases. The majority, however, are still dependent on copying the teachers' writing.

Mathematical development

56. Although there are a few children who enter the nursery with average mathematical knowledge and understanding, the standards reached by most of the children are well below the expectations for their age. For example, they have little knowledge of number, shape or colours. The teaching in this area is satisfactory overall, and as a result, the children's achievement is satisfactory. However, their low starting point means that there is a lot to catch up on and, by the end of the reception year, overall standards are still well below the expected levels. By the end of the reception year, most children can count to at least 20. Most of them can add one more to numbers less than ten, and the higher attainers can do simple addition and subtraction sums involving numbers less than ten. The teachers use a good range of number songs and rhymes to reinforce learning. Although adults take appropriate opportunities to extend children's learning in lessons, they miss many opportunities to reinforce learning in free play activities. For example, there is little intervention during play that helps the children count or sort objects or find things out for themselves. The activities have the potential to develop mathematical concepts and vocabulary, but the adults do not interact sufficiently with the children for this to take place. A weakness in the provision is the absence of mathematical displays to stimulate the children and reinforce learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

57. Most children enter the nursery with well below the expected levels of general knowledge about the world around them. The quality of teaching in this area is satisfactory and this results in satisfactory achievement. Again, however, their low starting point means that standards are still well below those expected for children of their age. Throughout the Foundation Stage, the teachers plan appropriately to interest the children in finding out about their local environment and how and why things happen. In the nursery, for example, the children had great fun blowing up balloons, first using their own breath and then using a pump. This gave them a clear understanding that air was used to inflate a balloon. The teacher took the opportunity the next day to show the children a helium balloon, and they were fascinated to see it rise to the ceiling. The children's learning about air inside balloons was reinforced in an art lesson when they blew into their paint to make bubbles and then made prints.
58. The children are introduced to computers in the nursery, and in the reception class higher attaining children use them to good effect to support their learning. Again, however, there is too little adult interaction as the children work, and the only record is of whether children have had a turn, not what they have managed to do. The children use the mouse very effectively to control events on the screen, for example, in ordering numbers and going on to the next page. Children learn about living things and how they change. In the nursery they grow sunflowers from seed, and in the reception class they compare photographs of themselves as babies and discuss how they have changed.

Physical development

59. When children enter the nursery, their attainment in this area is below average. Although they manage large movements well, they have difficulty with fine movements, such as cutting and drawing, and in coordinating their movements, for example, to fill a container with sand. Through good provision and teaching, they achieve well and, by the end of the reception year, most children reach the expected standards for their age. The staff provide plenty of opportunities for the children to practise and refine their manipulative skills through using a good range of tools, equipment and materials. In the nursery, for example, the children have good practice in folding when they put their letters in envelopes. In the reception class, activities such as threading, pasting and colouring in within an outline build up the children's confidence and skill. The provision for outdoor play is satisfactory. The outdoor play area is timetabled, so that the children have a weekly session when they are able to use wheeled toys to practise their steering skills. In addition to this, they have gymnastics lessons and a weekly session in the soft play area. These are planned well to develop spatial awareness. The children are active and use appropriate control. In their play they move with awareness of space and avoid collisions well. They move with care and precision.

Creative development

60. Children's attainment when they enter the nursery is well below the level expected for their age. The overall satisfactory teaching leads to satisfactory achievement, but by the end of the reception year, standards are still well below those expected. Teachers plan for the children to develop their imaginations by providing role-play situations, such as the Three Bears' Cottage or Mrs Wishy Washy's Laundry. They do not, however, plan for any adult interaction. The effect of this is that the children, who have very little imagination and are not able to think up their own ideas, do not extend their learning as much as they should. When incidental involvement between the adults and the children occurs the play improves and the children adopt new ideas. For the most part, however, although there is a group of children sharing the resources, they are playing as individuals.
61. Throughout the Foundation Stage, the teachers provide plenty of opportunities for the children to use different media and materials. A weakness here is that the activities are over-directed and the children do not have enough opportunities to explore the materials for themselves. In the reception class, children develop drawing, painting and printing skills appropriate to their age. Drawing skills are taught particularly well. The teacher uses resources effectively, for example, mirrors to encourage the children to observe their features closely while drawing their self-portraits.

ENGLISH

62. The children's standards in English are below the national average at the age of seven and eleven. In the National Curriculum tests for 2000 and 2001 the results were well below average and much lower than the standards reached by similar schools. The school has set targets for the current Year 6 children and expects them to be closer to the national average this academic year and more are likely to reach the higher levels. A high proportion of the children throughout the school are on the special needs register and the results for many of these children are likely to remain below average during their time in the school. This will continue to bring the school's results to a below average level. Despite this, the pupils have made good progress and are

achieving well. Two key factors for this are the good and sometimes very good teaching and the children's positive attitudes towards their learning.

63. The National Literacy strategy has been implemented appropriately. The development of the English curriculum has been a priority and has been handled well by the school. As a result, the standards in English are slightly higher than in the other core subjects of mathematics and science. Lessons are well planned and tasks are chosen carefully so that the children are interested and well motivated. Although the application of literacy skills is satisfactory overall, more could be done to develop the children's writing in other subjects of the curriculum, such as science, history and religious education. Lower achieving pupils and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Adapted work is provided for them and sometimes they receive extra support in lessons or are withdrawn for specialist support. There are occasions, however, when the work they are set is too difficult for them and this results in slower progress. Assessment procedures in English are satisfactory. There is a good understanding of how well the curriculum is covered and of the strengths and weaknesses shown in test results. Writing is assessed regularly and individual targets are set. Many of these targets are relevant and help to move the children forward. Sometimes, in Key Stage 2, they are imprecise and do not tell the children exactly what needs to be done to improve. Sometimes higher achieving pupils in each set are not given sufficiently challenging work to ensure that they reach higher levels. The school provides additional support groups for some of the lower attaining children and these are making a positive contribution to raising the standards for individual pupils.
64. Overall, the teaching of English is good, with some very good and excellent lessons. Relationships and the children's behaviour are usually very good. In the best lessons, the children were totally involved in their learning and were achieving at a high level. This was seen in a Year 6 lesson where the children were comparing a novel with a film. The children were taught how to search the text for examples that would prove their opinions and how to write a convincing report on their findings. In less successful lessons, sometimes the children are not being challenged at the correct level. For example, when one group were unable to read the sentences they were given they lost interest and became restless.
65. The children's standards of listening skills are average throughout the school. The standards of speaking are below average. Teachers have worked hard to improve this area and many occasions were seen when children were encouraged to give extended answers to questions. The teachers give good attention to this and it is developing the children's fluency. In Key Stage 1, the children listen carefully to their teachers and to each other and are keen to answer questions. The teachers value the pupils' responses and this gives them confidence to speak. In other lessons, there is a high level of respect and courtesy when considering the opinions and views of others. This ensures that the children are confident to share ideas with the class. When reading aloud the children are developing an expressive tone that enlivens their work.
66. By Year 6, the pupils' speaking skills are only just below that which is expected for their age. The majority are confident speakers and listeners. Their answers show that they listen carefully, but their use of grammar and their choice of vocabulary are sometimes weak. The teachers question children well to ensure these skills develop daily and good progress is made. The adults demonstrate reading very well and this

helps the children when they respond. An example of this was seen in Year 6 in their work on 'Nicholas Nickleby' by Charles Dickens. The teacher demonstrated how to use punctuation and intonation to make this difficult text understandable. As a result, the children were able to respond accurately to the text and improve their own use of punctuation. They were then able to read in a lively, fluent manner that engaged the listener.

67. Most pupils make good progress in reading. There is a wide range in the standards reached by the children because of their levels of attainment, but they try hard and are achieving well. Reading skills are taught well as part of the daily literacy lessons and through guided reading sessions. By Year 6, the most able pupils read fluently and with confidence. When necessary, most children use a range of strategies, which include context and letter sounds, to read unknown words. Phonic skills are taught well. The children take home reading books regularly and some home-school reading diaries are used effectively. These contain supportive and encouraging comments from both teachers and parents. There are, however, inconsistencies when the diaries are not as well used. The pupils are encouraged to write book reviews that show their understanding of the main points of the story. They are also encouraged to make evaluative comments and this is developing their skills as critical readers. The teachers keep records of guided reading sessions and are beginning to set individual targets for children. This is a necessary step forward in order to ensure maximum progress for each child.
68. A love of reading is being developed well in lessons and there is a sufficient range of good quality books in the libraries in Years 1 and 2 and Key Stage 2. Although generally classrooms have sufficient fiction books, few classes have attractive reading areas where children can browse. The non-fiction library is well stocked but some books are old. The corridor area which houses the non-fiction library is dark and unwelcoming and many shelves are too high for the children to reach books comfortably. This library shares the space with the computer suite; therefore access is limited at times. Older and higher attaining children use the contents, index and glossary information in non-fiction books well, but few are able to scan text quickly and successfully. The pupils with special educational needs are supported well through structured programmes and regular help. Older children are knowledgeable about books and many have favourite authors. Provision for reading has improved since the criticism of this aspect in the last report.
69. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in developing their writing skills. The coordinators have made good use of assessment results. They have identified that standards of writing and spelling were a problem. As a result, careful planning and good teaching have resulted in improvements in all aspects of writing. The last report expressed concern about a lack of opportunities for children to draft and redraft. This has been managed well by the school. In the best lessons, in Years 5 and 6, the teachers are skilful questioners, checking understanding carefully and further developing the children's skills by expecting high standards. Regular spelling and handwriting practice are provided. There are, however, some variations between sets in the same year group when some teachers' expectations are not as high as others and this slows down the progress for some pupils. The teachers provide a wide range of purposes for the children's writing. These include stories, letters and accounts, description of characters and plots, as well as poetry. In a Year 4 lesson, for example,

good use was made of the children's own familiar stories, like Cinderella, to improve their use of adjectives when describing characters. Children regularly use the computer to present their work and to seek research information. More opportunities to link English with information and communication technology are needed and the school has identified this as an area for development. Homework is set regularly and both parents and children support this. Overall, the teachers' marking is good. The best examples tell children exactly what to do to improve.

70. The two coordinators lead the subject well. They are knowledgeable and they have rightly identified the need to refine and further develop the assessment strategies as the next step to ensure rising standards.

MATHEMATICS

71. In both key stages, the children's standards are below average. In the tests taken at the end of the Year 2000, the standards achieved by the children at the end of both key stages were well below average. The standards have been rising gradually since the last inspection, but other schools are improving at a faster rate and the school is not catching up. The overall results in 2001 show a further slight improvement, but the number of pupils reaching the higher levels is still well below average and this brings down the school's overall test scores.
72. The school's policy of admitting children with learning or behavioural difficulties means that there is a larger than average number of children with special educational needs. Many enter the school with very low attainment. Bearing this in mind, the pupils are achieving at a satisfactory level throughout the school. The school has begun to analyse test performance and set targets to show where the children could achieve better. Additionally, when they take their tests in 2002 'readers' will be used to help the pupils understand the questions. As a result of these sensible initiatives, the school expects the test results to be higher. Pupils are taught in ability groups throughout the school and this, together with the excellent teaching of groups in Years 4, 5 and 6, is contributing to improved standards in the subject.
73. The National Numeracy strategy has been implemented successfully throughout the school and staff have received training and are familiar with the recommendations. Next year more training is planned, when mathematics is due to be the main priority for development in the school. This is timely as in some classes pupils do not make as much progress in developing their knowledge of number and computation as they should. This is because the mental arithmetic part of the lesson is too short, and teachers do not use appropriate resources, such as number fans and digit cards so that they can see at a glance which pupils can understand a particular task. In other classes, for example a Year 5 'middle ability' set, children used whiteboards to show their answers to multiplication questions. They all took part in the activity and were keen to respond to the questions and show their answers. In this excellent lesson, the teacher could see which pupils did not understand and she adjusted her teaching accordingly. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls overall.
74. The quality of teaching is good overall, although it ranges from unsatisfactory to excellent. Teachers plan the lessons well and clearly identify what they want the children to learn in them. These are always discussed with the class at the beginning

of the lesson and are often written in the children's books before they begin their written activities. In some lessons, the plenary session is used well to correct any misunderstanding of what has been learned but this is not always the case. The unsatisfactory lessons were because the work had been planned for only one level of ability within the groups. This meant that the level of challenge was not matched to the ability of all the children and, consequently, little progress was made by some groups of children.

75. During the inspection, the best lessons were conducted at a brisk pace and had a high level of challenge for the pupils. The teachers used excellent strategies to keep the children on task, such as timed activities and as a result they made very good progress in the lessons. Teachers manage the pupils well and children throughout the school work well during the lessons. The teachers know their pupils and have formed good relationships with them. This results in the pupils being attentive and behaving well. They settle down to their written activities quickly and because teachers plan interesting activities, they sustain concentration. Teachers have good subject knowledge and ask probing open-ended questions to test the pupil's knowledge and consolidate their learning. For example, in a Year 5 lesson the teacher asked a variety of questions to help the lower attaining children use their knowledge of rounding numbers up. The children are encouraged to explain their answers and this helps to build up their confidence and understanding of what is being learned. The teachers use a good variety of approaches to problem solving using 'real life' situations, for example, in Year 6 when the children were asked to calculate the price of visits to the Sea Life Centre. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils are given opportunities to interpret information from graphs and charts and this is helping to extend their mathematical skills. Information and communication technology is used to support the learning in mathematics but not frequently enough.
76. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by their class teachers and learning support assistants, and they make good progress in developing their basic skills in relation to their abilities. They are given praise and encouragement to raise their self-esteem. For example, in a lower ability set in Year 5 the teacher constantly praised the group and this motivated them to work hard.
77. Although the coordinator has only been in post for a comparatively short time, the subject is being managed effectively. Her analysis of test results is beginning to have some impact on standards. For example, much more work is now done throughout the school on shape, space and measures since these areas were identified as weak. She has led staff training in the subject and manages the budget effectively. Resources for mathematics are satisfactory.

SCIENCE

78. Standards in science are below average in both key stages. The pupils' performance in the national tests for Key Stage 2 has been well below average over the past four years. The teachers' assessment for pupils at Key Stage 1 show that they too are well below the national average. The school has attended to the shortcomings that were noted in the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and lessons are now good overall. The pupils' attitudes to science and behaviour in science lessons

are now good and often very good. As a result, the children's standards are improving and their rate of achievement is satisfactory.

79. Most lessons are practical and the skills of scientific investigation are taught well. The lessons have a clear focus and good pace because of the clearly identified objectives and lesson planning. The school has rightly identified the need for many practical activities to support and clarify the pupils' understanding and knowledge. There are good relationships between the teachers and the pupils and lessons are managed well. As a result, the children have very positive attitudes to science and they stay on task and keep up a good pace to their work. In Year 2 for example, the children worked very hard during their lesson. The Year 1 pupils benefited from a variety of activities associated with 'life and growth'. This was managed in a way that gave them a good range of practical activities during a single lesson. The opportunity to work with three teachers and explore a wide range of experiences worked well. The teachers have secure subject knowledge and are able to effectively intervene while the children are working. This helps the children to make good progress. The pupils enjoy the active lessons and they work well in pairs and groups.
80. The processes of investigation are taught satisfactorily, and at times well. The Year 2 pupils investigating electrical circuits were reminded regularly to 'behave as scientists', and when the teacher repeated an investigation she told the class that 'Good scientists always check their results'. There is often a contrast between the standards reached by the children in lessons and the work in their books. Generally, the children show a higher standard in oral and practical tasks than in their written work. The children's below average literacy skills contribute to this. However, in some cases the teachers expect too little of the children as they work in their books. This is particularly so for the potentially higher attaining children.
81. In many of the lessons, the pupils are given insufficient opportunities to work independently, either in setting up and carrying out an investigation or in recording the findings. Whilst the skills of investigation are taught well at Key Stage 1 and securely at Key Stage 2, the pupils' investigations are, at times, over directed. Knowledge and understanding of the other attainment targets are taught soundly and supported by practical tasks, but pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply this knowledge independently to new situations. Scrutiny of previous work revealed few examples of hypothesising or deducing.
82. There is a new coordinator for science, who has just taken up her post. She is being supported by the deputy head, who has good subject knowledge. The school has recognised the need to evaluate assessment data more rigorously in order to match the children's work more accurately to their level of attainment. There is a helpful policy, an appropriate scheme of work and the subject is well resourced.

ART AND DESIGN

83. Standards of work seen in art are above average in both key stages. This shows an improvement since the time of the last inspection. The school has won a Gold Artsmark award in recognition of good standards achieved in a wide range of the arts across the school. This included, for example, an African arts project and a range of clay work. Work displayed, samples of pupils' work and photographic records show a

good range of current art work. There are particularly exciting examples of sculpture and use of fabrics for weaving and tapestry.

84. Skills are taught well because of the well-planned scheme of work. The development of skills was evident in a Year 4 lesson where pupils worked on the theme of 'dreams'. The teacher used a video extract and work of well-known artists effectively to promote discussion and stimulate ideas. As a result, the pupils concentrated well on their drawings and worked creatively when developing their ideas by adding texture to gain a 'stretched' effect. Pupils achieved well during the lesson learning to think about the different ways ideas can be projected.
85. Work displayed in the Year 6 classrooms, such as the charcoal portraits and figure drawing and use of water-based inks to create urban skylines, is of a good standard. Sensitive use of colour and design in the canal art by Year 5 indicates good progress through the school. The school effectively broadens pupils' experiences in art by linking with outside artists. Particularly impressive work includes the life-size sculptured figures, which form an outstanding display in the school. Computer technology is used, for example, to help pupils produce an attractive brochure for a multicultural event. Three-dimensional work with clay is also a feature of the school's curriculum, which shows good development of skills from two-dimensional tiles to a range of pots and three-dimensional models.
86. The quality of teaching is generally good. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject, and are well supported in their teaching and planning through the scheme of work. Pupils are encouraged to develop ideas in sketchbooks. Their knowledge and understanding of art is developed well by good use of resources to stimulate ideas. A good example was seen in Year 1, where pupils were inspired by the work of Andy Goldsworthy to paint their own dandelion circles. Since the last inspection, the good management of the subject has been maintained by the previous coordinator who retired recently. The newly appointed post holder provides good continuity in the leadership and development of the subject. Highlighting the work of more female artists has already been identified as a means to widen pupils' knowledge and understanding of art. Opportunities for pupils to explore their individual creativity more fully through experimenting with the wide range of media available is also an area for future development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

87. Standards are unsatisfactory in both key stages and the children do not achieve enough. Design is not being sufficiently developed and both food technology and textiles are under represented in the curriculum. Although cooking appeared within the 'healthy eating' aspect of personal, health and social education and textiles appeared within the art syllabus, the activities were not undertaken as a 'design-and-make' process, with a design brief or evaluated outcomes. This concern was reported at the time of the previous inspection, and there has been no development of the subject since then.
88. Only one lesson was observed and the teaching was very good. Overall, however, the teachers' expectations for attainment in design are too low. The pupils generally produce only sketch drawings with little or no annotation and insufficient realistic

detail for a product to be developed. The full process of design is not evident in most cases. As a result, the children do not have enough experience in collecting information or learning by taking things to pieces. This means they have difficulty, when creating a design, in detailing the materials, tools and methods and evaluating the finished product.

89. In the very good lesson observed, the appropriate processes were followed to design and make a pair of slippers. The pupils were taught how to collect evidence prior to designing and making their slippers. They evaluated commercial products to observe key characteristics and took a pair to pieces to see how they were made and what was used. Throughout this activity the pupils were reminded of the processes they had to follow. They performed well because of the teacher's high expectations, good subject expertise and very good discussion techniques. This helped them look closely and learn from the observation. They obviously enjoyed the practical activity.
90. The new coordinator took up her post in the current term. She already has a clear idea of how the subject should be developed, and she brings wide design and technology expertise to the school. She has already identified the need to broaden the curriculum and to develop design. The school is well resourced for the subject and has a good food technology area although the range of construction materials is limited, especially at Key Stage 2. The policy and scheme need urgent revision. The development of the subject is overdue.

GEOGRAPHY

91. Standards are average at the end of both key stages and the children make satisfactory achievements. This is the same as at the time of the last inspection. Only two geography lessons were observed during the inspection, both at Key Stage 2. The teaching was satisfactory in one and good in the other. A review of the children's earlier work shows that the teaching is satisfactory overall.
92. In both key stages, the pupils are learning a satisfactory range of geographical vocabulary and their written work shows good links to information and communication technology and mathematics. For example, a traffic survey that the Year 2 children completed on the village of Swindon made use of pie charts and block graphs compiled on the computer. In Key Stage 1, the children can name the countries of the United Kingdom and can describe and make comparisons between places. They can describe the human and physical features of a village they have visited, including the housing and recreation facilities available.
93. In Key Stage 2, the Year 6 pupils are developing mapping skills and can locate places using compass directions. In the good lesson seen, the teacher used the school environment well to extend the pupil's mapping skills. She helped the children use a map to enter parts of the school where water could or could not drain away. The oldest children confidently recall earlier work, for example about the water cycle and describe the journey of a river in detail. They talk about their own locality and can explain how it differs from other places in the country. They understand how the environment can be damaged by pollution. Sometimes children become restless in lessons when they find the tasks difficult or less interesting. The teachers showed good subject knowledge and questioned the children well in the lessons seen.

94. The coordinator is enthusiastic, is keen to observe lessons and to help her colleagues improve their work in geography. This year the subject is a priority for development in the school and she has some good ideas to take the subject forward, using a wider range of resources. Resources have been updated and reorganised and are adequate to support the learning. Children are given the opportunity to visit many different places to support the geography curriculum.

HISTORY

95. The standards in history are average in both key stages. These standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The children's lower than average standards in English restrict their work in history. However, the pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve at a satisfactory pace. Three lessons were observed during the inspection and in these teaching was good.
96. By the time they are seven, the pupils are beginning to develop a sense of chronology and to understand how everyday life has changed over time. This was seen in a Year 2 lesson where the teacher used old photographs, taken in the early 1900's, and role-play to good effect. This helped the children to explain how the lives of people in the past are different from their own. There are opportunities for them to compare old and new kitchens, and to consider how ships have changed and why different materials were used to build them. The teacher demonstrated good knowledge of history and her enthusiasm communicated itself to the pupils, motivating them to work hard.
97. In Key Stage 2, pupils further develop their understanding of chronology by studying topics such as the Ancient Greeks and Egyptians, Romans and Tudors. In their study of Britain since 1930 and during the Second World War, they show an understanding of social development and change. They know why people built Morrison and Anderson shelters and how and why the role of women changed, for example, from cotton weaver to bomb maker. Good links are made with design and technology as part of history work. Recently they have designed chariots and World War Two shelters. In their lesson on Ancient Greece, the children were successfully developing their understanding of the difference between primary and secondary sources. Good use is made of visits to historical sites such as the Black Country Museum. Visitors such as older and knowledgeable residents come to talk to children about the effects of World Wars. All of these opportunities mean that history is brought alive for the children and contributes to their enthusiasm for the subject.
98. The coordinator is new to the school, but the useful policy and the school's scheme of work, backed up by the nationally recommended scheme, have ensured that the teachers are well supported. The children are assessed at the end of each school year. Resources, including artefacts, support the teaching of history well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

99. The children are reaching average standards in both key stages. In most lessons they achieve at a satisfactory rate. This is the same as the last inspection. Since then, however, the school has made very good improvements in the provision of hardware and is now resourced to a very high standard. There is a networked suite of high

specification computers with projection facilities sufficient to teach a whole class. There is a mini-suite of six machines that can be used for group or individual work. All classes have at least one networked workstation and most teachers have a portable computer for administration and to use when demonstrating to children. The youngest pupils use machines confidently and have appropriate software. Most of the strands of the subject are being taught but control and data management are yet to be fully implemented.

100. Generally the skills, knowledge and understanding of information and communication technology are being taught securely and at times well. As a result, the children show enthusiasm for their work and most can explain what they are doing, using the appropriate technical vocabulary. The use of these skills across the curriculum is not yet fully developed but there is evidence that this is improving. In some classes, pupils are being given opportunities to apply and develop their skills well. For example, a Year 2 class spent a lesson in the computer suite learning some of the features of a drawing program. Later in the day the children applied their new skills to designing wheels in a design and technology lesson. The Year 6 children have learned to use a range of skills that enable them to find and investigate computer programs. They use this, for example, to discover information about Ancient Greece as part of their history curriculum. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have used traffic census materials taken from a local study in geography to create graphs of their findings.
101. Staff are currently undertaking their national training programme for information and communication technology in order to raise their capabilities. Already they are using their portable computers to plan the curriculum and prepare lessons. The teachers show varied levels of confidence when using the hardware. For example, one teacher continued confidently when the projector would not work by adopting an alternative teaching strategy. However, some teachers are not yet using the projection facilities at all. Specific training on using the suite and its facilities will help to iron-out the variable standards of teaching observed.
102. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The coordinator has the necessary expertise and is well supported by the deputy head who has additional technical competence. The scheme of work is generally appropriate, but does not include advice on using the subject across the curriculum. The subject is well supported by a member of the governing body who combines her knowledge and expertise in the work environment with a parent's view of the importance of information and communication technology in the curriculum.

MUSIC

103. The standards in music are above average in both key stages and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Children of all ages sing well and with enthusiasm. They show a good sense of rhythm and pitch. During hymn practice and assemblies, all the adults join in well and this enthusiasm encourages the children. Older children can sing songs in different parts. They know how to maintain their own pattern whilst others are singing theirs.
104. High standards are being achieved through good and sometimes very good teaching. The teaching of drums by the visiting teacher and of brass and singing by the music coordinator is excellent. In Year 1, the children can respond to music in pictorial form, playing their instrument accurately. Older children have learned to respond to

music by composers such as Gershwin and Holst. They can express their emotions in a mature way. They know musical vocabulary such as crescendo and diminuendo and know that the term ostinato means repeated patterns in music. The children are making good progress in developing their music skills. They enjoy their music lessons and show a high level of concentration, for example, when learning a new hymn for Harvest in Year 3.

105. The music curriculum is enhanced by provision for pupils in the choir and brass band that performs both at school and for parents. They also perform at places like the Merry Hill shopping centre. When the brass band played at the Key Stage 2 assembly the children showed a strong sense of performance. They did this without the presence of their music teacher who also normally conducts them. During breakfast club and at dinnertime children can attend drums club. This is an inspirational session where children and adults make music together. It is of very high quality. Young children are successfully encouraged to develop an enjoyment and interest in music at an early age. For one child, the African drum was bigger than she was but that did nothing to deter her.
106. The subject is led well. The coordinator has a clear vision about how to further improve the music provision. An underdeveloped aspect of the music curriculum is that of composing. The school rightly plans to correct this in the near future so that it matches the high levels achieved in other aspects. A particularly strong element of the music curriculum is that of listening to and appraising music. The teachers are supported in this by having good quality compact disc players in all classrooms. Other resources to support music are satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

107. During the inspection, children were observed in lessons that included gymnastics, dance and games. The children reached standards that are broadly average and have been maintained since the last inspection. The children have swimming lessons in Year 3. This is because there are several local canals and pools that are dangerous to young children. By the time they reach the age of eleven, only half of them reach the national standard of being able to swim 25 metres and this is unsatisfactory.
108. In the lessons observed, the teaching was never less than satisfactory and often good. A very good lesson was seen in a Year 1 class. In this lesson the teacher used praise well to get the best out of the children. She gave clear instructions and used demonstrations to good effect. In a Year 3 class the teacher showed good understanding of the skills needed to help the children send and receive a ball using a racquet. The children responded by trying to improve their performance. Lessons are well planned and have a good structure. The main activity is always preceded by a 'warm up' and children 'cool down' at the end of the lesson. They understand the importance of 'warming up' before starting skill practices because the teachers discuss with them the effect that exercise has on their bodies. Social skills are developed during the team games. For example, in a games lesson in Year 6 a boy with very good bowling skills adapted these according to who was batting at the time. Pupils throughout the school enjoy the lessons and their attitude to the work is good.

109. There is a wide range of out of school sports and games activities and these support the learning well. Both boys and girls join in. The coordinator leads the subject well, is enthusiastic and has good expertise, particularly in dance. There is a scheme of work which gives the staff confidence and good advice on planning and teaching their lessons.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

110. Standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection.
111. The curriculum is very effective in developing pupils' understanding as they move through the school. In the infant classes, the pupils learn in progressive steps where individuals fit into the rest of society. They are gradually introduced to the idea of different faiths and the acceptance of different beliefs. By the age of seven, pupils know that the Bible is a special book that tells us about God, and most can recall people and events from Bible stories they have heard. They know about celebrations in other faiths, such as the Hindu festival of Diwali.
112. In the junior classes, pupils build well on their previous learning, and study an increasing range of faiths. By the age of 11, they have built up a satisfactory knowledge of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. The curriculum is planned effectively, so that the pupils re-visit the work they have done in previous years and take their learning forward. In the study of Judaism, for example, pupils in Year 3 learn about the artefacts inside a synagogue, including the Torah. In Year 5 they are introduced to the Hebrew alphabet and consider the work of the rabbi.
113. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but teachers generally rely too much on pupils completing commercially produced worksheets. These do little to inspire the pupils to think for themselves or provide opportunities for the pupils to develop their literacy skills. There are isolated exceptions when the children are expected to think more deeply. For example, in Year 5 as the pupils discussed the work of a rabbi they were asked to produce an advertisement for the position. The teachers plan interesting lessons that the children enjoy and as a result, the children concentrate and become knowledgeable, about other faiths for example. The work seen shows a good understanding of the qualities required.
114. Pupils are given appropriate opportunities to reflect on what they have learned and on their own feelings and beliefs. For example, pupils in Year 4 study the Ten Commandments and then interpret these as rules that reflect the needs of the present day.
115. The leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory overall although the coordinator is currently on long-term leave. The locally agreed syllabus is being revised and teachers are informed about possible changes. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough because it is limited to a review of the work on display.