

INSPECTION REPORT

MARSH HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Erdington, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103233

Headteacher: Mrs C D Ball

Reporting inspector: Mrs S E Hall
21750

Dates of inspection: 16th – 19th September 2002

Inspection number: 246275

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior school

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Marsh Hill
Erdington
Birmingham

Postcode: B23 7HY

Telephone number: 0121 464 2920

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J Tozer

Date of previous inspection: 28th April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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21750	Mrs S E Hall	Registered inspector	Design and technology	The school's results and achievements What could the school do to improve further?
10965	Mrs P Edwards	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes and values. How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
25384	Mr R Bonner	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology	How well is the school led and managed?
8358	Mr A Blank	Team inspector	Science Physical education	How well are pupils taught?
22856	Mrs K Campbell	Team inspector	English Music Equal opportunities English as an additional language	
2063	Mrs J Hicks	Team inspector	Art and design Religious education The Foundation Stage curriculum	
15223	Mr R Salt	Team inspector	Geography History. Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Marsh Hill Primary School is a community school in an area of Birmingham where the economic circumstances are slightly below average although several pupils attend from a wider area of the city. There are 393 pupils aged from four to eleven in this larger than average sized school, with slightly more boys than girls and an average number of pupils moving in and out of the school. Approximately 33 per cent of pupils are currently eligible for free school meals, which is above average. The majority of pupils are of white ethnic heritage, with around a quarter being from minority ethnic groups. Less than ten cent of pupils speak English as an additional language (mainly Punjabi and Bengali), with none at the early stages of learning English. There are 55 pupils on the school's special educational needs register which is less than found in most schools. There are four pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school has undergone many changes in staffing and a full re-build of the school recently. The level of the children's skills on entry is slightly below average in several areas including in the key skills of communication, language and literacy.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school was identified as having significant weaknesses in the previous inspection in 1997. It has improved in many areas since this time and now provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Standards are currently average in mathematics but below national averages in several subjects, including English, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall as is the quality of leadership and management. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics and design and technology.
- Teaching in the reception and Years 1 and 2 classes is currently good.
- There is good quality support for pupils with statements of special educational need.
- Provision is good for pupils' moral and social development.
- Provides a safe and secure environment for learning in good quality school accommodation.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, science and ICT.
- The quality of teaching to ensure the highest levels of challenge for all groups of pupils.
- The links with parents.
- Further developing teamwork, so that there is a shared vision for and commitment to continuing school improvement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory overall progress since the previous inspection in 1997 and good improvement in several key areas. There has been good improvement in the quality of curriculum planning and teaching. The school has ensured that the health and safety issues identified were addressed and statutory requirements are now met. There has been satisfactory improvement in the raising of standards in several subjects, although more remains to be done to ensure that attainment is consistently in line with national averages. There has been satisfactory improvement in the quality of assessment and monitoring and evaluation procedures, although more remains to be done to ensure pupils are challenged at a consistently high level. There has been only limited improvement in the development of some pupils' attitudes to learning.

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			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	C	D	C
Mathematics	E	D	D	C
Science	E	B	E	D

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

The attainment of most of the children when they start school and when they enter Year 1 is slightly above the Birmingham average, but below the national average. The children have below average skills of communication, which affects their achievement in all subjects. The National Curriculum test results in 2001 show that at the age of seven standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well below the national average and that standards in writing were amongst the lowest five per cent of schools in the country. Results in 2002 tests indicate an improved picture in reading, writing and mathematics. Inspection findings are that standards of speaking, reading and writing are currently below average, but those in mathematics are average.

The 2001 National Curriculum test results showed the attainment of pupils aged eleven to be below average in English and mathematics and well below average in science. When compared to those schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals, attainment was average in English and mathematics and below average in science. Over a period of time there has been marked variability in the achievement of some year groups and sometimes weak and disappointing results. The 2002 national tests show that standards dipped slightly in English and mathematics from 2001 but rose in science. Inspection findings indicate that Year 6 standards are currently below average in English and science but average in mathematics. The school's targets for 71 per cent of eleven year olds to achieve the expected levels in English and 76 per cent to do so in mathematics in 2002 were not met.

Standards in ICT, art and music across the school and religious education at eleven are below average. Whilst learning is currently satisfactory overall and sometimes good there have been considerable changes in the school that have affected learning over time and this has slowed the progress that some pupils have made.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. The majority of pupils respond appropriately during lessons although several do not make enough effort or contribute.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Behaviour in lessons is mostly appropriate but around school it is often off-hand and boisterous.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Relationships are generally friendly. There are too few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and use initiative.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Whilst most pupils attend punctually and regularly a minority do not. Several families choose to take holidays in term time which affects the progress pupils make.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching was a key issue identified in the previous inspection where 40 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory or poor. Since that time the quality of teaching has improved and is currently satisfactory with several good features. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage and in the infants has been of concern, but has recently much improved and is now good. In the juniors the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory with some strong teaching in Year 5. A key feature of good teaching is the use of praise, which encourages pupils' self-confidence and promotes a climate where they feel comfortable. The management of pupils, some of whom have quite casual attitudes to learning and behaviour, is good. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and understanding of the strategies for teaching the skills of literacy and numeracy. The teaching of mathematics, design and technology and geography is good. The teaching of all other subjects is satisfactory with the exception of art where it is unsatisfactory. Over a range of subjects, teachers sometimes do not expect enough of the pupils including those with higher attainment. Pupils, including those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Those with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates and the pupils with statements of special educational need make good progress towards their targets because of the high quality of individual support provided.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school has a broad and reasonably balanced curriculum although the time allocated to the teaching of some subjects including music does not allow pupils a deep enough understanding.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The quality of individual education plans and overall provision is satisfactory. There is very effective support for those pupils with a statement of special educational need, which enables them to have appropriate access to the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Pupils are supported well in lessons and make as much progress as others. However, the school does not have structures in place to support class teachers with newly arrived pupils when extra help is not available.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their moral understanding and social skills. However, staff often miss opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness further.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The pastoral care of pupils and procedures to support and guide pupils are satisfactory. Assessment procedures and the use of checks and tests to inform lesson planning are sound.

Parents' views of the school are unsatisfactory, with a significant and occasionally vociferously critical minority of parents making many demands upon the time and resources available.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall. The school has appropriate aims and has identified priorities for development well. However, there have been difficulties in establishing corporate working practices and clarity of purpose about how to achieve further and consistent improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory overall. The governors are supportive and are developing their role in shaping the direction of the school in an effective manner. They are well led and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Staff have recently begun to make sound use of a range of information to track the progress that pupils make and to set targets for further improvement. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been developed appropriately, but occasionally lacks rigour. There is still work to be done in identifying areas for further development.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall. Financial management is generally sound although the school has had poor information leading to a very large underspend that has not been used to full effect to raise standards. The principles of best value are applied to purchases in a suitable manner. The school has satisfactory staffing arrangements, learning resources and good accommodation.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That children are happy at school. • The pupils are expected to work hard. • That their children make suitable progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons. • The quality of leadership and management. • The school working closely with parents. • The behaviour of the pupils. • The setting of homework. • Information about pupil progress. • The response of the school to concerns.

A low percentage of pre-inspection questionnaires were returned and few parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors generally agree with the positive views of parents. The inspectors feel that most of the areas that parents would like to see improved are satisfactory except the links with parents, which do require further improvement.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 The attainment of most of the children when they start school in the reception classes, whilst slightly above the Birmingham average, is largely below the national expectation for this age. Many children enter the school having attended local nursery schools and have personal and social skills that are slightly above average at this stage. However, the children have below average skills of communication, language and literacy, which affects their achievement in all subjects and this is an area that the school has to work hard to improve. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is also below average as is their creative development. Children's understanding of early mathematics is slightly better and is broadly average, as is their physical development. The children make good progress in the Foundation Stage in all areas of their learning. However, most children still do not achieve the Early Learning Goals (the nationally recognised benchmark for children of this age) in communication, language and literacy or in their knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development by the time they start Year 1.

2 The previous inspection report noted that standards were generally below national expectations. The National Curriculum test results in 2001 show that at the age of seven standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well below the national average and that standards in writing were amongst the lowest five per cent of schools in the country. When attainment is compared to that of pupils in similar schools, standards in reading and writing were well below average and those in mathematics were below average. The results of 2002 tests indicate considerable improvement in reading, writing and mathematics. Inspection findings reflect the variation in the achievement of different year groups and show that at the age of seven standards of speaking are low, those in reading and writing are below average but those in mathematics are currently average.

3 The 2001 National Curriculum test results at the age of eleven indicated that pupils' attainment was below average in English and mathematics and well below average in science. When compared to those schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals, attainment was average in English and mathematics and below average in science. Over a period of time there has been marked variability in the achievement of some year groups and often disappointing results. The 2002 national tests show that standards dipped slightly in English and mathematics from 2001 but rose in science. Inspection findings indicate some current differences in ability and that Year 6 standards are below average in English and science but average in mathematics. The school's targets for 71 per cent of Years 3 to 6 pupils to achieve the expected levels in English and 76 per cent to do so in mathematics in 2002 were challenging and were not met.

4 Throughout the school the pupils have quite limited speaking skills and this affects the progress that they make across the subjects. Whilst most listen quite well, relatively few make voluntary responses and therefore have not developed a full, descriptive and mature vocabulary. Pupils' achievement in reading is generally below average. Only a few pupils read really fluently and with expression or use a range of appropriate strategies to work out unfamiliar text and meaning. Pupils' writing is also below average and a limited number spell well. The quality of handwriting is below average and pupils generally do not take sufficient care over the presentation of work.

5 Standards in mathematics are improving at a better rate than in some other subjects and are largely average although there are still areas for further improvement. Improvement is

linked to effective co-ordination of the subject, which over a consistent period of time has ensured a good level of subject support and development. Most pupils have a sound understanding of numbers and are able to carry out a range of calculations both in mental and written formats. However, the speed of some mental calculations is quite slow and laborious. Pupils generally have appropriate understanding of shapes and measures and other areas of mathematics.

6 Achievement in science has been very variable in recent years. Whilst pupils have some understanding of materials, physical processes and life and living things there are weaknesses in their ability to carry out experiments and investigative activities which affects the progress made. Again such work is hindered by weak language skills.

7 Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is below average throughout the school. There have been major hardware difficulties in setting up sufficient computers for pupils to use on a regular basis and this has hindered the continuous development of skills. It is important that such technical difficulties are resolved in order to ensure progression in learning. Because the pupils have not had enough regular use of computers, they do not have the opportunities or skills to develop their learning through research or recording their observations and findings in subjects such as science, design and technology, geography and history.

8 Standards are average in design and technology across the school. This was an area identified as being in need of improvement in the previous inspection and which has been tackled well by the school. Effective co-ordination of the subject has ensured planning has considerably improved. Standards are also average in geography, history and physical education at the age of seven and eleven. Standards in art and music across the school are below average and not enough emphasis is given to these important subjects. The time allocations, particularly for music, are insufficient to achieve learning in depth and these subjects do not pervade the life of the school. Standards in religious education are average at the age of seven but below average at the age of eleven when pupils are confused about the features of different faiths.

9 Over a period of time the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and achieve reasonably well. However, during this period, there has been a lack of consistency in standards and this has had an impact upon progress including that of higher attaining pupils. Assessment information and national test results reflect the uneven pattern of achievement in recent years. The senior management team is aware that learning has been affected by the very high mobility of staff in and out of the school, the large number of temporary teaching arrangements and the major upheaval of the complete rebuild of the school. However, there have been few staffing changes in recent months, the new building is complete and that the school is now in a more stable situation. This is having a positive impact on teaching and learning which has considerably improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory overall. Where teaching is good, as now seen in the Foundation Stage, Years 1 and 2 and often in Year 5, pupils are learning at a better rate and are currently making good progress.

10 The progress made by pupils as they move through the school is generally satisfactory although in recent years there has been significant variation. Currently many pupils achieve well particularly in mathematics and design and technology. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is satisfactory and similar to that made by other groups of pupils in the school. The school is aware that girls' attainment is occasionally higher than that of boys, especially in English, but there does not appear to be a significant reason for this. Rather late in the day, it

has started to monitor gender issues and is just beginning to pinpoint areas of weakness in provision.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11 Throughout the school the attitudes, values and personal development of pupils, including those with special educational needs are satisfactory. In many classes, pupils for whom English is an additional language are confident and fluent in both spoken and written English. They are enthusiastic and want to succeed. Pupils from all backgrounds are fully integrated into the life of the school. The positive aspects of pupils' personal attitudes highlighted in the previous report have been maintained and others improved upon, particularly behaviour, although more remains to be done in this area.

12 The majority of pupils respond appropriately in lessons. Where activities are well matched to their needs, they sustain good levels of concentration and listen carefully as seen in a Year 1 design and technology lesson where pupils worked enthusiastically and with enjoyment to make sliders for their moving pictures. Where work is less well matched to their ability some pupils become inattentive and listen less carefully.

13 During the inspection the behaviour of pupils was satisfactory overall. However, pupils' behaviour at playtime and lunchtime both in the school and playground is a cause of concern to some parents. Behaviour is casual and at times boisterous and some incidents of unacceptable behaviour were observed. Pupils are aware of the school rules and the majority responds well to bronze, silver and gold merit awards and the recently introduced child of the week award. No incidents of bullying, sexism or racism were observed during the inspection. Pupils care for one another, their belongings and school property in a satisfactory manner.

14 There were 25 fixed period exclusions involving three girls and seven boys during the last reporting year. In the past, the overall exclusion rate has been high, with a worryingly large proportion of Afro-Caribbean pupils excluded. The school has started to approach the problem in a different manner in order to integrate rather than exclude such pupils. Thus far, the strategy has been very successful and has led to a substantial decrease in the number of exclusions. The improved behaviour of pupils evident during the inspection is attributable to the systematic application of the school's behaviour policy.

15 The majority of relationships are satisfactory and open and friendly. Pupils feel comfortable when chatting to teachers about their work and personal issues. However, pupils are not always respectful of lunchtime staff and are dismissive of their role. Pupils are honest and trustworthy and they are willing to accept responsibility. There is a School Council with elected members from classes in Years 3 to 6. The council meets regularly and has recently been involved in discussions on lunchtime provision. Pupils act as classroom helpers and 'buddies' throughout the school. Pupils have occasional opportunities to use their initiative and take responsibility for their own learning particularly through homework activities. However, there is room to extend this area. Whilst most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the impact of their actions on others, several do not.

16 Attendance is unsatisfactory and well below that found nationally. However, since an attendance officer has taken up her post, attendance has improved significantly. The reason attendance for the summer term remained below the national average was the number of pupils absent on holiday during school time. This is a cause of concern as the education of the pupils is affected. Punctuality has improved since the very recent introduction of the 'Breakfast Club' but too many pupils are still arriving late causing disruption to the start of each session.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17 At the time of the previous inspection of the school, teaching throughout the school did not adequately meet the needs of the pupils. The percentage of unsatisfactory teaching was very high; across the whole school 40 per cent of the teaching observed was unsatisfactory or poor and in Years 1 and 2 this figure grew to 50 per cent. Clearly, dramatic changes to the quality of teaching were needed for pupils to learn and make progress as they should.

18 Teaching is now much improved and is satisfactory overall with some strong features. In the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 teaching is consistently good. The best teaching is in Year 5. Across the whole school, nine per cent of teaching is very good, almost 36 per cent good or better, nearly 52 per cent is satisfactory and only four per cent of the teaching observed was judged unsatisfactory. Whilst more needs to be done to make satisfactory teaching even better, it is a very much improved picture than was the case at the last inspection. The improvement in teaching is matched closely by pupils' learning. However, the rising standard in teaching is often relatively recent and ongoing because of the many staff changes and there is a lower proportion of very good teaching than is often seen. The improved quality of teaching has not yet fully impacted upon pupils' attainment over time and some do not achieve as highly as they should.

19 In the lessons where teaching was judged very good, teachers have quickly developed a good understanding of their new classes, the individuals and groups within them. In one mathematics lesson in Year 5 the teacher planned work on multiplication tables. The work the pupils were expected to do matched the different abilities closely, challenging each group and individual at their own level. The teacher posed questions in such a way as to make pupils think and expand on their answers. The teacher also created an atmosphere that was simultaneously industrious and humorous. In another lesson where literacy was being taught in Year 1, the planning was very precise about what was expected of pupils and what they would learn by the end of the lesson. Pupils with special educational needs were encouraged to answer and then to expand on their first efforts so that the language they used became more complex and developed. Their confidence and self-esteem was increased. The teacher made skilful use of white boards so that pupils could draft their writing and then improve on it. All three strands of literacy, speaking and listening, reading and writing were developed within a 'Where's my Teddy?' activity that engaged pupils' interest.

20 The strength in teaching overall is the effective control and management of pupils. In the infants teachers' knowledge and planning are strong and the use of support staff and resources is good. Generally, pupils' learning reflects teaching closely so that usually pupils learning in Years 1 and 2 is good and in Years 3 to 6 it is satisfactory. Teaching is good in design technology, mathematics and geography throughout the school and in English in Years 1 and 2. In no subject is teaching less than satisfactory overall, though in science the teaching of investigative skills is generally under-developed and subject knowledge in art and music is at times weak. Occasionally the match of work to pupils' ability is not as good as it could be and this particularly impacts upon the progress of higher attaining pupils.

21 The teaching of numeracy is good throughout the school. Lessons are prepared well and delivered to ensure that all pupils receive work that matches their ability. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall though it is good in Years 1 and 2. Good use is made of guided reading sessions in small groups to improve pupils' reading skills. However, at times, teachers talk for too long and do not make enough use of open-ended questions to encourage pupils to develop their speaking skills. Whilst different tasks are often set for groups of different ability, this sometimes does not happen where it would be appropriate, and not enough is expected of higher attaining pupils.

22 The improvement in teaching since the last inspection reflects school policy and a determination to improve teaching and learning. Recruitment of staff, in-service training and internal and external monitoring have raised the quality of teaching and learning significantly. The challenge for the school now is to continue the improvement so that it has a noticeable impact on pupils' attainment and the standards they achieve over time.

23 In Years 3 to 6 pupils with special educational needs are supported satisfactorily by a trained support assistant, and they work on appropriate tasks within the aims of the lesson. This is also true of pupils in Years 1 and 2 and with some opportunities to withdraw the pupils for additional support, which the school is starting to monitor very closely. Learning is satisfactory in all curriculum areas though individual learning plans do not sometimes contain targets for mathematics. The classroom support for pupils with a statement of special educational need is good as such staff have a good level of understanding of their roles and work closely with the teachers to enhance pupils' learning at an appropriate level.

24 Class teachers and learning assistants provide good quality support for pupils with English as an additional language, enabling them to contribute fully in lessons. Although some classes have an imbalance of boys and girls, teachers are careful to ensure all pupils have equal access to all activities. In classes where relationships are strong, as observed in one Year 5 class, boys display a mature approach towards their work, and are highly motivated to succeed. However, the school is not as successful in its provision for pupils who are withdrawn for extra support. The organisation of the timetable is not meeting the needs of pupils well enough as these pupils often miss the most valuable part of the lesson.

25 The amount of unsatisfactory teaching was limited to three lessons out of 81 observed. In these lessons teachers missed opportunities to develop skills and techniques so that in one art lesson the finished pieces of work were below the standard that pupils were capable of producing. In science, practical skills are not developed sufficiently in most year groups. In one lesson where the teaching was judged unsatisfactory the activities were poorly chosen so that pupils learned very little and at one point were told that aluminium was a magnetic metal, which it is not. In a music lesson what pupils were meant to learn was unclear. They became disinterested and their behaviour became unsatisfactory.

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

26 The quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory. At the time of the previous inspection several aspects of provision were found to be unsatisfactory and the curriculum became a key issue requiring improvement. Some elements of subjects such as information technology and design technology were not securely in place. Also programmes for health education and sex education were not embedded into the curriculum. As teaching time in the juniors did not comply with minimum requirements, there was also a lack of balance in the time allocated to different subjects. Planning was unsatisfactory and some schemes of work were inadequate and failed to outline the knowledge and skills appropriate to particular year groups. Since the time of the last inspection a new base for special educational needs has been built and resourced. There is also increased support for pupils on the register of the Code of Practice. At present the school offers pupils an improved curriculum and a wider range of opportunities for all pupils.

27 In the current inspection, all subjects of the National Curriculum comply with statutory requirements in a satisfactory manner. The requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for religious education are also satisfied and there is provision for a daily act of worship. Improved planning across the curriculum ensures that teachers can build with greater consistency on

pupils' earlier learning. There remains some imbalance in the curriculum however because the school gives a greater than average proportion of time to English and mathematics. This decision has been taken in order to raise academic standards by promoting the essential skills of reading, writing and mathematics. The introduction of guided reading and extended writing sessions are other initiatives that demonstrate the school's determination to improve literacy skills. While the curriculum has sufficient breadth, some areas inevitably receive a reduced allocation of time. This tends to hinder the full development of creative and practical opportunities within subjects such as music and art.

28 The new accommodation is appropriate for indoor physical activities but the school continues to travel to other venues for games and swimming. The provision of a newly equipped room for ICT is an asset to the school but much work is required before computer technology fully supports other curriculum areas. The school has been beset with technical problems in the implementation and access of pupils to the full ICT curriculum and recognises the need for this to be resolved as a matter of importance.

29 The National Literacy Strategy has been satisfactorily embedded into the English curriculum and the focus on reading and writing is helping to develop literacy. The recent improvement in national test results at seven indicates that these strategies are beginning to have an impact on standards. Although the curriculum as a whole provides sound opportunities, speaking and listening and writing remain areas of weakness and more opportunities for pupils to speak and write at length are required. The National Numeracy Strategy has also been implemented successfully and is helping to raise standards in mathematics. The strategy ensures a good balance between mental activities, practical work and the consolidation of learning. It also provides a structure for planning and assessment and helps teachers to match tasks to the ability of individual pupils. The setting of pupils in mathematics into ability groups supports this process further.

30 The previously limited number of extra-curricular activities has been of concern to parents. Having recently emerged from the difficulties associated with moving into a new building and now with a more established staff, the school is acknowledging the wishes of parents by offering a range of extra-curricular activities, which are now satisfactory. Football, netball and basketball training are available to Years 5 and 6 while the younger pupils from Years 3 and 4 can attend Bible study and story telling classes. Choir and homework clubs are open to all pupils in Years 3 to 6 and further activities are planned. A Breakfast Club is available to ensure that pupils have something to eat before the demands of the school day.

31 Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and good for those pupils with statements of special educational need. Effective support from their teachers and learning support assistants ensures that all pupils have equal access to learning opportunities. Pupils with statements of special educational need are particularly well catered for. They receive high quality help from support assistants who ensure that pupils understand the learning objectives of lessons and participate along with their classmates. This has a very positive impact upon their learning, social inclusion and self-esteem. The design of the building, which incorporates a toilet for the disabled and lift access to the first floor, offers equal access to pupils with disabilities. The school staff are aware of the register of gifted and able pupils in the school but although some resources have been purchased, this area requires further development. The school offers satisfactory support for pupils for whom English is an additional language and for those with behavioural problems.

32 Provision for personal, health and social education is satisfactory, with regular timetabled sessions when pupils can celebrate achievements which raises their self-esteem. They also discuss issues such as racism and bullying and are made aware of how their behaviour affects others. In discussing the principles that distinguish right from wrong, the

pupils are able to suggest suitable rules for the school community. These debates are developed within the School Council, which effectively gives pupils a voice in the running of their school, although does not involve many pupils. Physical health is promoted well during an allocated week when each year group of the school studies a different aspect of health education. In this way the school is successful in raising pupils' awareness of such issues as the abuse of alcohol and drugs. The school nurse, following consultation with parents, provides sex education. Throughout the curriculum there are appropriate opportunities for the social, moral and cultural development of pupils but fewer opportunities for spiritual development.

33 The school has satisfactory relationships with partner institutions and is purposeful in the way it uses the local community to support pupils' learning. The history curriculum is enhanced by visits to museums and local places of interest, while geographical studies are extended by visits to local parks and a farm. The older pupils are given opportunities for personal study and the social experience of residential stays at an outdoor centre and camp. A recent design and technology project was supported by a local business and a community partnership sponsored the school science week. Facilities for sport are extended through regular visits to the swimming baths and nearby playing fields. There are constructive links with the nursery, which is the main feeder school, and with the local secondary schools. Recently established links with head of Key Stage 3 at the local secondary school are to be developed further and aim to provide valuable opportunities for Year 6 pupils in the future.

34 During the recent period of instability, the school has provided an appropriate balance of support for pupils with English as an additional language through in-class support and small withdrawal groups. Pupils are supported well in lessons and make similar progress to their classmates. A part-time member of staff provides additional support for pupils at the early stages of English language acquisition. However, the school does not have structures in place to support newly arrived pupils when such help is not available.

35 At the time of the previous inspection, provision for pupils' moral and social development was satisfactory, but spiritual and cultural development was not. Progress has been made since then: provision for moral and social development is now good, with cultural development just satisfactory. Despite some positive changes, spiritual development remains less than satisfactory.

36 The school's main provision for spiritual development is through collective worship, consisting of a mixture of whole school, departmental and class assemblies. These arrangements comply with statutory requirements, which is an improvement since the last inspection. However, assembly records were until recently incomplete and do not yet provide a firm basis for monitoring class-based worship. Recent assembly themes have been predominantly concerned with the pupils' moral and social development, but they have also provided information about major world faiths.

37 Assemblies observed during the inspection were on the whole successful either in making a moral point or in conveying a social message, but left little space for the pupils to reflect or experience a time of quietness. Apart from the introductory music and the whole-hearted singing which gives a lift to whole-school assemblies, there is little to evoke feeling or personal response. Positive messages are not given when staff absent themselves from whole-school worship or, as in one class assembly, when the classroom assistant continued to tidy up and organise resources throughout. Spiritual development through the curriculum is not given sufficient consideration, but sometimes arises in unplanned ways. There are occasional moments of amazement and excitement as when Year 1 pupils explore unseen objects in a 'feely bag'. Such experiences are all too rare. It is unfortunate that visits to various places of worship, as described in the last inspection report, have been reduced in number.

38 The pupils' moral and social development is catered for well. Assemblies and collective worship now address moral issues effectively. The theme of 'honesty' that provided the link for collective worship during inspection week was effectively developed in the initial whole-school assembly and was built on in class assemblies. In some infant classes the teachers successfully use shared experience from their own childhood to bring the message home to their pupils. In discussion with older pupils it is clear that the theme is recalled and understood. The school's 'golden rules' that underpin the behaviour policy are well expressed. They are displayed in rooms throughout the school in a manner that gives them value and status.

39 The School Council is already beginning to make an effective contribution to the pupils' social development and is contributing to their understanding of citizenship. Older pupils have a clear idea of the purposes and responsibilities of the council, and trust their representatives to express their views and act in their interests. It is a strength that the School Council has modest funds at its disposal to improve the school environment and that charitable giving is also within its remit. Social development and good relationships are further developed in the course of a residential visit for the older junior pupils. Local visits, for example to a nearby park, help to develop the pupils' understanding of conservation and the need to care for the environment. 'Buddy' systems throughout the school encourage the pupils to form constructive relationships with their peers and to assist those who need extra support.

40 Cultural development has improved since the last inspection, but is still not as strong as it should be. Provision for music is beginning to make a positive contribution to the pupils' cultural development, with the visit of a Jamaican band last term and a memorable performance by older pupils at Symphony Hall, Birmingham. The visual arts are underdeveloped, however, and the school environment, although neat and tidy, is lacking in visual interest and there is little large, bold and imaginative artwork around the school. Visits to museums and places of historic interest have tailed off recently, but a comprehensive programme of worthwhile visits has been organised to take place in the coming school year. Very few library books represent other cultures and do not always reflect local or world cultures and pupils are often confused about different faith groups. Whilst such provision is satisfactory overall, there is room for the school to strengthen its cultural links with the minority ethnic groups represented in the school community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41 The school provides satisfactory support and guidance for its pupils, which largely maintains the quality of care observed in the previous inspection. It provides a caring environment where teachers value their pupils as individuals. The majority of parents are happy with the care offered to their children and feel their children are happy in school. Staff reward pupils in weekly assemblies for personal effort and achievement both for work and behaviour. Individual profiles are kept for pupils to record their personal development as they move through the school.

42 The school has sound procedures for finding out what pupils can do. The clear policy means that all teachers know what forms of assessment to carry out. The baseline assessment for Foundation Stage children is completed in the first half term. Thereafter the co-ordinator provides a detailed assessment file for each class with analysis of the statutory and non-statutory tests carried out by the school, including analysis of questions which have caused particular difficulties. This gives teachers a clear indication of how the standards of work within the school compare with standards both locally and nationally. The information gathered enables teachers to track the progress rate of different groups of pupils within the

school, for example how boys' and girls' attainment compares. The progress of each pupil is noted and targets are set for the end of each year. In English there is an effective 'snapshot' book of annotated work for each pupil and assessment booklets for writing. These booklets are consistent and informative and are useful documents. In mathematics the marking of pupils' work is helpful and encourages further improvement. In music, assessment is made at the end of each unit of work and the activities are recorded. The co-ordinator for religious education keeps class flip charts to enable a record to be kept of the work covered.

43 The use of assessment information to inform planning is satisfactory. Pupils are set individual targets for literacy and numeracy. However the use of the information to plan work that meets the needs of all pupils is not yet fully developed. Some pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by the activities set for them, including the more able. The school has been slow to analyse test results by gender and ethnicity.

44 The staff apply the agreed behaviour policy evenly and consistently, including the lunchtime staff who have received training to help them in their role. The school is aware of the need to improve lunchtime play activities and has advertised for extra staff including a play leader. The behaviour policy is currently being revised and a parent working group has met to discuss sanctions, which are now awaiting discussion by staff before being presented to the governing body. The school aims for all children to have the opportunity to develop in confidence and maturity and learn without hindrance. Effective response to all allegations of bullying and inappropriate behaviour are key elements of the school's approach.

45 The school has good procedures in place for monitoring attendance. Class teachers call the register at the beginning of every session. Staff follow up any unexplained absence on the first day and work closely with the education social worker where there is perceived to be a problem with attendance or punctuality. 'Attendance Ted' is awarded to the class with the best attendance each week and certificates are presented to individual pupils with 100 per cent attendance each half term. A half-termly newsletter, specifically about attendance issues, is sent to parents.

46 The school has an appropriate child protection policy. Procedures are satisfactory and comply with those of the area child protection committee and staff are fully aware of these procedures. Governors have not yet adopted a policy to ensure safety when using the Internet. The arrangements for first aid and the recording of accidents and informing parents are sound. Outside agencies successfully support lessons on sex education and drug awareness. The school has a comprehensive health and safety policy. The appropriate checks on equipment have been carried out and the school undertakes regular risk assessments. However there are health and safety concerns regarding the temporary fence around the two playgrounds and the low wall in the junior playground. The school is aware of these safety issues and is making every effort to rectify the situation with the site operators.

47 Learning support assistants offer appropriate levels of care to pupils with special educational needs and good support for statemented pupils throughout the school day. This supports pupils' learning well as seen when a child with cerebral palsy joined in enthusiastically with a physical education lesson. He is very well supported by his carer who intervenes if he looks like falling over. He enjoys the sessions and has a sense of achievement. Those pupils identified with special educational needs have individual learning plans that are shared with class teachers and learning support assistants. Although they are not written in the new format, targets and monitoring are appropriate to the requirements of the Code of Practice. Statements are helpful and well structured but the means of assessment is not always clear.

48 The support for pupils speaking English as an additional language is satisfactory. However, problems arose during the week of the inspection because the newly appointed learning support assistant for these pupils was not in post. This caused particular difficulty in one class with three new arrivals. Although staff cope well, there is no interim structure in place to ensure the needs of these pupils can be accurately assessed or addressed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49 Since the previous inspection the school has endeavoured to improve its partnership with parents and the majority of parents are satisfied with their links with the school although not always in a very active manner. Nevertheless a significant minority of parents has some strongly held individual concerns and is highly critical of many school procedures. Parents' views of the school are unsatisfactory overall and a key issue for improvement. However, much of this criticism appears to be unwarranted and personalised and makes it difficult for staff to carry out their roles in a fair and equitable manner. For instance, the school has been criticised for the quality of support provided for pupils with statements of special educational need, which inspection findings show to be good.

50 The school values its partnership with parents and the quality of information provided is satisfactory. Newsletters are used appropriately to inform parents about school events and activities. They are produced twice monthly and are attractively presented by a parent helper. The school prospectus gives useful information on the curriculum and school organisation. Annual progress reports give details of work covered, progress made and some areas for development although they are at times not very personal. On the few occasions when families speaking English as an additional language need help, the bi-lingual support assistant provides valuable information for parents.

51 The school has worked quite hard to address the negative views of some parents by extending the opportunities for carers to become more actively involved in school activities. Parental involvement in the school is good overall. There are termly parents' evenings and teachers and senior staff are available to see parents at the beginning and end of the school day. The headteacher and chair of governors are available one afternoon each month to discuss parents' suggestions and concerns. This is effective practice. Parents are welcome at the newly formed Breakfast Club and they are invited to Friday assemblies. Parents receive information on the topics to be covered each term and workshops are held on literacy and numeracy for parents with children in the Foundation Stage and for parents of pupils taking national tests. The school has held a family literacy course and a family numeracy course is planned for later this year, although, of necessity, these involve only small groups of parents.

52 Overall, relatively few parents support the school in an active manner. However, parents are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school. A small number helps in class and this regular, reliable help is much appreciated by staff. Parents help with swimming, special events and on visits. There is a parent working group which has been involved in drawing up a revised home school agreement which supports the school's policies on behaviour, attendance, punctuality and homework. This group has discussed the review of the behaviour policy and is currently discussing the review of the homework policy. Many parents are supportive of reading at home and comment on their children's reading record. Homework is generally given in line with government guidelines although at times this appears limited. The Friends' Association is flourishing and organises regular fund-raising and social events such as coffee afternoons and discos. These raise substantial amounts of money to support the school.

53 Parents are generally supportive of the quality of teaching and levels of care afforded to pupils with special educational needs. A small number of vociferously critical parents totally reject this picture of the school but inspection evidence does not support these views.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54 The quality of leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff is satisfactory with some good features. The headteacher took over the school shortly after the school was identified as having significant weaknesses in the previous inspection. At the time there were several major shortcomings that had to be tackled. Priorities had to be established and strategic management choices made and the headteacher has worked with a sense of continuing purpose to address the issues. Not least was the unsatisfactory level of teaching and lack of curriculum planning. The many very necessary changes to bring about improvement especially in the consistent quality of teaching have been difficult and slower to achieve than desirable and partly affected by high staff turnover and the complete rebuild of the school. During this period some long serving staff, many of who were popular with parents, found it hard to adjust to the many changes and left the school.

55 The deputy headteacher who has also joined since the previous inspection has been an effective support in many areas and fulfilled her role with enthusiasm and commitment. The school has established a senior management team, although the frequent change of personnel in the team has caused a difficulty in establishing continuity in development. The senior staff have been determined to make the tough choices and take the necessary action to bring about improvement which sometimes proved difficult for all staff and parents to understand and accept. Parents are provided with a range of opportunities to voice their opinions. However, the continual and at times unwarranted personal and professional criticism of school leadership by a small but highly critical group of parents has been an on-going challenge for staff to deal with.

56 The school's development planning is satisfactory with some good features and provides an effective focus to ensure a clear educational direction has been established. The educational and social inclusion of pupils is generally well considered and the school is up to date with requirements including the introduction of a race relation's policy. Planning for improvement and the day-to-day work of the school reflect the school's aims and values appropriately. Experienced staff have delegated areas of responsibility and most are developing their role as curriculum leaders well. For instance, subject leaders in English, mathematics and design and technology have a clear understanding of their role and of what is necessary to bring about further improvement in standards.

57 The governing body is well led and fulfils its responsibility in a satisfactory manner with several good features. The chair of the governing body and other experienced governors have a good grasp of their roles and responsibilities. Some governors are involved in school development planning and, as a group, they are extending their role in shaping the direction of the school. The chair of governors visits the school on a regular basis and is supportive but questioning of what the school does. Some governors visit lessons in order to understand what issues the staff and pupils are dealing with and there are firm plans to extend these links. Most governors have a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school although their involvement in financial planning has not been sufficient to ensure such management has been fully effective. The governors are a reflective group who are aware that previous issues have not been fully resolved and that more work lies ahead to achieve higher standards.

58 The monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is satisfactory. The school has appointed an enthusiastic assessment co-ordinator who has a good grasp of the need

for careful tracking of attainment and the importance of the use of such data to inform future planning. However, not all staff are as yet making best use of the assessment information available to provide the highest appropriate level of challenge to all. The school has implemented a full programme of evaluation activities. Subject co-ordinators have had the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the quality of lesson planning, teaching and samples of the pupils' work. The local education authority has also been involved in school reviews. The range of activities has been effective in indicating areas for improvement. However, school based monitoring at times lacks the necessary rigour to clearly evaluate what works well or otherwise and what action is necessary to bring about improvement. As such procedures have not been fully effective this has not supported the driving up of standards to the expected degree.

59 The action taken to meet the school's targets has been satisfactory. Staff are generally very honest in their assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, at times there is a lack of clarity in how to bring about further improvement. Senior staff have identified that they believe the school is now in a more stable period following the turbulence of recent years. There is a clear commitment by all concerned to further improvement although it is a continuing challenge to senior staff to ensure that this is corporate and that all staff feel fully valued and are moving forward together.

60 The deputy headteacher took on temporary responsibility for special educational needs at a time of considerable upheaval as a consequence of staff turnover and the school rebuild. The school was advised by the School Support Service not to implement the transition to the new Code of Practice until a new appointment was made. At present, individual educational plans are appropriate, resources are good and the school maintains constructive links with external agencies. The school has recently appointed a new co-ordinator who has made a satisfactory start in familiarising himself with current practice, arranging meetings with outside agencies and demonstrating his knowledge of the new Code of Practice. His brief is to take responsibility for child protection and gifted and able pupils and priorities are to take a more active part in supporting teaching and learning. Learning support assistants are of high calibre and provide good opportunity for pupils with English as an additional language to develop their language skills further during lessons. Bi-lingual support is also put to good use where it is available to support pupils and parents.

61 The school has comprehensive written guidelines relating to the financial management of the school, clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of all those involved. Day-to-day administration is in the hands of the school finance officer and the headteacher and is satisfactory. However, changes in administrative staff and confusion relating to some aspects of the private partnership finance caused the school management to temporarily lose an appropriate focus upon its overall budget. Until recently the school was unable to fill the post of finance officer and internal systems failed to monitor the budget sufficiently well. This lack of effective management has contributed to a currently high level of budget underspend, with the school accumulating a surplus of over 10 per cent of its budget. The new finance officer is working hard to develop and implement more rigorous internal procedures to monitor the budget in order to be in a position to proceed with plans to significantly reduce the underspend. However, this work is at an early stage of development and the systems in place are not yet sufficiently robust. Most of the recommendations in the last audit report have been implemented successfully.

62 Specific grants received by the school are used in a satisfactory manner for the purposes for which they are intended and there is a detailed record of how the money has been spent. For example, the specific grants for special educational needs and pupils at an early stage of language acquisition. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. It analyses its performance using both national and local data and uses this to

evaluate the standards that its pupils are achieving and where improvements are needed. The school seeks to obtain good value for money when purchasing goods and services. For administrative purposes, the school makes satisfactory use of its technological capacity.

63 Since the last inspection the school has continued to be affected by a high turnover of teaching staff. This situation has had a detrimental effect on the quality of education that some pupils have received and has limited their progress. In the previous academic year the school was more successful in retaining teachers as only one left in the summer term. In order to retain teaching staff, the headteacher and governors have increased the numbers of teachers and support staff. Teachers are appropriately qualified for the curriculum subjects and the ages of the pupils. There is an appropriate match between their training and expertise, and the subjects which they are asked to co-ordinate. Procedures for staff development and the induction of new staff are satisfactory although there is a need for additional development in subjects including art and music. There is generally a clear link between the main areas of school improvement planning and the courses that staff attend. New staff, particularly those who are newly qualified, are well supported. Learning support staff are well qualified; they have a good level of expertise and provide the pupils in their care with good support and guidance.

64 The accommodation provided within the school is good. All classes are timetabled to use the library and computer rooms, and the computer suite was particularly well used during the inspection. Pupils benefit from two halls that are put to various uses, including physical education lessons. There is good wheelchair access including a lift to the upper floor and there are specific toilet facilities for people with physical disabilities. Outside, the grounds are well maintained and they provide pleasant play areas for the pupils. There are good playground markings to encourage pupils to play constructively although not enough seating for those who wish to sit and chat quietly to their friends. Resources are good for pupils with special educational needs and satisfactory for all subjects except ICT and physical education where they are unsatisfactory. There is also a lack of suitable outdoor play facilities for pupils in the Foundation Stage. Taking all factors into account the school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve the quality of pupils' learning further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Raise standards in English, science and ICT to at least the national averages by:
 - extending the range and quality of activities to enhance pupils' skills of speaking at greater length and using a wider and more descriptive vocabulary; (paragraphs 2, 4, 29, 87-89)
 - further developing the range of opportunities to extend the skills of handwriting and spelling in order to improve the appearance and quality of pupils' work across the curriculum; (paragraphs 2, 4, 29, 83, 95-97, 167)
 - extending the opportunities to develop experimental and investigative skills in science; (paragraphs 117, 119)
 - ensuring as a matter of urgency that a full and suitably challenging range of ICT activities is provided continuously for all pupils. (paragraphs 7, 87, 121, 131, 136, 141-143, 146, 155)

- (2) Improve the quality of teaching across the school by:
 - ensuring that different and appropriate work is planned to match the needs of different groups of pupils to ensure the highest appropriate level of challenge for all; (paragraphs 12, 20, 103, 135)
 - developing the skills of questioning the pupils to further extend their direct involvement in all activities. (paragraphs 19, 21, 112, 130)

- (3) Improve the links with parents by:
 - providing a warm and welcoming environment for all visitors; (paragraphs 49, 50)
 - extending the opportunities for parents to be directly involved in day-to-day activities and the life of the school. (paragraphs 51, 52, 55)

- (4) Develop the staff team involvement in strategic management so that there is a shared vision and commitment to continuing school improvement. (paragraphs 56, 58-59, 63)

Minor issues that the school should consider:

- Improving the attitudes and behaviour of pupils in and around the school and particularly at lunchtimes. (paragraphs 11 - 15)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	81
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	7	29	42	3	0	0
Percentage	0	8.6	35.8	51.8	3.7	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	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	393
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	129

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	55

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	42

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	37
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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
	2001	39	21	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	25	26
	Girls	15	15	20
	Total	39	40	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	65 (53)	67 (72)	77 (72)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	22	25	25
	Girls	14	16	18
	Total	36	41	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	60 (58)	68 (74)	72 (65)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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
	2001	30	29	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	19
	Girls	24	20	25
	Total	40	37	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (75)	63 (63)	75 (90)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	19	19
	Girls	23	22	22
	Total	37	41	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	63 (67)	69 (71)	69 (87)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
272	6	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
11	0	0
13	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
35	3	0
1	1	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
22	0	0
32	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	222

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
	£
Total income	991,005
Total expenditure	894,626
Expenditure per pupil	2,276
Balance brought forward from previous year	81,445

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	11
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	403
Number of questionnaires returned	50

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	46	46	8	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	28	56	6	8	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	38	14	18	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	36	30	18	0
The teaching is good.	32	48	10	2	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	30	30	16	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	29	39	16	16	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	32	56	10	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	16	36	28	18	2
The school is well led and managed.	16	44	16	22	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	18	56	18	6	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	4	22	16	45	12

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

There was a small return rate to the parents' questionnaire. The majority of parents who responded feel their children are happy at school and that they are expected to work hard and that most make suitable progress. However, a minority of parents is quite strongly critical of the quality of provision for their children and does not think the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons, that the school is well led and managed or that the school works closely with them. Several parents think they do not have enough information about the progress made and that the giving of homework is not systematic and they think that behaviour is not as good as it could be.

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

65 Children are admitted to one of Marsh Hill's two reception classes at the start of the school year in which they are five. The last of the new admissions coincided with the start of the current inspection, and, although most had attended nursery or a similar pre-school setting, many of the week's activities represented new experiences, including the first assembly and the first physical education session in the hall. With sensitive support from the teachers and nursery nurses working in each class, the children settle happily and confidently. Good communication with parents, including warm informal contacts at the beginning and end of each day, are helping the children to feel secure and relaxed. Overall the children are getting off to a good start in the reception classes.

66 At the time of the previous inspection the children were said to be making satisfactory progress but there were reservations about the way in which activities were organised. In particular, there were periods of inactivity whilst the children waited for adult attention. This is no longer a problem, and the children now have plenty of planned activities to help them learn independently. There are, however, some teething problems in sorting out the structure of sessions reorganised this year. The children tend to spend too long sitting on the carpet, whilst the time available for free flow activities is too limited. Arrangements for structured and unstructured play outdoors are unsatisfactory, because of the large numbers of children involved and a lack of suitable outdoor play equipment and seating. These arrangements are, rightly, under active reconsideration. Although there are workable systems for assessing children's achievements when they are engaged in adult-led activities, monitoring independently chosen activities is less systematic and requires development.

67 The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is currently good. Recently there has been a change of teaching staff, and both reception teachers, one of whom is the co-ordinator for the Foundation Stage, joined the school only one term before the inspection. In addition to the teacher, each class is supported by an experienced nursery nurse, giving a satisfactory child to adult ratio. The adults in each classroom work well as a team and some support is of very high quality. All staff working in the reception classes plan the teaching programme and structured play together, with complementary activities offered in the two adjacent rooms: for instance, the sand tray is located in one classroom and water play in the other. At the time of the inspection this system was not working quite as intended because most of the newly admitted children were naturally inclined to stay close to their own class base. The approach is well conceived, however, and promises to work well when the children are firmly settled.

68 In general the children are provided with a satisfactory range of learning experiences, but limited floor space and a lack of some important resources restrict opportunities. The home corner is cramped and there are currently no opportunities for creative role-play linked to stories or topic work. Both rooms are over-furnished, with fixed cupboards restricting the imaginative use of space. There is a lack of equipment for large-scale construction activities, and picture books of high quality are in short supply. Some of the furniture is the wrong size: for example, children cannot sit safely and comfortably at the computer in one class. There is a separate play area for the Foundation Stage, but this cannot be directly reached from the reception classrooms. The school lacks the appropriate equipment to make this the exciting 'outdoor classroom' that it should be.

69 The children score well in the local 'baseline' test of attainment on entry, but in a national comparison they are below average in some important respects when they start

school. With good nursery experience, personal and social development is rather better than average, whilst mathematical understanding and physical development are similar to those of most other four year olds. However, the children are somewhat below average for their age in communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. Many lack experience of working with computers. Regular activities in literacy, mathematics, early science, understanding of time and art and design, show steady development for children in all ability groups, although there is some lack of challenge for the more mature in gaining knowledge and understanding of the world.

70 On the basis of last year's work, the teaching was sound, as at the time of the last inspection. However, that observed during the current inspection was good overall, with some very good features. Staff are particularly skilled at promoting the children's personal and social development, encouraging them to make choices whilst observing classroom conventions and routines. High expectations are made clear, as when the children are all expected to respond politely during afternoon registration or to contribute in their turn in a 'circle' activity. At the start of a lesson in the hall, the children are carefully briefed about the safe use of space and respond particularly well, and learn at a good pace. At best, the teaching is imaginative and highly appealing to the children. One mathematics session, for example, completely absorbed the children's attention, with excellent use of a large puppet to teach about the properties of simple two-dimensional shapes. Well-planned and good-humoured teamwork between the teacher and the nursery nurse was a feature of this very enjoyable lesson. Where teaching is occasionally not so strong, activities are not well enough designed to challenge and extend the more capable children. Sometimes adults become so absorbed in the work of their own group that they fail to intervene elsewhere in the room when this would be helpful.

71 The full inclusion of children with disabilities is a strength of the current reception provision. During the inspection great care was taken to ensure that all the children understood the needs of members of the class with particular difficulties. Just the right degree of support and encouragement is given to pupils for them to settle well and feel confident at school.

72 Management of the Foundation Stage requires further development to ensure that the reception year is valued as part of a discrete stage in its own right. The recently appointed co-ordinator has yet to establish a clear position in the school. She has sound ideas for development, but is, for understandable reasons, finding planning and implementation difficult in the new context. The decision to include the early year's co-ordinator in meetings of the senior management team next half term is a step in the right direction.

73 **Personal, social and emotional development** is a strength of the current provision, and is very effectively promoted by the staff through everyday activities. Morning registration, for example, is undertaken on an individual basis for the first few weeks of term to establish good personal relationships and to ensure that the children understand the importance of regular attendance. Maintaining hygiene by washing hands was explicitly taught in one of the lessons seen. There is a kindly but firm insistence that the children should observe class rules and routines such as tidying equipment away, to which the children respond very positively. They are becoming sensitive to one another, especially those with disabilities, contributing thoughtfully to a lesson about a person who is 'special' to them. When teaching is good, the children are interested and excited about their learning. They can already maintain attention and concentration for considerable periods and are becoming independent in personal matters. Most are already close to achieving many of the early learning goals in this area, and attainment is better than average for the start of the reception year. The children are open and friendly towards one another, irrespective of ethnic and cultural

background. On the basis of last year's work sample, however, their opportunities to experience a range of cultures and traditions are limited.

74 Standards in **communication, language and literacy** are below average. Teaching in this area was sound last year and the children made satisfactory progress. Handwriting was not learned as successfully as other basic skills. There were good features in the teaching seen during the present inspection, with some effective learning, but opportunities were sometimes missed to encourage the children to speak at greater length. At present the children are confident to talk, but they tend to answer questions with single words or phrases, even when the question is open-ended and invites a lengthier response. Some children's vocabulary is limited, but teachers usually focus appropriately on this area, for example emphasising the terms 'corner' and 'side' as the children learn about shapes.

75 On entry, more than half of the current intake can write their names independently, but letter formation is usually non-standard. Only a few above average children have any further understanding of letters and the sounds they represent and a significant minority cannot identify rhyming words. From a similar starting point, last year's reception children made steady progress in their writing. Those who were above average were producing two or three sentences independently by the end of the year, comfortably achieving the relevant early learning goal. Average children fell below this level, however, and were still heavily reliant on adult support to spell the words they needed. Most were beginning to link consonants with sounds in speech, but could not identify the middle vowel sounds. Handwriting was a relative weakness.

76 Children in this year's reception class all handle books properly and turn the pages one by one in the right direction. They look carefully at the pictures and make sensible observations about the story, but their ability to predict any of the actual words in the text is limited. All enjoy stories and the above average children chat about the characters and their actions. These more mature children are beginning to distinguish the text from the pictures, but most have little idea of identifying separate words. Overall the starting point is below average and these children are not likely to reach an average standard by the end of the year.

77 **Mathematical development** is an area of relative strength that is well taught in the current reception classes. Attainment on entry is close to average for the age group. Many of the children can count with objects to five or beyond and recognise some numerals. In at least one of the classes, the children are secure in recognising and naming circles, squares and triangles, and understand the terms 'sides' and 'corners'. During the inspection, mathematical development was effectively promoted by structured play activities with water, sand and dough. With good teaching, the children discussed how to roll their dough into various shapes and were encouraged to make a cylindrical shape that would roll.

78 Many of last year's reception children made sound or good progress and achieved the early learning goals for mathematics. Their books show that, by the end of the year, average and above average children were counting accurately to at least 20, although they sometimes reversed numerals beyond 12. Most were doing simple calculations involving addition, which some above average pupils recorded neatly. The books show sound coverage of measurement, with comparisons of length, weight and capacity, together with work to develop mathematical vocabulary. In general this work was well matched to the children's maturity and stage of development, supporting their progress.

79 On the basis of work in last year's reception class, attainment in the area of **knowledge and understanding of the world** is below average, with satisfactory progress being made. There were very limited opportunities to observe this area of learning with the current reception children apart from introductory work on the computers in one classroom

and with small groups in the computer suite. The teaching here was sound overall, although children working in the classroom needed better briefing and more attention than they received. Sessions in the computer suite emphasised safety appropriately and, with patience and encouragement from staff, the children made good progress. There is appropriate provision during free choice activities for structured play with small construction kits, playmats and 'small world' equipment. An assortment of model African animals and tropical trees caused great excitement and interest in one session, but was not a particular focus of the teaching. Discussion with the children during these activities suggests limited general knowledge, with a below average starting point on entry to school.

80 Folders of work from last year's reception classes show a well-balanced, broad coverage of the scientific, geographical and historical aspects of this area of learning, mainly through topic work. Early science activities, for example, included observations of chocolate melting in the sun, using the senses, plant growth and animal life cycles. The children also recorded the taste of porridge with different added ingredients. There were opportunities for the children to consider the seasons, to look at growth from babyhood and to compare old and new toys and kitchen appliances. One piece of work was based on the children's daily journey to school. Although the curriculum offered was interesting and relevant, all the children undertook much the same activities, with a heavy reliance on commercial worksheets to record their findings. One exception was a well-executed and labelled diagram of a flower produced by an above average child. Progress was undoubtedly at least satisfactory, but the level of challenge for the more able children was not high. The early learning goals were not fully achieved because there is very limited evidence of children making their own observations and posing their own questions.

81 **Physical development** is average for the current reception children, who are likely to reach the expected early learning goals by the end of the year. Progress, although generally satisfactory, is limited by a lack of suitable provision and large equipment for outdoor activities. Whilst the children learn little in the course of brief spells of outdoor play, the one formal physical education lesson observed was well taught, with clear explanations and high expectations of the children. During this session the children make good progress in using the unfamiliar space, avoiding collisions and following instructions. Although this was very early in the term, almost all take part, some showing above average ability at marching, balancing and skipping. The children's fine skills and co-ordination are generally average, except that many hold a pencil or crayon with an inefficient grip.

82 Creative development is below average on entry and, on the limited basis of last year's artwork, at the end of the reception year. With good teaching in the current reception classes, the children are making progress that is generally good. Children are gradually being introduced to activities such as printing and handling dough, but need a lot of adult support at this early stage in the school year. Most are not ready to work independently or to make choices. The children have regular opportunities to draw and make marks, producing drawings that are slightly immature for their age. There is real enjoyment and security in the small home corner, where children play co-operatively alongside others. Some above average children use their imagination to act out short domestic sequences with one another. Dressing up in the adjacent classroom is also enjoyed, but activities here tend to be solitary and lack focus. There was no opportunity to observe a taught music session during the inspection. However, children are beginning to experiment with a small selection of un-tuned percussion instruments currently on display in one classroom.

ENGLISH

83 The 2001 National Curriculum assessment test results at the end of Year 2 were well below average when compared to schools both nationally and in similar contexts. Standards

in writing were among the lowest five per cent. The proportion of pupils achieving higher levels was poor. However, from a low base, there are encouraging signs of improvement in 2002. Although results of most recent tests have still to be ratified, the proportion of pupils reaching both average and higher levels has increased significantly.

84 Results for pupils in Year 6 in 2001 were better than for the younger pupils. The number reaching nationally expected standards was slightly below average, although with over a fifth of pupils achieving higher levels. Results for 2002 show a decline in standards, most noticeably in the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels, and reflect a period of considerable instability. The school fell short of its target of 71 per cent of pupils reaching average levels or above. Over time, girls have outperformed boys in both key stages but there appears no significant reason for this. The pattern of progress has been erratic, resulting in fluctuating standards.

85 Inspection evidence indicates that overall standards of pupils currently in Year 2 and Year 6 are below average. This indicates a fall in standards since the previous inspection in Year 2 and a similar picture to that seen previously in Year 6. Although pupils' progress is currently at least satisfactory, examples of previous work show a very different picture. Whilst the achievement of most pupils is sound some pupils are not achieving standards in line with their ability. In classes most affected by high staff turnover, some pupils made little progress last year. More able pupils have suffered most and this group underachieves. They have been held back by lack of basic literacy skills and have not acquired the more advanced reading and writing skills they need to develop further. A high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in some classes also contributes to the low standards.

86 The school has addressed some issues from the previous report well and there is room for optimism. It now analyses test results with far greater precision and accurately targets areas in most need. Although writing skills remain weak throughout the school, the recent focus on raising standards through extended writing sessions and more effective assessment has made a major contribution to the rise in standards in the infants. Initiatives to raise reading standards have also had a positive impact.

87 Overall there is still much work to be done to raise standards to at least the national average and some of the weaknesses identified in the previous report remain. The use of ICT is unsatisfactory and computers do not form an important enough part of literacy skills development. Speaking and listening skills are not promoted well enough and strategies for improving handwriting and spelling are inconsistent. Pupils do not develop adequate skills to sustain their writing with any degree of confidence. This lack of ability affects the quality of work in all subjects and the school has not been successful in developing literacy skills across the curriculum in a structured manner. Current writing lacks depth and maturity. Overall, standards of presentation are poor.

88 On entry to Year 1, although some pupils have adequately developed speaking and listening skills, most have below average skills and lack confidence with answering questions or reading aloud. Some teachers use the oral part of literacy lessons very well to promote skills. During a very good Year 1 lesson, pupils who were a little reticent to talk in front of the class, were very comfortable when discussing how they might write some simple sentences about 'Where's My Teddy?' with their partner. Discussion was animated and made a major contribution to the success of the lesson. Adult support was of high quality and less able pupils benefited from seeking the reassurance of support staff as they talked through their answers. However, this example is the exception. More often, teachers talk for long periods and pupils sit passively, displaying varying degrees of interest. Teachers' use of questioning is often weak. Only occasionally do teachers encourage pupils to answer fully or give further detail.

89 By the time pupils leave the school, although some sustain a mature level of discussion, others lack the will or confidence to explain articulately. Pupils of all ages, who have experienced high staff turnover, have got out of the habit of listening to others. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop speaking and listening skills outside the classroom. Drama does not form part of the timetable and there is no extra-curricular drama club.

90 At the age of seven pupils reading skills are below average although they enjoy books. They use an interesting range of good quality materials. Resources have improved since the last inspection. There are many opportunities to develop reading skills, through guided reading sessions and the voluntary reading group initiative. Even pupils who are not yet able to read without help are well motivated. The level of support from parents of younger pupils, particularly from those who participated in the Family Literacy Scheme, makes a strong contribution to pupils' success.

91 Pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 know how to tackle words unfamiliar to them. Books chosen for whole class reading sessions are very accurately matched to age groups and abilities. Pupils with special educational needs cope well with most texts. The small number of pupils who have English as an additional language receive an appropriate level of support in order to ensure they make as much progress as everyone else. However, past provision has not presented as positive a picture. In some year groups, pupils have been capable of much more. The effects of disruptions in staffing and accommodation are most obvious in the current Year 2 classes. A large proportion of these pupils should achieve average standards, but there is currently little evidence to suggest more able pupils will reach levels in line with their ability. Despite the difficulties, attitudes remain positive. One boy proudly announced that he 'absolutely loved reading'.

92 Pupils' positive attitudes continue in Years 3 to 6. By the time they reach Year 6, many pupils are fluent and confident readers. However, there is little evidence of pupils acquiring more advanced skills in any systematic way. This weakness was identified during the previous inspection and has not been sufficiently addressed. Very occasionally, pupils with English as an additional language struggle with the meanings of words and would benefit from books more suited to their needs and backgrounds. A very fluent Year 6 pupil did not understand what she was reading because she had not come across the word 'wafer' before.

93 All but the most able pupils have weak library skills. The new school library is starting to improve provision. Pupils borrow books regularly and use the library during timetabled sessions. Many older pupils belong to local libraries and the school makes very effective use of time, by combining its swimming sessions with visits to Erdington library. However, the school library is currently geared more towards junior pupils and class libraries range from comfortable seating areas where pupils can enjoy reading to untidy collections of books. Although most pupils understand the language of reference books and confidently understand the purpose of the contents and index page, they do not yet use their knowledge sufficiently to develop independent learning skills. There are isolated examples of good quality research work, but no consistent pattern of development.

94 The school could do more to capitalise on pupils' enthusiasm for reading. Although pupils take home books to read, not all have a home school diary or a reading record identifying areas for development. In some diaries, teachers do not make comments; parents alone contribute. The school misses an opportunity to develop the important link between home and school in establishing good reading practices and regular dialogue about progress.

95 The school has rightly identified writing as its area of most concern. Pupils' early writing skills are weak on entry to Year 1. Overall standards are below average and, in some previously disrupted classes, well below average. Evidence taken from examples of past work presents a fragmented picture of inconsistent and often unsatisfactory progress. Current provision presents a more positive picture. In lessons observed during the inspection, pupils were making at least satisfactory progress through better teaching and greater stability.

96 The patchy provision goes some way towards explaining why there is little consistency in handwriting or spelling throughout the school. Handwriting was an issue last time the school was inspected. A large proportion of Years 1 and 2 pupils have poor pencil control, only write in simple phrases and do not always spell basic words or use simple punctuation correctly. Although higher ability pupils develop ideas through pieces of sustained writing, they too lack basic skills. Average ability pupils use very immature vocabulary in their writing. Lower ability pupils are not yet confident enough to write unaided, although many make recognisable attempts at familiar spellings. When the pace of lessons is slow, or the teacher talks for too long, group writing activities provide insufficient opportunity for pupils to develop their skills adequately. There is sometimes too little time for pupils to do any written work.

97 At the beginning of the juniors, strategies designed to improve standards have been most successful because they have given pupils greater confidence to write. Year 3 has benefited most. In one lesson, more able pupils succeeded in finding more adventurous words to make their stories more interesting. There was maturity about their work. However, throughout the key stage, persistent basic punctuation and spelling mistakes hinder progress. There is a lack of consistency towards spelling unfamiliar words and pupils do not use a dictionary or thesaurus with any degree of consistency or skill.

98 Arrangements for homework are also inconsistent. Parents were rightly concerned about this issue. Some classes have regular homework; others receive none. The organisation of the timetable for pupils who are withdrawn for extra literacy work has not been thought through carefully enough. These pupils often miss the most valuable part of the lesson. In addition, although class teachers and learning support assistants provide well for pupils with English as an additional language, there is no structure in place to support staff when extra help is unavailable. During the week of the inspection, three new pupils arrived in one class and staff had difficulty assessing the needs of these pupils, whilst settling other pupils into new routines.

99 One good feature that has remained consistent during the turmoil of recent years has been the systematic approach towards collecting evidence of progress. Pupils' 'Snapshot' books give very helpful insight into individual progress and other work samples show an encouraging breadth and depth of writing. Some pupils' work demonstrates a developing talent for writing poetry. Many good examples are seen. One pupil skilfully incorporated the line, 'He wraps everyone within his fiery grave' in a poem about 'Fire'.

100 The introduction of targets for developing individual pupils' work has been another positive move in the right direction, although this work needs further refinement and targets are not always appropriate. For example, the target of a younger pupil, who had not yet mastered the correct use of full stops and capital letters, was, 'To use speech marks correctly'. The marking of pupils' work is another area that needs attention. Although there are good examples of teachers using marking effectively to help pupils develop, particularly in Years 1 and 2, the overall quality varies considerably.

101 Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. A programme of monitoring has had a positive impact. No unsatisfactory teaching of English was observed. The overall quality was good in Years 1 and 2, with over half of the teaching being good or very good. In Years 3 to 6, the overall quality was satisfactory, with one third of teaching good. Apart from better quality marking, infant teachers use high quality support staff more effectively and capture pupils' interest through more exciting activities. The success of a good lesson observed in Year 1 resulted from high quality input by both teaching and support staff. Every adult encouraged a richness of discussion and pupils of all abilities made equally swift progress, because the work was interesting, and pupils wanted to succeed. The classroom was a hive of activity. However, this is not the whole picture. Lacklustre teaching in Year 3 and low expectations in some junior classes contribute to pupils' underachievement. Further work remains to be done to improve the quality of teaching. It must not be forgotten that many pupils have lost ground to make up and their success is totally dependent on the highest standards of teaching.

102 In lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, there is not enough sense of urgency and teachers talk for far too long, leaving pupils with inadequate time to practise or develop skills. In one lesson, pupils spent nearly forty minutes passively listening to the teacher, with varying degrees of interest. In another, the literacy hour overran and valuable guided reading work was cut short. Teachers do not always make best use of learning support assistants, who sit unoccupied during the first part of the lesson. Activities lack challenge and some pupils have got out of the habit of applying themselves to work.

103 There are, however, some good features common to all teaching. Planning has improved significantly and is now good. Activities during group work match the needs of most pupils well, although more able pupils do not always receive work that challenges or inspires them. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers have very positive relationships with their class and manage pupils well.

104 Considerable staffing instability has made continuity difficult. The school has been slow to respond to its pupils' underachievement. It is only in recent times that it has started to analyse results to identify why standards are not high enough and what needs to be done. The co-ordinator now manages the subject very well. Much of the recent improvement is directly attributable to her leadership, combined with good quality support from the local education authority. The current picture provides hope for the future. The school now has a very accurate perception of its strengths and weaknesses, targeted areas have shown improvement, and there is a clear focus for future development.

MATHEMATICS

105 The results of the 2001 national tests for seven year olds were well below the national average. In comparison with similar schools the standards were below average. In recent years there has been a slight decline in test results while standards nationally have continued to rise. Taking the results of the last three years into account, there is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. Unconfirmed results of the tests taken in 2002 indicate a rise in standards to broadly in line with the national average.

106 The results of the 2001 national tests for 11 year olds were below the national average. In comparison with similar schools the standards were average. This group of pupils made satisfactory progress since taking the national tests when they were in Year 2. Unconfirmed results of the tests taken in 2002 indicate a rise in standards to broadly in line with the national average.

107 The findings of the current inspection support the view that standards are now rising. The attainment of pupils in the current Years 2 and 6 classes is similar to that expected of pupils of their age. Close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that most of them are now making good progress in their learning and are achieving well. Standards of attainment of pupils in Years 2 and 6 are higher than those recorded at the last inspection, and reflect the improvements that have been made particularly in the quality of teaching, the curriculum and leadership of the subject. The setting of pupils in groups of similar ability has provided an effective focus upon the planning of work for groups of pupils who make different rates of progress. Although teaching and learning is now good overall, there is still room for further improvements, and standards could be higher especially in using and applying mathematics through problem solving.

108 In lessons, most pupils in Year 2 put numbers to 100 in order and can recognise patterns in multiples of five and ten. Average and higher-attaining pupils add accurately in ones and tens from a given number and are developing a good understanding of the value of numbers although not all calculations are speedy. Higher-attaining pupils successfully use mental recall of addition and subtraction facts to 20. Lower-attaining pupils are developing an understanding of the value of numbers but this is not secure. A close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that most have a satisfactory understanding of number, they know the names of common geometric shapes and accurately measure lengths in centimetres. Lower-attaining pupils experience difficulties in solving problems and calculating simple algebraic sums.

109 In lessons, most pupils in the Year 6 classes use mental recall of multiplication facts successfully to solve number problems. They mentally multiply and add two two-digit numbers accurately and understand the value of numbers over 1000. Higher-attaining pupils explain clearly how they solve problems and justify their choice of method. Lower-attaining pupils accurately double and halve, single and two-digit numbers. Some average and lower-attaining pupils do not have speedy or well-developed mental skills and this inhibits the progress that they can make. A close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that most pupils confidently use the four number operations and have a clear understanding of the value of decimals. Higher-attaining pupils confidently multiply decimals and use a range of strategies to check the accuracy of their answers. Most pupils calculate the perimeter and areas of shapes and measure the size of angles using a protractor. Some average and lower-attaining pupils experience difficulties with solving number problems calculating the areas and perimeters of shapes.

110 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, although it ranges from very good to satisfactory. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. In the best lessons the work is well planned and organised so pupils of all abilities are able to learn well. These lessons begin with a rigorous mental session or game to engage the pupils in their learning. In a very good lesson in a Year 5 class for example, the teacher presented the lesson in a lively manner that engaged the pupils' interest. The enthusiasm he displayed encouraged the pupils to become involved in their learning and work hard. The pupils were well motivated by his use of humour and responded very well to his high expectations of their involvement and behaviour. The teacher maintained very good control and pace throughout the lesson and as a result the pupils learnt very well.

111 In lessons, teachers generally set high expectations of pupils' behaviour and effort and pupils respond well. However, these expectations do not sufficiently extend to the presentation of pupils' work, which is sometimes poor. On some occasions, pupils' poor presentation causes them to record the wrong answers. Teachers generally manage the pupils well and as a result pupils behave well and try hard. In some classes, however, due to frequent changes of teachers in past times, a few pupils find it hard to settle to their work and

concentrate. Teachers are effective in promoting mathematical vocabulary and encourage their pupils to explain their work using the correct terminology.

112 Teachers' marking of pupils' work is mostly good; it informs pupils of the quality of their work and provides pointers for further improvement. Teachers' questioning of pupils at the beginning and end of lessons is good at times. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of questions that are carefully chosen to check the understanding of individuals and groups of pupils. In a minority of lessons it is not used sufficiently well to assess what pupils understand or have learned. During some lessons, teachers do not rigorously check the progress that pupils are making and as a result they do not learn as well as they might. Support staff are often used effectively to support pupils' learning, in particular those with special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of English language acquisition. They support these pupils well, using initiative and questioning effectively to clarify their understanding and enabling them to make similar progress to their classmates.

113 The curriculum is satisfactory overall, but there are still some weaknesses. The school appropriately employs the National Numeracy Strategy to plan the curriculum and has a published scheme of work to underpin the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding and practice of their skills. Teachers provide some opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects, for example, science, history and geography. There are particularly good examples of pupils measuring and recording the results of their science experiments on charts and graphs in Years 5 and 6. A computer program is being well used to support the learning of some pupils but overall computers are not being used sufficiently to support pupils' learning in this subject. The school is well aware of this shortfall and plans to rectify the situation are at an advanced stage.

114 Procedures for checking pupils' progress are satisfactory. Teachers record pupils' progress against 'key objective' statements for the elements of mathematics covered. In the best cases teachers use these records well to guide them in the provision of appropriate work for all pupils. Careful analysis of pupils' previous work shows that this is not always the case with some lower-attaining pupils not being provided with work that is sufficiently tailored to meet their needs. The school analyses pupils' performance in national tests and is beginning to use these and the results from the annual non-statutory tests in Years 3, 4 and 5 to set targets and to check pupils' progress. This is a fairly new initiative and the impact of this work on consistently raising standards cannot yet be fully assessed.

115 The subject is very well led by the co-ordinator who has been able to provide more consistency in her role than in several other subjects. She has a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and has a clear view of where further improvements need to be made. She monitors the quality of planning and teaching and checks the standards that pupils achieve. She is aware that a rigorous process of monitoring and review needs to continue. However, despite strong leadership in the subject the many staff changes have hindered progress even further.

SCIENCE

116 At the time of the previous inspection standards in science were judged to be below average at the age of seven and eleven. Since then standards, as measured by national tests, have fluctuated year-on-year from above average to well below average. The results in 2001 indicated well below average attainment in both key stages. When the results are compared to similar schools standards are still well below average in Year 2 and below average in Year 6. Results in 2002 are currently provisional, but look similar to those recorded a year earlier. Inspection findings are that standards are below average at the age of seven and eleven.

117 In appropriate year groups pupils build up some knowledge and understanding of relevant topics such as the human body, electrical circuits and forces. However, test results show that pupils' understanding is not as clear or as detailed as should be. The analysis of pupils' recent work reveals that some topics are not covered in sufficient depth. Often, opportunities to increase the range of activities to consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding and to broaden their experience are not taken. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and ideas are shallow. In Years 1 to 5 not enough time is spent carrying out tests and experiments that allow pupils to observe closely, measure changes, record results and think about their findings. As a result, pupils' practical skills are not developed sufficiently and in this aspect pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. In Year 6 there is a greater emphasis on practical work and pupils use results from tests and experiments to draw graphs that consolidate numeracy skills well. However, the good practice in Year 6 cannot compensate fully for the lack of similar experiences in earlier years and pupils' attainment is lowered. Higher attaining pupils are not always offered a sufficient level of challenge to move their thinking on.

118 The quality of teaching and learning observed throughout the inspection varied from very good to unsatisfactory and was satisfactory overall. In one very good lesson observed in Year 1, pupils learned about their senses; they tested them by smelling samples of food, tasting fruit flavoured sweets and identifying noises. The teacher had quickly developed very good relationships and communicated with pupils skilfully making sure that the answers they provided were carefully considered. Eventually pupils recorded some of their ideas and findings in the form of pictures in a way that led them to an early understanding of tables of results. In the unsatisfactory teaching observed, the lesson was both poorly planned and delivered. Pupils learnt little of real value and their attitudes to science as a subject were not promoted successfully.

119 The lack of practical work in past years indicates that teachers do not have sufficient understanding of how to plan and deliver interesting practical sessions on a regular basis and how to use these to motivate pupils. As a result, pupils' learning and achievement over time is affected. There is a misunderstanding amongst some staff of what constitutes an investigation. Sometimes staff plan simple demonstration activities, which contain only limited investigative content. The school is currently reviewing its science curriculum and has embarked on a system of rewriting it by assembling current lessons into a new scheme of work. This will not fully address current shortcomings as it repeats present weaknesses. The science co-ordinator is now rightly considering the creation of a new scheme of work that puts practical, experimental and investigational work at its heart.

120 Pupils who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make progress in much the same way as other pupils. In some classes, including in Year 5, pupils who have statements of educational need receive very high quality support that enables them to keep pace with the rest of the class and to get the most out of lessons.

121 The temporary co-ordinator for science has approached the position seriously and conscientiously. He has used consultants to monitor teaching and has taken advice on how to improve provision for science throughout the school and how to raise standards. Resources are adequate, but a detailed audit is needed in order to facilitate and sustain a more practically based curriculum. The school does not currently make enough use of ICT to support learning in science. Whilst there are opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills when working together, the school misses opportunities to develop other aspects of pupils' personal development through science.

ART AND DESIGN

122 Standards are below average at the end of both the infant and junior stages, and pupils, including those with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language, are not achieving as they should be. There has been little improvement since the last inspection. This is partly because limited time is given to the subject but also because not enough is expected of the pupils, especially the older juniors. Teaching in the lessons observed was mainly satisfactory. However, when the work sample is taken into account, it is clear that teaching and learning have been unsatisfactory for some time. With the thrust to raise standards in national tests, art has not had high priority for many years. This is reflected in a shortage of top quality artwork on display around the school.

123 The range of the curriculum in Year 1 is reasonably broad, but standards of painting and drawing are below average as reflected in the class portfolios. Samples of work from last year's Year 2 are few in number and most examples are immature for the age group. The pupils have had limited opportunities to consider the work of other artists and to evaluate their own work. Sketch books, or 'art diaries', are introduced halfway through Year 2. In one class, these include rubbings of bark, bricks and paving stones executed directly onto the page, with predictably poor results. When activities are more appropriate, work of a better quality is sometimes seen. One group of seven year olds had, for example, observed natural objects such as shells, cones and mushrooms, producing drawings that were in most cases average or better for their age.

124 Portfolios and sketchbooks for the junior pupils suggest that the subject has been neglected in some classes. There is too much variation in what is offered, not enough attention to the systematic development of skills, a tendency to avoid 'messy' activities, almost no three-dimensional work and mainly low expectations of the older pupils. In Year 5, for example, collage butterflies were created from screwed up tissue paper, with results that far younger pupils could have achieved. In Year 6, collages using overlaid tissue paper were based on Monet's paintings of his garden, missing opportunities for pupils to select their own media whilst exploring colour, form and space. On the positive side, sketchbooks contain some effective drawings linked with topic work, especially in Year 3. There is some attention to skills development in Year 5, with constructive marking in this year-group and some original use of ICT to generate graphic images.

125 For logistical reasons, the only lessons seen were in the junior classes. Good features are occasionally seen when the teacher has the appropriate subject knowledge. In one Year 3 lesson, for example, the teacher had drawn on a large scale the broad outlines of a Picasso sketch to show how simply the work is constructed, using bold and sweeping lines. Even so, the pupils found it difficult to grasp that a sketch can be quick and simple. Opportunities were missed in the Year 6 lessons, despite the challenging topic of moving water and a good focus on a woodblock print of a waterfall by the Japanese artist Hokusai. Although the pupils were working in pairs, they failed to plan their work or sketch a preliminary design. There was over-use of crepe and tissue paper for the collage activity, whilst the quality of pupils' paintings was limited by the use of ready-mixed paint in inappropriately strong colours. As a result achievement was limited.

126 The co-ordinator is new to the school and has only been in post for one term. She has a high level of personal skill and subject expertise that could be of real value to the school. However, as yet there have been few opportunities to monitor the quality of work across the school and work with colleagues to raise their expectations of what the pupils can produce.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

127 Standards are average at the ages of seven and eleven. This indicates there has been good improvement since the previous inspection where standards were below average at the age of seven and well below average at the age of eleven. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language make good progress both within lessons and over a period of time. The sample of pupils' work and photographic evidence shows that the main improvement since the last inspection has been in the quality of planning for and leadership of the subject to develop work of appropriate breadth and depth. All strands of the curriculum are now attended to well and the quality of coverage of the different aspects of the subject is a strength of current provision. There is now a carefully structured scheme of work that relates to both the school's own planning and refers to national guidance. The good quality of this medium-term planning ensures good progression and continuity in pupils' learning and is well embedded in the curriculum.

128 From the start of their time in the infants, and then subsequently throughout the school, pupils are presented with a good range of activities that include designing, making and evaluating a series of different products. This enables the pupils to make good progress in their awareness of the importance of the design process, of how to develop a range of making skills, and the significance of finding out how they could improve what they have produced. In Year 2, pupils design and make different flavoured yoghurts. They carry out a sensory analysis of the preferences in the look, smell and taste of different yoghurts which effectively supports the development of data collection skills in mathematics. Pupils also design, make and evaluate a good range of vehicles and finger puppets. To do this they find out how to measure, cut and join materials. They make good progress when making axles to support the wheels of their vehicle and when using simple stitching techniques to sew together the pieces of their puppet.

129 In the juniors pupils extend their skills well so that by Year 6 they are able to make a soft toy for a visually impaired child which supports their personal, social and moral development well. This work extends skills in science through the pupils' investigations of different fabrics to suit their purpose and taking specific account of the design criteria. Pupils also make a moving carousel using cogs or a motor. They extend their planning skills well when creating a story-board and flow chart to organise their design ideas. Pupils also enjoy designing and making a healthy and tasty flapjack by looking at different types of flapjacks and considering their ingredients, appearance, texture and taste. In all activities there are good links to the development of literacy skills by carrying out and recording their evaluations of the products they make. This encourages pupils to use different descriptive vocabulary other than just using the word 'nice'.

130 The quality of teaching and learning is good. The effective management of pupils is a feature and ensures lessons are conducted in a purposeful manner even when the pupils are anxious to begin making things. Teachers plan activities well and resources are used appropriately including the use of a simple range of tools. Teachers give clear instructions and have good expectations of what the pupils can achieve although more attention could be paid at times to finishing techniques. Some teachers use both open-ended questions and those directed to certain pupils to attempt to develop language to a higher level. Pupils have good attitudes to their learning and most enjoy their work and try quite hard.

131 Leadership and management of the subject are good and some aspects are very effective and have been a pivotal influence in bringing about the marked improvement in standards. The subject leader has usefully spent time reviewing and extending the scheme of work and ensuring that medium-term planning is available as a framework for lessons. She monitors and effectively evaluates short-term planning and the work produced and ensures feedback is given on the quality of such work. Resources have been improved although an area for development is in the use of ICT to aid the design process.

GEOGRAPHY

132 Standards of attainment are average at the ages of seven and eleven. This represents an improvement since the time of the last inspection when there were issues relating to continuity and progression and standards in the juniors were judged to be below expectations. Since this time a new scheme of work has been introduced and assessment has been built into planning, both of which have supported improvement in the subject well.

133 Pupils in Year 1 know that rooms have different purposes and some can satisfactorily explain the function of different items of furniture and position them within a room. The majority demonstrate good practical skills when using play dough and plastic construction material to build rooms. In Year 2, pupils find the position of their home city and compare it to local towns and villages. Many are able to express opinions and explain ideas although these descriptions are sometimes brief and some pupils have poorly developed writing skills.

134 In Year 3, pupils study settlements and in particular, their local area. This is achieved by comparing an old map of Erdington with their research from guided walks. Later in the year they produce their own satisfactory surveys of safe places to play. As they move through the school, the areas of study widen to include the continents, oceans and the solar system and simple concepts about the environment. Most pupils show satisfactory evidence of expanding knowledge and geographical skills at this stage but written accounts and presentation are generally weaker. In Year 5, the current area of study concerns landmarks. Most pupils satisfactorily explain the difference between fixed references and ephemeral landmarks. They are also developing good spatial awareness and map reading skills when using landmarks to plot a route across a map. In Year 6 pupils study the flow of a river. Many recall the names of different sections of the river and a few demonstrate deeper understanding of geographical terms. The majority of pupils are currently making satisfactory progress, including those with special education needs and those for who English is an additional language, although this is often from a low base.

135 Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features at both key stages and is sometimes very good in the juniors. However, the quality of teaching and learning over time has been affected by the many staff changes. Planning is sound, learning objectives are shared and teachers demonstrate good classroom management. Pupils show interest and are attentive particularly in the initial stages of lessons. In Year 5, where teaching is very good, pupils are continually challenged to explain their understanding of the lesson objectives and to maintain high standards of behaviour. The pupils respond by sustaining their concentration, making more effort and being productive in their work. Throughout the school the match of task to ability is generally good but sometimes there is insufficient challenge for the more able and this is an area for further development.

136 The subject is well managed by an enthusiastic co-ordinator. The scheme of work is manageable and well designed with good opportunities to extend social and cultural development. However, there is little evidence of moral and spiritual development being enhanced through such work. Resources are satisfactory but in some lessons there is an over-reliance on work sheets. Although ICT is an available resource there is very little evidence of its use during lessons or in the scrutiny of pupils' work.

HISTORY

137 Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations at seven and eleven. This represents an improvement since the time of the last inspection when teaching did not relate well to the identified topics and standards in Year 2 were judged to be below national

expectations. The recent development of clearer lesson objectives and review of subject delivery have also brought about improvements.

138 In Year 1, pupils think about the toys they use and the games they play and then study toys and games of the past. They discuss events, use a simple timeline and begin to develop the idea of sequence. Pupils in Year 2 order some well known events in history and many use specific vocabulary to compare their own lives with those of famous people. While their understanding of history is sound at this stage, the quality and presentation of written work is inconsistent.

139 In Year 3, a few pupils are able to make deductions about objects in an Egyptian tomb though most make simple observations from the pictures they are given. Pupils in Year 4 are able to describe the character of Henry VIII but then struggle to record evidence from a reproduction of his portrait. Many have knowledge of famous people from history but for some their understanding of historical features and events is insecure. Year 5 pupils show an increasing knowledge of social history when they compare life in Victorian times with their own experience of the present. In Year 6 pupils discuss the reasons for evacuation and appreciate the conditions under which people lived in World War II. While there is growing evidence of investigative skills, the quality of writing continues to be inconsistent and presentation is often weak. All pupils make satisfactory progress, including those with special education needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

140 Teaching and learning are satisfactory across the school. Planning is generally sound and resources are well chosen as in Year 3 where pupils study pictures and examine artefacts from the tomb of Tutankhamen. While the task was appropriate for the majority, some pupils found it too difficult, lost concentration and became inattentive. Teaching is good when tasks are matched carefully to the ability of pupils and teachers demand high standards of behaviour. Learning is good when pupils understand the demands of the task and work productively. However, some teachers rely too heavily on standard worksheets, which are often inappropriate for both high and low attainers.

141 The newly appointed subject co-ordinator has not yet had time to influence work in the subject. The scheme of work is satisfactory and offers good opportunities for social, moral and cultural development. Resources are satisfactory and the school makes effective use of museum visits to support topics. The current assessment procedures are satisfactory but could be refined further to provide a better picture of individual attainment. At present the subject largely fails to make use of ICT for research and recording purposes.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

142 The attainment of pupils in Years 2 and 6 is below that expected for their age, which reflects the findings of the previous report. The school building project and significant technical problems have hindered the progress that the school has been able to make in developing this subject. Provision for the subject is a key issue for development. Some classes have been without computers, and in others pupils have only had limited access. As a result, over time, pupils have not made the progress that they should. The school now has a computer suite in operation and each classroom has a 'stand alone' computer. Although there are still some technical problems to resolve, each class is timetabled to work in the computer suite. During the inspection, the majority of classes were observed and pupils, including those with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language, are now making at least satisfactory progress in lessons. Teachers have not yet had training through the New Opportunities Fund, although this is planned for the near future. The school has made satisfactory progress in most areas identified in the last inspection report.

143 From a low start, pupils in Year 2 are making satisfactory progress and word process simple sentences using capital letters, full stops and the space bar, changing the font size and colour. They create pictures and patterns using an art program, selecting colours and using facilities, for example 'infill'. They collect and display data appropriately, for example of the colour of eyes and the ways pupils travel to school and enter simple commands to control an on screen 'turtle'. However, over time, pupils have not had sufficient opportunities to develop keyboard and mouse skills and have little insight into the use of computers in and out of school.

144 Pupils in Year 6 also make satisfactory progress and save, retrieve and print their work and use subject specific vocabulary, such as 'log on' and 'enter'. They know the main function keys on the keyboard and higher-attaining pupils effectively use the keyboard and the mouse to control a program. Average and lower-attaining pupils often 'search' for keys on the keyboard and sometimes lack co-ordination when controlling the mouse. Close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that they have had some opportunities to use spreadsheets and graph programs to record the results of investigations and surveys they have undertaken. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils create interesting results as they type and highlight text in order to change its size and colour. Pupils in Year 4 change the size and style of text on a wanted poster. In a lesson in a Year 5 class, pupils enter a series of commands into a computer to control a set of traffic lights and in Year 6 pupils use the Internet to search for information on religious initiation ceremonies. However, in many lessons, pupils are dependent upon staff for support and are not really confident users of computers.

145 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have worked hard to familiarise themselves with new programs and adjust to teaching in the computer suite. At the beginning of lessons, teachers share the learning objectives of the lesson so pupils understand what they are expected to achieve. Teachers generally display good knowledge of the programs they use and work well at developing pupils' technical vocabulary. In the best lessons, teachers develop basic skills effectively by breaking down the learning into its different parts and then providing time for pupils to consolidate their skills. In a good lesson in Year 6, the teacher provided good guidance and intervened well to support the pupils in their learning as they accessed web sites on the Internet. In most lessons, but not all, teachers set high expectations of the pupils' attitudes and behaviour and pupils generally respond well. In a very good lesson in a Year 5 class, the teacher managed the pupils very well, using humour to engage their interest. In response, they were enthusiastic and interested in their tasks. They worked well together in pairs and took it in turns to place the symbols in the correct order to make the program operate the traffic lights. At the end of the lesson the pupils' learning was consolidated through systematic questioning. In lessons where teachers have insufficiently high expectations and lack management skills, the pupils do not behave well and the quality of their relationships is unsatisfactory.

146 There is a policy and scheme of work to underpin the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. However, the policy requires updating to take into account recent changes in the curriculum. There is little guidance on how computers can be used to support and enrich pupils' learning in other subjects of the curriculum and this is an area for considerable development. There are comparatively few examples of computer programs being used to support pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy and other subjects. However, pupils in Year 2 practise letter sounds on the computer, and in Year 1 they 'play' snakes and ladders to improve their number skills. A computer program is being used to practise and develop the literacy and numeracy skills of selected pupils in Years 4, 5, and 6. Even so, this area of the school's work is still unsatisfactory and requires significant development. Procedures for checking pupils' progress are satisfactory.

147 The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has worked hard to improve the curriculum and the provision for new computers but has been hindered in this work. He has a clear view of how and where the school needs to move forward in the development of the curriculum, staff training and the provision of additional computers and programs. The subject co-ordinator is aware of the importance of computer safety but the school does not have a policy relating to this issue.

MUSIC

148 The last time the school was inspected, pupils achieved average standards at the end of both key stages. While the quality of teaching ranged from poor to good and progress was variable, some teachers lacked security with the subject and there was insufficient emphasis on singing. A number of changes have taken place since the previous inspection. These have contributed to a decline in standards, which are now below average at the age of seven and eleven and progress is unsatisfactory over time.

149 Currently too little time is devoted to the teaching of music and some classes spend less time than others on this subject. Pupils throughout the school do not have sufficient opportunity to acquire enough breadth and depth of knowledge across the whole music curriculum to reach average standards. High staff turnover and lack of training for non-specialist class teachers, who are not totally confident with the subject, have adversely affected standards. The school has recognised the need to improve its provision for music and has recently asked a very accomplished teacher with musical ability to take over responsibility for co-ordinating the subject. The current picture is far more positive.

150 The school's recent focus on raising interest in singing has shown positive results and there are encouraging signs of improvement. Younger pupils sing with great enthusiasm. In discussion, they remember many of the songs from the new programme linked to collective worship and they like them. However, younger pupils have little recall of songs they learned last year or music they have listened to in the past. They do not have much knowledge of the last time they used instruments in their music making.

151 During class lessons in Years 1 and 2, pupils develop an adequate understanding of dynamics by standing up when the music is loud and sitting down when it is soft. However, in discussion it is clear that music has not always been firmly established on all timetables. When asked what she liked in her music lessons, one pupil replied unprompted, "We don't have music lessons".

152 By the time pupils move into Year 3, their lack of knowledge about music becomes more obvious. In one lesson, some pupils wrongly mistook the sound of a violin for a piano. Although most could distinguish well between lively and calm music, there was some confusion about fast and slow. Some pupils listen well; others, particularly in classes with a high staff turnover last year, have got out of the habit of listening. Teachers do not always have the expertise to know how to guide pupils to listen with enough sense of purpose. Although the vast majority of pupils in Years 3 to 6 tap rhythms with reasonable accuracy and use musical instruments occasionally, by the time they reach Year 6, they only display a very basic level of understanding.

153 In lessons observed, the overall quality of teaching and pupils' rate of learning were satisfactory, although a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed. There was no better quality teaching. Pupils' level of confidence and expertise is totally dependent on class teachers' security with the subject. Not all teachers know what standards pupils can and should achieve. The music co-ordinator has provided helpful lesson plans for non-specialist teachers and this has gone some way towards ensuring continuity that was

previously lacking. However, the heavy reliance on tape-recorded music and prescribed lesson plans sometimes hinders, rather than helps progress. In addition, not all lessons provide enough balance of listening, singing and composing activities and there is too little opportunity for pupils to refine or develop their work.

154 Teachers tend to spend too long on activities with which they are most secure and do not provide enough variety. A lesson on listening to extracts of music demonstrated this well. Pupils listened to the extracts for an excessive amount of time without any sense of purpose because the lesson did not contain enough follow up activities. There are however, examples of teachers providing pupils with worthwhile learning experiences. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils responded with maturity when listening to a piece of music. The teacher was organised, handled her insecurity with the subject well and retained pupils' interest. Consequently, pupils made satisfactory progress.

155 The school has invested in a new music scheme and is in the process of extending its range of instrumental tuition to include woodwind, brass and percussion and has started to keep informative examples of pupils' work. Last year pupils participated in a highly successful Christmas production and the newly formed choir took part in a high profile performance of 'Youth in Unisong' at Symphony Hall. Music is becoming a more important part of school life. However, all initiatives are very recent and have not had time to have a significant enough impact on standards, particularly in class lessons. Although there are plans for future development, the school has no current structure to develop pupils' ICT skills through music.

156 The new co-ordinator had only taken over responsibility for the subject two weeks before the inspection. He is well aware that the policy needs updating and that resources are underused and inaccessible. He already provides a good level of informal support for class teachers, and his own high quality teaching and enthusiasm for the subject are the key to future success. Music has been a low priority subject but that perception is now changing. The school has recently formed a music team of interested and musically competent teachers to promote the growth of music across the school. A choir is now successfully established as an important part of school life and all older pupils are given the opportunity to participate.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

157 At the time of the previous inspection standards in physical education were judged to be average. Current standards are also average throughout the school and pupils' progress is satisfactory. In the infants children perform different types of jumps, taking off and landing on one foot or both feet, sometimes adding turns to make jumps more complicated and interesting. They are able to make their bodies wide and narrow and put several types of jumps together to form sequences.

158 In Year 4, pupils demonstrate basic hockey skills, dribbling balls and making short passes to each other with reasonable accuracy and control. Because of timetabling arrangements no physical education lessons in Year 6 were observed during the inspection, but the skills and abilities of pupils in other year groups indicate that standards are about average in gymnastics and games. No dance was observed at all and standards in this area of physical education could not be judged, though the curriculum contains planning for pupils to receive dance experiences that are appropriate to their age.

159 Discussions with pupils suggest that since moving into the new building, gymnastic equipment has not been used very often and the equipment available is very limited. The school has rightly identified the need to improve current resources for gymnastics so that

techniques that are developed in floor and mat work can be extended to small and large apparatus, to provide pupils with greater challenge and excitement.

160 Pupils have swimming for half a term every year between Year 2 and Year 6. This is good provision and it provides opportunities for pupils to develop swimming skills over time. Most pupils reach the national standard of 25 metres. However, a few pupils in Year 6, including those from ethnic minority groups, swim very little if at all. The school is considering whether special provision can be arranged for these pupils so that they can at least learn to develop basic competence in water.

161 Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good teaching observed during the inspection. Teachers ensure that equipment is prepared early, making good use of the time available. They ensure that pupils who have special educational needs are well supported and they plan lessons that have a good structure of warm up, main activity, and cool down. Teachers draw attention to the effects of exercise on heart rate and breathing.

162 Pupils' experience of sport is often very limited and is less than is found in most schools. The level of fitness is often low. Opportunities to compete within the school itself and against other schools have been limited and is an area that the parents would like to see considerably extended. The school has arranged for outside groups to deliver coaching in basketball and tennis, and is beginning to explore as many ways as possible to extend sporting opportunities for pupils both within physical education lessons and after-school activities. During the inspection an after-school netball club was observed where boys and girls practised passing, before playing a game. Pupils were enthusiastic and keen to learn basic techniques and rules but skills were at an early stage of development.

163 There is a newly appointed co-ordinator for physical education who has had limited opportunity to monitor and evaluate standards. The school recognises that if the subject is to be developed and opportunities for pupils increased the identified priorities will need determination and commitment over some time. Whilst there are adequate opportunities for pupils to develop social skills in the range of activities, the school misses the chance for pupils to develop further moral understanding through discussions of tactics and working together as a team.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

164 Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, and most pupils, including those speaking English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, reach the standards set out in the locally agreed syllabus by the end of the infant stage. In the junior classes achievement is less satisfactory, and standards remain below average. In particular there is not enough to stretch the higher attaining pupils. Despite improvements in subject management, curricular planning and resources, standards have not been raised to any significant extent since the last inspection.

165 In Years 1 and 2, the pupils' written work shows that they are taught consistently and cover a satisfactory range. The pupils learn about the importance of the Koran in Islam and how Muslims pray. They also become acquainted with significant narratives, including the Christmas and Easter stories. In Year 2, there is a good balance of work on religious practices including festivals and places of worship, with issues and experiences that are personal to the pupils. When working on relatively abstract themes such as 'happiness' and 'sacrifice', average and above average pupils show their understanding by writing independently on such topics as 'an important event in my life' and 'being brave'. Lower attainers tend to record their ideas in the form of illustrations. During the inspection, pupils at

the start of Year 2 responded to the subject of 'special books' with reasonable understanding, explaining their personal choices in simple terms.

166 In the junior classes, work in exercise books and folders suggests that the pupils are not making enough headway. In Year 3, the work is largely at the level that would be expected: for example, many pupils give a clear account of the stories of the Prodigal Son and the Lost Sheep, with some appreciation of the meaning. By Years 5 and 6 expectations tend to be pitched too low, with recording sometimes based on worksheets that fail to extend the pupils: this slows achievement. A similar pattern was reflected in the lessons observed. Despite a good lesson on the Feeding of the Five Thousand, pupils in Year 5 were unable to suggest any meaning beyond the strictly literal, which showed a lack of understanding in depth. Discussion with Year 6 pupils reveals a considerable degree of confusion about the major world faiths, which they mix up with one another. General knowledge is weak. A group of otherwise capable and articulate Year 6 pupils could not name a book in the Old Testament, but volunteered that it was 'about Jesus'. A group of lower attainers did not know what the terms 'baptism' or 'christening' meant.

167 Teaching was at least satisfactory in all the lessons seen during the inspection, and the sample of pupils' work in the infant classes shows teaching that is thoroughly competent, with some imaginative approaches. Last year's work in Year 2, for example, linked the topic of friendship with the betrayal of Jesus by Peter. The pupils were then set the challenging task of writing a letter from Peter to Jesus. The work sample demonstrates some shortcomings at the junior stage, especially a lack of challenge at the right level. In some classes the pupils are rarely asked to explain their ideas independently in writing and the tasks given can be pedestrian. Some marking is inaccurate, with significant errors ticked as correct. There were, however, a number of positive features in the lessons observed during the inspection. In one Year 5 class, the inclusion of all the pupils was a very marked feature, with great care taken to encourage and value the contributions of the less confident. These included a child with English as an additional language and another with a statement of special educational need. In Year 6, pupils have used the Internet to find information about initiation and naming ceremonies in different world faiths, which is an effective use of ICT to support learning.

168 Management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of the subject and clear ideas about the next steps to take. She rightly identifies that there is a need to reinstate visits to different places of worship, to plan visits from representatives of different faiths and to draw upon the diverse experience of the pupils. She has already undertaken some monitoring of the pupils' written work and, with the backing of the senior management team, now intends to tackle the question of raising expectations.