

INSPECTION REPORT

ROBERTS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Gornal, Dudley

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103821

Headteacher: Mr J Crichton

Reporting inspector: Mr A Bond
17263

Dates of inspection: 3rd - 6th March 2003

Inspection number: 246320

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 (with nursery class)

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3-11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Robert Street
Lower Gornal
Dudley

Postcode: DY3 2AZ

Telephone number: 01384 818 275

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J Walters

Date of previous inspection: 9th February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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17263	Andy Bond	Registered inspector	History	What sort of school is it? Results and achievements How well pupils are taught How well the school is led and managed
9188	Jane McHugh	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How the school works in partnership with parents
19507	Beulah Andrews	Team inspector	Science Geography	Special educational needs Educational inclusion
3751	Trudy Cotton	Team inspector	Art and design Music Foundation Stage	English as an additional language
18346	Rod Bristow	Team inspector	Design and technology Physical education	
7593	John Collier	Team inspector	English Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
15223	Roger Salt	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology	How good are curricular and other opportunities?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Roberts Primary School is a much larger than average community school with a nursery unit. The school provides education for 587 pupils aged 3 to 11 years; 292 boys and 295 girls, including 90 part-time children in the nursery (45 full-time equivalent). In the last two years the school has moved to a new building on the same site and a nursery unit has been added. The school roll number has increased quite considerably.

In general, pupils are drawn from a below average social and economic area and start in the reception classes with standards that are below average, especially in language and literacy and mathematical development. Thirteen per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is broadly in line with the national average but this does not accurately reflect the below average social and economic background of many pupils. Almost 20 per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is broadly in line with the national average. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are four pupils with a statement of special needs (0.6%); this is below the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of white ethnic heritage but a small number of pupils are from Asian and Black Caribbean backgrounds. There are 11 pupils who do not have English as their mother tongue; all speak English fluently. The number of teaching staff has increased in the last two years as the school has grown in size.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Roberts Primary School provides pupils with a good education. Pupils attain standards which are broadly average and make good progress overall. The quality of teaching and learning is generally good. The headteacher provides good leadership and the school is very well managed. Overall, the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is well led and very well managed.
- Children receive a good start to their education in the nursery and reception classes.
- Teaching is good in the infant classes and very good in Year 6 classes.
- Pupils' personal development is promoted very well and this is reflected in their very good attitudes and good behaviour in school.
- The school provides a good range of learning opportunities.
- The school cares well for pupils and develops good links with parents and the local community.

What could be improved

- Pupils' rate of achievement in the junior classes, especially in Years 3 to 5.
- Standards in writing throughout the school.
- The level of attendance in the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1998. Since that time, the school has made good progress. The issues for action from the last report have been addressed well. Pupils' speaking and listening skills have improved to average levels. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved quite rapidly in a short time; pupils are now making much better progress. Greater consideration has been given to higher attaining pupils and a larger percentage are reaching above average standards. More opportunities are being provided for pupils to develop spiritually. Standards in mathematics and science have improved faster than the national average. The quality of teaching is much improved. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and very good teaching is a far more common feature. The school has maintained much of the good provision reported at the time of the last

inspection despite the disruption caused by movement to a new building. Pupils' learning is now being enhanced by the new accommodation.

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
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	D	D	C
Mathematics	D	E	D	C
Science	E	E	D	C

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

The table above sets out the results in National Curriculum tests for 2002 taken by pupils at the end of Year 6. It shows that results were below average for English, mathematics and science. Compared to similar schools, the results in all three subjects were average. The standards attained by pupils currently in Year 6 are judged to be average. Standards are rising steadily year-by-year and more pupils are reaching higher levels because of the school's strategies for improving standards.

In 2002, standards in National Curriculum tests and tasks for pupils in Year 2 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Compared with similar schools, all three subjects were average. Teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment in science judged standards to be below average. The pupils currently in Year 2 are judged to be attaining average standards in reading, mathematics and science but below average standards in writing. The present Year 2 classes contain more higher attaining pupils than the previous year-group, but in writing more pupils than would be expected are operating at the lower end of average levels.

Children enter the reception classes with standards that are generally below average, especially in their literacy and mathematical development. However, they make good progress, having had the benefit of part-time education in the recently completed nursery unit. By the time they start in Year 1, most children are reaching average standards because good teaching in the reception classes has enhanced their learning.

Standards at the end of Year 6 have shown an improvement in national tests over the last four years: at a faster rate than the national average in science and mathematics. Overall, pupils make good progress throughout the school, from a below average starting point to national average standards by Year 6. However, there are periods of more rapid progress in the nursery, reception and infant classes before progress slows down in the early junior years and finally peaks in Year 6. The progress of those pupils with special educational needs follows a similar pattern. They are properly supported by teachers and learning support assistants and make similar progress to their classmates.

The school endeavours to provide extension activities to ensure that gifted and talented children reach their full potential; in the main, they are successful. There are a very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. All of these pupils are fluent in English and are well integrated into lessons, making generally similar progress to other pupils in the school. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds also make similar progress to their classmates. Over time, there are no significant differences between the test results of boys and girls although the Year 2 results in 2002 showed that girls significantly outperform boys in reading and writing.

Standards in all National Curriculum subjects and religious education are average at the end of Years 2 and 6, except for writing, which is below average in the present Year 2 classes. The school has realistic targets for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics in Year 6 tests for the year 2003. On the basis of inspection evidence, these targets appear to be achievable.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and they are polite and friendly.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and during break times.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils get on very well with each other and use their initiative well when given the opportunity. They undertake jobs around the school with maturity.
Attendance	Poor. Well below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Two thirds of lessons were judged to be good or better and almost a quarter were very good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons observed, but in some lessons the pace was moderate and some teachers did not have high enough expectations of their pupils. However, there were many examples of very good teaching throughout the school, especially in the nursery, reception classes and Years 1, 2 and 6. In the best lessons, teachers use novel approaches to capture pupils' imagination and interest. Teachers build up good relationships with pupils and manage their classes well. They encourage pupils to concentrate and work hard on tasks. Teachers generally plan thoroughly and cater well for pupils of different abilities, ensuring that they make good progress. Homework is used effectively, especially in Years 1 and 2 to support pupils' work in school and to supplement their learning. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are taught well, especially in the early years of schooling, and this provides a good platform for pupils' later education. Overall, the needs of all pupils are met. Pupils with special educational needs are properly supported. Gifted and talented pupils are given appropriate opportunities to extend their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. There are well-developed strategies for teaching numeracy skills, very good provision for personal, social and health education and very good links with the community to enhance pupils' learning. The range of activities provided outside school is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are properly supported by learning support assistants and specialist teachers.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. There is no specialist support for pupils with English as an additional language but this is not necessary for they are well-integrated and fluent speakers of English.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Pupils' personal development is fostered very well especially through the school's programme for moral and social education. Spiritual provision is much improved since the last inspection.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. The school cares well for its pupils. Assessment procedures are generally good and the information gained is used appropriately. Monitoring procedures for attendance are sound but they are not making a sufficient impact.

The school keeps parents well informed and provides good quality information about their children's progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher provides good leadership and manages the school very well. The deputy headteacher makes a valuable contribution to the management of the school. The subject managers and senior staff fulfil their roles well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are fully involved in shaping the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school evaluates its own performance and uses the information effectively to set new targets for improvement. The headteacher and governors have a very good understanding of how to obtain good value from allocated fundings.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial resources are used effectively to support school initiatives. Administrative procedures are supported very well by modern technology.

The school is well staffed, although at present there are a number of part-time and temporary teachers covering absences. Learning resources are good and are used effectively to enrich the curriculum. The accommodation is excellent and is having a positive impact on the rate of pupils' learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of teaching That children are happy at school and making good progress The school expects pupils to work hard and do their best The school is well led and managed The approachability of staff and headteacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small number of parents think there is an insufficient range of activities outside lessons or they are unsure about the quality of the provision

The inspection team agrees with all the very positive views of parents. A small percentage of parents were unsure or unhappy about the quality and range of activities outside school hours. Inspectors judge these to be good. Overall, inspectors do not share the views of a small percentage of parents who have negative views about the school's provision.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the reception classes with below average standards, especially in the areas of speaking and listening, writing and, to a lesser extent, mathematical development. However, the baseline information shows an improving picture and the gap between children's attainment and the local education authority's average is gradually narrowing. This is the result of two factors: the recently completed nursery provision, which caters for 90 children on a part-time basis, and the changing school catchment area. The nursery class is helping to boost standards because the quality of teaching and learning is good. Previously, children entered school with little or no pre-school experience. New houses have been built near the school, a mixture of council, housing association and private properties, and this has meant that there is an improving catchment area. This is confirmed by the fall in the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Even so, the present free school meal entitlement of 13 per cent does not reflect fairly the general level of deprivation of the Gornal ward of Dudley, which is statistically in the lowest 30 per cent nationally.

2. Children continue to make good progress in the reception classes because they have been given a good start in the nursery and skilful teaching builds on this foundation. The new building and its very good facilities also contribute to raising standards and to increasing the rate of progress. Classrooms are bright and there is a good, stimulating atmosphere which boosts children's learning. By the time children are ready to enter Year 1, the vast majority have achieved the Early Learning Goals¹ in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. In personal, social and emotional development the majority of children exceed the Early Learning Goals. Standards show an improving picture, which is reflected lower down the school. The evidence derived from the inspection in Year 1 classes shows that an increasing number of pupils are attaining above average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The indication is that the school is beginning to reap the benefits of nursery provision and good teaching in the early years of the children's education.

3. The results of national tests for 2002 showed that pupils attained standards, at the end of Year 2, that were below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers' assessment of attainment in science also revealed below average standards. Although the vast majority of pupils (in excess of 80 per cent) reached the national average level 2 standard, there was a high proportion of boys with special educational needs operating at the lower end of the average level. This resulted in the overall standard being pulled down from above average in 2001 to below average in 2002. Nevertheless, compared to schools in similar social and economic areas, results were average in reading, writing and mathematics. After three years of improving standards from 1999 to 2001, the results for 2002 were against the general trend of improvement. However, evidence from the inspection shows that pupils currently in Year 2 are attaining average standards in reading, mathematics and science. In writing, although there is an improving picture with more pupils reaching higher standards, the large percentage of pupils in the lower average level (level 2C) still remains high and this depresses standards to below average. The school has rightly identified this as an area for development because many pupils still have problems with basic spellings and in remembering to start sentences with capital letters and finish with a full stop in their normal written work. The quality of pupils' handwriting, in many cases, is not high enough even though it is practised regularly.

¹ Early Learning Goals - the nationally recommended targets for children by the end of the reception year.

4. The results of the national tests in 2002, showed that pupils at the end of Year 6 were attaining below average standards in English, mathematics and science. Compared with schools in a similar context results were average. Results have been improving over the last four years, at a faster rate than the national average, especially in mathematics and science. In fact the results in science and mathematics were on the brink of average. This trend of improvement appears set to continue because inspectors' judgements of standards in the current Year 6 are that they are average in English, mathematics and science. The general improvement is due to the effectiveness of the teaching of the national strategies in English and mathematics and the school focus on investigation in science. The very good teaching in Year 6 also acts as a timely boost and helps to push up pupils' performance prior to national tests. Writing is still a weaker element of English. Spelling is an identified weakness for lower attaining pupils and the lack of use of adventurous language is another comparatively weaker element. In general, pupils do not have sufficient time within the school week to write freely and at length. The school has recently developed a system of assessing pupils' writing on a half termly basis in order to identify specific weaknesses. If this information is used properly it could have a favourable impact on improving writing standards throughout the school.

5. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls in National Curriculum tests over time. However, the results for boys in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 tests in 2002 were much lower than girls. In this particular age-group there are a higher percentage than normal of boys with special educational needs.

6. The school sets realistic targets for improvement in the test results for pupils in Year 6 and these appear to be achievable, based on existing evidence. The expectation is that there will be an improvement of four per cent in English and seven per cent in mathematics on average levels in 2003, compared with last year's predictions.

7. Generally, pupils achieve well as they move through school but there are variations in their progress. Good progress is made in the Foundation Stage² because of the impact of the new nursery provision, the very good facilities and the consistently good teaching and learning in both nursery and reception classes. It means that children are making a good start to their schooling, especially in the development of their basic literacy and numeracy skills, which can be built upon in later years.

8. In Years 1 to 2 the pupils continue to make good progress. The teaching and learning remains good. Teachers in these year-groups work closely together and use very effective methods to stimulate pupils' interest. They have high expectations and set challenging work that extends pupils' learning. The management of classes is of a very good standard and results in pupils working at a good, productive pace. Homework also makes valuable contribution to an increased rate of learning.

9. Although pupils' achievement in the juniors is satisfactory overall, it is comparatively slower than in the other two phases. In Years 3, 4 and 5, teaching and learning are sound with the vast majority of lessons (approximately three quarters) being satisfactory, whereas in Year 6, teaching is never less than good and the majority of lessons are very good. This has the effect of boosting pupils' learning and raising achievement levels. However, there are a number of factors, which account for the generally slower progress made by pupils in Years 3, 4, and 5. On average class sizes are larger in Years 3 and 4 because of the transition that the school is making from a two-class entry to a three-class entry. There are class sizes of 35 pupils, compared with 22 pupils in Year 2 classes. Year 3 currently

² Foundation Stage - nursery and reception classes

contains a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs and overall standards are lower in this age-group. The school has tried hard to minimise the impact of large class sizes by employing additional part-time teachers and learning support assistants. Although there is some beneficial impact, pupils' progress has remained sound rather than good. In Years 3, 4, and, to a lesser extent, Year 5, there are a number of part-time and temporary teachers with class responsibility employed by the school who, although they liaise with their colleagues, they do not provide pupils with the same level of continuity in their education as permanent members of staff are able to do. This is a difficulty experienced by many other schools in the current climate of teacher shortage and staff absence due to illness. In general, teachers' expectations of pupils in Years 3, 4, and 5 are not as high as in other year-groups. The pace of learning is moderate and some of the tasks are not as challenging as they might be. Although teachers continue to ensure that pupils make appropriate gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding, productivity and presentation levels are not as high as elsewhere in the school. Marking, too, although sound, does not always tell pupils clearly what they need to do in order to improve.

10. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are set clear and appropriate targets and make generally steady progress towards meeting them. Their achievement is sound in relation to their prior attainment. They make secure progress in lessons where support is provided and when teachers plan different work and resources to promote their learning. Well-focused individual education plans support pupils' learning. Pupils and parents know about the targets set, and these are effectively monitored by the co-ordinator with the support of experts from outside the school.

11. Standards in music, art and design, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), history, geography, physical education and religious education are all average by the end of Years 2 and 6. The school has maintained a good curriculum balance and, as a result, appropriate standards have been maintained, and, in some cases, such as in design and technology and ICT, they have been improved. Progress is satisfactory in all these subjects.

12. The school has made good levels of progress since the last inspection. The issues related to standards have all been addressed well. Speaking and listening standards have improved because there are far more opportunities for pupils to discuss their work, respond to teachers' questions and take part in role play and drama. They are more confident and articulate their thoughts much better, although on some occasions they do not speak loudly enough to be heard by the rest of the class. Pupils' ICT skills have improved significantly since the introduction of the new computer suite and the specialist training completed by the staff. Standards in ICT are now average by the end of Year 6. The performance of higher attaining pupils has improved. A larger proportion of pupils are now reaching the above average National Curriculum levels in English, mathematics and science by the end of Years 2, and 6. The improvement is attributed to setting by ability levels in mathematics, better matched work in lessons and 'booster' classes in upper Key Stage 2 lessons. A co-ordinator for more able pupils has been appointed who identifies and monitors the provision for these pupils. During the last inspection, standards in design and technology were judged to be below average at the end of Year 6. This has now been rectified because judgements for this subject show that pupils are now attaining average standards.

13. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, progress overall since the last inspection has been good, despite the turmoil and uncertainty experienced by the school when transferring from the old building to the new site. Judgements at the last inspection indicated that standards were average in English and mathematics at the end of both key stages and above average in science. However, the test results for that particular group of pupils in the same year, 1998, showed generally below average standards in

English and well below average standards in mathematics and science. Since that time the school has made faster progress than the national trend in raising standards, particularly in mathematics and science. The improved quality of teaching, the introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, the better analysis of test data and the improved facilities and accommodation are the key factors in this good level of improvement.

14. Areas for development

- Raise pupils' level of achievement in Years 3, 4 and 5.
- Raise standards in writing throughout the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. All pupils have very good attitudes towards learning. This includes both boys and girls, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and pupils with different levels of attainment. Pupils like school and enjoy their lessons. They show a great deal of enthusiasm for learning, particularly practical tasks. On rare occasions where attitudes are less than satisfactory it is often due to over-excitement and an eagerness to get involved in the activity rather than misbehaviour.

16. Behaviour in school and lessons is good, particularly in lessons where pupils are given well-matched work to do. All staff pay consistent attention to promoting standards of good behaviour. Relationships are very good. This has a direct impact on the standards achieved. For example in a Year 5 science lesson about the effects of exercise on heart rate, pupils showed consideration for each other by suddenly maintaining total silence to enable those exercising to monitor their pulse rates following an energising activity. This positive behaviour resulted in all pupils achieving a satisfactory result. The school is a happy, lively community where pupils are polite and friendly to visitors and one another. Adults and pupils often respond to each other with respect, concern and humour. Doors are held open and chairs pushed back under tables without prompting from teachers and adults.

17. Children in the nursery and reception classes have positive attitudes to school and behave very well in lessons. They settle quickly to school routines and form good relationships with each other. They share equipment sensibly and take responsibility for tidying away. Children are generally kind to each other and know the difference between right and wrong.

18. For pupils with special education needs there is a good working atmosphere in classrooms and the work set is suitably challenging. Learning support assistants are skilled at offering the right blend of support and challenge. As a result, attitudes are positive.

19. Pupils respond very well to the trust placed in them by the school. For example, they are visibly proud when it is their turn to answer the telephone and man the reception desk during lunchtimes; duties as corridor monitors are taken very seriously. They gain in confidence and self-esteem through the constant message from staff that they are valued and their contribution is important. Posters are prominently displayed around the school, all giving messages aimed at raising self-esteem and encouraging high standards. Older pupils regularly read stories to groups of younger pupils. However, opportunities for pupils to organise and make decisions about their own learning within lessons are a little limited. This was the case at the time of the last inspection.

20. The level of attendance is poor and well below the national average for primary schools. Unauthorised absence and exclusions are average. The school does its utmost to avoid excluding pupils with behavioural problems, although, when necessary, it will resort to

this sanction for serious misbehaviour. As a result of poor behaviour two pupils were excluded in the last school year for a fixed-term period.

21. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Pupils' attitudes to their learning have improved as a result of the improved surroundings. Pupils who were spoken to during the inspection say that they work harder because the classrooms are more stimulating. Overall, behaviour has improved and is now good. Attendance remains at the same level as the last inspection. Although the school has made some efforts to raise attendance levels, they have not improved the overall position. Whilst there is a core of regular non-attenders, and high levels of absence during September, when families take holidays, the vast majority of absences are authorised by the school for illness. Parents are encouraged by school to contact them explaining their child's absence and the vast majority do this. Consequently unauthorised absence is broadly the same as the national average. Punctuality by the vast majority has improved with the move to the new site but a small number of pupils are still late each day, despite constant encouragement by the school.

22. Areas for development

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to organise and make decisions about their own learning within lessons.
- Work with parents and other agencies to identify and minimise reasons for authorised absence.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is judged to be good. Two thirds of all lessons observed during the inspection were good or better. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. In the Foundation Stage, that is nursery and reception classes, teaching is good, with 79 per cent of lessons being good or better. In Key Stage 1, that is Years 1 and 2, it is also good with 83 per cent of lessons being good or better. Overall, in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6) teaching is judged to be satisfactory, but there are significant differences in the quality of teaching between some year-groups. In Year 6 teaching is very good with all lessons being judged good or better and 55 per cent being assessed as very good. The picture in Years 3, 4 and 5 is comparatively weaker; although all lessons are at least satisfactory; only 26 per cent are judged to be good or better. There are a number of factors, which contribute to this weaker picture. The school has been in a transition period since it moved into the new building because it is now designated a three-form entry school, with an intake limit of 90 pupils per year-group. Previously, the intake limit for each year-group was 60. In Years 3 and 4 it has resulted in average class sizes of 35 pupils. Although the school has taken steps to give class teachers additional support by providing part-time teachers and learning support assistants, classes are too large and overall progress in pupils' learning is slower. In Years 3, 4, and 5, there is a higher proportion of part-time and temporary teachers than in other classes. Although the school takes appropriate steps to ensure that teachers are inducted properly and liaise with each other, almost inevitably there is some negative impact on the continuity of pupils' learning. Teachers in these year-groups generally do not have the same high level of expectation of pupils as in other year-groups to reach higher standards in their work, presentation and behaviour.

24. Teaching and learning are good in mathematics in both key stages and in ICT and English in Key Stage 1. In religious education and science in both key stages and in ICT, English and geography in Key Stage 2 they are satisfactory. In all other subjects there was insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement.

25. Teachers draw up appropriate individual education plans with the assistance of the special needs co-ordinator and are careful to include pupils with special educational needs

in whole-class sessions. As a result these pupils make the same progress as other pupils. Learning support assistants make an effective contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers' planning often indicates recognition of higher attaining pupils and work is matched appropriately but little additional time is devoted to them in lessons.

26. There is no specific support for pupils who have English as an additional language. They are all fluent speakers of English and have no particular difficulties in speaking and listening, reading and writing. In line with the schools' policy of equal access for all, these pupils are well integrated into lessons and make similar progress in their learning as their classmates.

27. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection in the overall quality of teaching and learning. Unsatisfactory teaching has been eradicated and the percentage of very good or better teaching has almost doubled from 12 per cent to 23 per cent. In design and technology and ICT in particular teaching has improved. Teachers are more confident because of the training they have received and are now secure in their presentation of subject knowledge. Teachers also match the work they set for pupils much better, catering more effectively for the different ability levels within their classes, especially higher attaining pupils. 'Setting' in mathematics, the system which groups pupils by ability across a whole year-group, is also having a favourable impact on raising standards in the subject. It allows teachers to match work more tightly to pupils' ability levels and set more challenging work. This was demonstrated well in a Year 5 lesson when higher attaining pupils made calculations to two and three decimal places.

28. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall with approximately three-quarters of lessons being judged good or better. This results in children in the nursery and reception classes making good progress in their learning. Teachers provide children with rich and exciting experiences across the six areas of learning. Creative and role-play activities are particularly beneficial in developing children's learning in a seemingly incidental way. Teachers make good use of stories, poems and rhymes to develop skills of speaking, listening and reading. Children develop their mathematical language well because teachers present them with practical activities that are relevant to their experiences, such as counting cakes and sequencing articles from the heaviest to the lightest. This enables good concepts to be built up for later, more formal calculation. Children's skills in ICT are also developing well because teachers demonstrate confidence and present well-matched tasks which are linked to previous work. However, there are weaknesses in teachers' planning for children's physical development because learning outcomes are too vague and not focused enough on what children need to achieve. The pressure on the over subscribed outdoor area also limits opportunities for good learning to take place. Resources are used effectively in creative and imaginative activities allowing children to experiment and discover for themselves. Musical experiences are also well planned, especially in the reception classes.

29. Teachers in Years 1 to 6 form good relationships with pupils and generally manage their classes well using positive strategies to encourage pupils to behave well and work hard. In a Year 6 science lesson the teacher used an amusing anecdote to explain the differences between noise levels today and those of a bygone period. These instances of relevant humour encourage pupils to listen and stimulate their learning and enjoyment of lessons.

30. The basic skills, particularly of numeracy, literacy and ICT are generally taught well by teachers. They lay the foundations for pupils' later learning by providing the necessary skills across a whole range of learning opportunities. This was demonstrated well in a Year 1 lesson. The teacher focused on the blend of initial letters at the beginning of words, such

as 'sw', 'st' and 'sl' to help pupils develop strategies in reading and spelling. She encouraged pupils to 'sound out' each letter combination to find the meaning of the word, resulting in 'st...i...ck'. The pupils soon adopted this approach effectively and used it to break down other unfamiliar words.

31. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly, usually working with a colleague in a parallel age-group class to ensure consistency of curriculum coverage. Objectives are shared with pupils at the start of the lesson so that they have a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn. Generally, teachers are well organised and have equipment already prepared so that there is no waste of time in the lesson. Suitably matched activities and worksheets are provided so that pupils can make progress at an appropriate rate for their ability level. On some occasions worksheets can be restrictive because they do not give pupils the opportunity to work freely and express their own views, especially in literacy.

32. Teachers have a good grasp of the subject matter that they are transmitting to pupils. They provide pupils with accurate information which enlarges their knowledge and understanding of the subject being taught. During a Year 5 history lesson the teacher spoke confidently about ration books and evacuation arrangements during the Second World War and when questioned by inquisitive pupils answered giving good illustrations to support her response. In Year 2 a teacher also demonstrated good knowledge of ICT when she explained the functions of a Roamer³ and set challenging problems for the pupils. They used this device effectively and articulated their understanding at the end of the lesson.

33. In the best lessons, teachers use methods that spark pupils' interest, in science for instance, when pupils undertake investigations with a specific focus in mind. Five different groups of pupils in a Year 1 lesson maturely conducted an experiment to find the speed and distance travelled by a toy car down a ramp. They placed the car on the ramp in different positions and measured the distance travelled. A designated higher attaining pupil in each group wrote down their results and conclusions, and then their results were shared with the rest of the class at the end of the lesson. Skilful teachers vary the activities in lessons, particularly during the afternoon when sessions are rather long. They do not keep pupils sitting listening for long periods but break up the sessions by using activities such as drama, research using reference books and computers or mini-discussions.

34. Most lessons move along at a reasonably brisk pace, though in general the pace tends to be slower in Years 3 to 5. Many teachers set sensible time targets for the completion of work in order to spur on pupils' rate of learning. Teachers use learning resources very effectively and at times very imaginatively to capture pupils' interest and consolidate their understanding. Learning support assistants make valuable contributions to lessons, especially the way in which they patiently support lower attaining pupils when they undertake specific tasks. However, they could be used more productively during the introduction of some lessons to assess and record pupils' progress and the level of their involvement.

35. Homework is used well to support and supplement pupils' learning. In Years 1 and 2 pupils learn spellings at home, consolidate number bonds and read their books to parents. In Years 3 to 6, more advanced calculations in mathematics are undertaken at home and some writing and learning of spellings, in addition to the reading of set pages in pupils' reading books. In Years 5 and 6 pupils produce quite detailed pieces of research work on topics such as 'Space' and the 'Ancient Greeks', using reference books and the Internet. Most parents appear to give their children good support with the completion of homework.

³ Roamer - a programmable robot used in ICT and other subjects

36. **Areas for development**

- Consider ways of reducing the size of some large classes and the number of part-time and temporary teachers.
- Raise the expectations of teachers, particularly in Years 3, 4 and 5 in order to promote a faster rate of learning.
- Share the existing good practice of teachers in order to attain consistently good teaching throughout the school.

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

37. At the time of the last inspection the curriculum was judged to be sound with good provision for under-fives. While the report was often positive in judging the opportunities offered to pupils, some aspects of provision were found to be unsatisfactory and requiring improvement. The standards and rate of progress in information and communication technology (ICT) were judged to be below average. Teaching in design and technology needed improvement in order to achieve a better balance between the elements of the curriculum. The report identified the lack of opportunities for higher attaining pupils to extend and apply their knowledge and pointed to below average skill levels in speaking and listening. The limited opportunities for pupils to reflect were judged as having an adverse effect on the development of spirituality. The action taken by the school to address these key issues has been successful despite a time of great upheaval due to a protracted move into new accommodation.

38. The quality of learning opportunities provided by the school is good. All subjects of the National Curriculum comply with statutory requirements. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are also met and there is appropriate provision for a daily act of collective worship. The new accommodation is spacious and well resourced and is having a positive impact on the curriculum. The provision of a large computer suite allows whole classes at a time to use computers, and an interactive screen ensures a more efficient delivery of ICT skills. This investment, together with staff training is a significant factor in raising standards in ICT. Teaching time allocation meets national recommendations, with additional time for the development of literacy skills provided within many different subject areas. Lessons begin on time and teachers ensure that movement around the building is well ordered and efficient. There is some concern about the length of some lessons. The first session of the afternoon is rather long for younger pupils and there is some loss of concentration towards the end of the lesson. Senior management as part of a four-year cycle monitors the curriculum effectively with the core subjects of English, mathematics and science receiving more regular scrutiny.

39. The school is strongly committed to providing equal opportunities for all pupils and for the most part pupils have access to the full curriculum. The staff value pupils as individuals. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have similar opportunities and access to the National Curriculum and the range of activities within the school. Individual educational plans are good and when pupils have immediate support within the classroom or work is specifically planned to meet their needs they enjoy success. In English and mathematics each pupil takes a full part in the lesson theme through tasks matched to their ability. In other subjects, however, pupils requiring additional support are sometimes withdrawn and miss parts of lessons. This was evident in Year 2 when four pupils were withdrawn for the larger part of a physical education lesson. The potential for loss of entitlement to the full curriculum is also present when the older juniors depart from their normal timetable to take part in 'booster' sessions. The school makes satisfactory provision for more able pupils. These have been identified, extra provision has been found

and a teacher with special responsibility for higher attaining pupils has been appointed. The evidence from national test results over recent years indicates a gradual rise in standards, which shows an improvement in the way the school provides for its most able pupils.

40. The National Literacy Strategy has been successfully implemented. The increased opportunities for speaking and listening are evident across the curriculum and recent test results have exceeded the targets set. While this represents an improvement since the time of the last inspection, the school has identified writing as an area of weakness and this has become a current focus. The National Numeracy Strategy has also been successfully implemented, although the school had already been chosen as a pilot school at the time of the last inspection. This provides a structure that enables teachers to improve their planning and procedures for assessing pupils' progress. It also provides a balance between the time given to mental activities, practical tasks and the consolidation of learning. Inspection evidence indicates that teachers are currently placing more emphasis on problem-solving activities.

41. The school makes good provision for extra-curricular activities and many parents recognise the efforts made by staff. Childcare clubs are provided before and after school, while opportunities to take part in choir, recorder and art clubs serve to enhance the curriculum. A range of sporting activities, including football, rugby, gymnastics, netball and athletics, are offered to older juniors by Sportslink coaches who teach skills during curriculum time and stay on to offer after-school clubs. Younger juniors are offered multi-sports clubs where they can develop the skills associated with a range of sporting activities.

42. Equality of opportunity is good. It underpins all aspects of school life and is reflected in the school's aims. The new accommodation has been designed with a lift and ramps that help to promote easy access to the upper levels, the computer suite and the environment unit. Boys and girls have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum and are treated equally; for example teachers are careful to make sure that all pupils have an opportunity to answer questions in oral sessions. Pupils from ethnic minorities are well integrated. The school is welcoming to all pupils, but does not have enough resources and images reflecting a wide range of cultural diversity. At present there are no pupils at an early stage of learning English, who need specific support with their spoken and written skills in English. All are fluent in spoken English and their progress is not hampered in any way.

43. The provision of personal, social and health opportunities is very good. The enthusiastic co-ordinator has successfully evaluated school needs and has produced a scheme of work that is relevant. Sex education, healthy eating and drugs awareness have been integrated into the curriculum with support from the local authority advisory staff and outside agencies. Teachers decide how to deliver the curriculum but most use 'Circle Time'⁴. When health topics are dealt with outside science, letters are sent to parents. The school has also communicated with parents over responsible Internet use.

44. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is very good. Visits are arranged to places of interest and visitors to the school enrich the curriculum. A major asset is provided by the new accommodation that includes a purpose built environmental centre. This is staffed in partnership with The Urban Environmental Centre and provides access to expert knowledge on environmental issues. The Children and Parent Zone is also part of the new building and provides a meeting place for pre-nursery children and a parent-toddler group. The unit is run by social services and the Primary Care Trust who provide support for pupils with behavioural problems. The advantage to the school of early intervention in the event of social and behavioural problems cannot be overstated.

⁴ Circle time - a time when pupils are encouraged to discuss their feelings and concerns in an open and secure environment.

45. The relationships with partner institutions are good. Pupils from Year 6 take part in an induction week in the summer term immediately before their move to secondary education. An appropriate exchange of information takes place when staff from the local secondary school visit to interview the leavers. During the year students from two colleges practise teaching in the school and groups of sixth form pupils gain valuable work experience from regular visits.

46. **Areas for development**

- Examine the length of time spent on some lessons which take place in the afternoon.
- Consider how withdrawal from some lessons affects pupils' entitlement to a full curriculum.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

47. The school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was good. At that time, provision for spiritual development was judged unsatisfactory and the school was required to address the issue. This has been done successfully and provision is now good. In all assemblies, there is now time set aside for pupils to sit quietly and think and pray about the issues that have been raised. Pupils contribute their own prayers chosen from a 'Prayer Tree' that is displayed in each hall. A candle is lighted to signify this special time and a quiet hush falls as prayers are read. Assemblies are planned around a weekly theme and speakers introduce a variety of religious and moral stories to illustrate the topics. Sometimes, there is too little interaction with pupils and they sit passively listening but a visiting minister capitalised on the junior pupils' enthusiasm for learning about the significance of Shrove Tuesday by involving some of them in making a pancake. In lessons too, teachers often allow quiet times for reflection. In a religious education lesson in Year 2, pupils quietly reflected on the dilemmas we often face when having to make a decision. In other lessons, the mystery and wonder of life is presented to pupils. Those in Year 6, pretending to be archaeologists uncovering ancient Egyptian treasures, treated the objects they uncovered in the sand respectfully and assumed the reverent approach that 'real' archaeologists had towards their amazing finds.

48. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Pupils clearly understand right from wrong and are involved in determining and obeying their own class rules as well as those set for the whole school in the 'School Code'. Rewards and sanctions are explicit and teachers are consistent in applying them. House points are awarded for good effort and this contributes to a corporate feeling in the school. Particular pupils who deserve special commendation for their efforts have their names entered into the 'Gold Book'. Moral issues are fully explored, usually during PSHE lessons⁵. In Year 1, for example, the teacher skilfully used the story of 'The Three Little Pigs' to instigate a discussion about bullying and its effects on others. The school has a deserved reputation for charitable collections, supporting national and local charities. A local hospice, for example, has benefited over the last three years from money raised by selling soft toys.

49. Pupils' social development is very well promoted. A school council of elected members from the junior classes is well established and has been instrumental in improving the school's practice. For example, the School Code has been 'translated' into child-friendly language at their instigation and table games for use at playtimes are being provided. There are plans to widen the representation on the council so that Year 2 pupils are involved. Teachers regularly offer pupils opportunities in lessons to work together, particularly in

⁵ Personal, social and health education.

practical activities in science, and they co-operate well. Outside lessons, pupils mix in other social groupings; during extra-curricular activities; at playtimes when older pupils act as 'buddies' for the younger ones; and on visits to local places of interest, such as Dudley Zoo to study the castle. Pupils do not have the opportunity of a residential visit, however. Year 6 pupils have a wide range of responsibilities, for example acting as tuck shop monitors, librarians, telephone receptionists, corridor prefects and coffee monitors for the teachers.

50. Provision for the pupils' cultural development is good and has improved since the last inspection. Subjects of the curriculum such as history contribute well to the development of an understanding of how our society has evolved and Year 5 pupils have considered how important it is to look after the environment and protect it. The contribution and importance of art and music to our lives is promoted. Pupils take part in productions, for example, at Christmas and some impressive sketches by the oldest pupils in the style of Lowry are displayed. The ways of life, traditions and culture of people in different parts of the world are explored too. In Year 1, an African story was used for a literacy lesson and Year 5 pupils have presented an assembly about France. In religious education lessons, pupils learn about the beliefs, traditions and values of Christianity, Judaism and Islam and they celebrate a variety of religious festivals in assemblies. However, until very recently, they have rarely had the opportunity to meet people from a variety of ethnic communities so that they can appreciate the nature of our multicultural society. They only visit Christian places of worship and only Christian ministers visit the school to take assemblies. The value of widening this programme of first-hand experiences was evident from a discussion with pupils in Year 6. One class has recently visited an exhibition that showcased different religions at 'Faith City'. "We found we knew a lot," said one.

51. Areas for development

- Provide more opportunities in assembly for pupils to become more actively involved.
- Continue to extend pupils' understanding of non-Christian cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

52. There is a good ethos within the school which cares, encourages and supports pupils. This shows in the very good relationships formed between staff and pupils. Child protection procedures are good. The health and safety of pupils are high priorities of the staff. Pupils are regularly made aware of their own and others' safety by reminders to take care while walking up and down stairways and holding doors open for others so that fingers are not trapped. Regular safety checks are carried out involving staff and formal risk assessments made. First aid procedures are good.

53. There are good procedures to achieve acceptable behaviour, consistently applied by all staff. Pupils have been involved in the review of the code of conduct and posters in every classroom are a daily reminder of the high expectations for behaviour. Assemblies are used well to regularly reinforce the message. As pupils move through the school, their personal development is monitored and supported well. Pupils value the system of gaining house points and are enthusiastic about the recently agreed change of names of 'houses' to those identified in the popular series of books about Harry Potter. The school has a policy for racial equality and this is implemented effectively to prevent racist behaviour. Appropriate steps are taken by teachers to ensure that pupils are protected from offensive materials on the Internet.

54. Procedures for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs meet statutory requirements and are good. Individual needs are identified early and appropriate action taken. The school has a culture of including pupils well and pupils of all abilities are valued. The special needs co-ordinator works closely with parents and outside agencies.

Pupils on the special needs register have good quality individual education plans that clearly identify learning or emotional and behaviour needs. They have measurable targets that are monitored by staff.

55. The school expects good attendance and punctuality, but this is still to be achieved by a very significant minority. Certificates are awarded for both regular and improved attendance. Pupils speak in praise of these awards. The poor rate of attendance has remained consistent since the time of the last inspection. Holidays during the autumn term and high levels of authorised absence notified to school by parents as illness, are a major contributor to the poor attendance figures. This has a direct impact on the standards attained by pupils.

56. Monitoring of attendance takes place on a regular basis but analysis is not sufficiently rigorous to raise levels of attendance. The computer-based system the school uses enables registers to be taken quickly and efficiently. However, the staff do not always adhere to procedure and check the register during the afternoon session. As well as being a legal requirement this has implications for the school's duty of care to pupils. There is no system of 'first day calling' in operation for parents to be notified of their child's first day of absence. Good working relationships are shared with the Educational Welfare Service but time allocated to the school is insufficient in relation to the significant number of pupils with poor records of attendance for whatever reason.

57. Overall, good progress has been made following the previous inspection. High standards have been maintained in the areas of child protection and health and safety and the school has retained the secure caring family ethos, despite growing in size and moving to a totally new building. The minor weaknesses identified then, in the lack of systematic rewards for pupils, have been resolved. Pupils are now more involved in the modification to the code of conduct and house system, resulting in a good whole school approach understood by all. However, little progress has been made in the monitoring of attendance. Whilst administration staff are conscientious in their duties by making phone calls, sending letters and supporting families there is still a lack of sufficient emphasis on raising attendance levels.

58. **Areas for development**

- Place greater emphasis on monitoring absence by contacting parents as soon as it happens; take advantage of the very good relationships with parents, agencies and community partnerships to raise expectations and stress the importance of regular attendance to school; make clear to parents the implications to their child of irregular attendance.
- Analyse attendance to identify patterns, groups by gender, ethnicity and compare with standards achieved in test results.

Assessment

59. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress have continued to be good since the last inspection. When the youngest children enter the Foundation Stage, checks are made of what they know and understand, and this information is recorded in their individual profiles, which follow them as they progress through the school. Statutory assessments are carried out in Years 2 and 6 and optional testing takes place in Years 3, 4 and 5. In English, mathematics and science, teachers test and record gains made in skills, knowledge and understanding, at least termly. There are comprehensive records of progress made in reading, and recently half-termly records of progress in writing have been introduced. Although co-ordinators monitor progress in all other subjects, there are still no consistent assessment procedures for recording progress. Procedures are being trialled for

ICT, design and technology and physical education. In mathematics, the assessment information is used to group pupils into sets. Published tests in mathematics have been used well in order to give a sharper focus to teaching and learning. Teachers assess what pupils know and understand when they enter their classes and then predict what they are expected to achieve by the time pupils leave. These predictions are reviewed on a termly basis after testing at the end of each unit of work.

60. The school compiles a good level of information which enables teachers to identify standards and progress according to gender or background. However, the information is not used as effectively to identify pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school's impression, which is probably correct, is that these pupils make similar progress to other pupils in their classes but there is insufficient monitoring of their performance to prove this hypothesis.

61. The assessment co-ordinators have analysed national tests in English and mathematics in order to identify what skills are needed in order to improve standards and satisfactory whole class targets have been set. This information could be used better in order to challenge individuals or different groups within each set or classroom, including higher attaining pupils.

62. In Key Stage 1, teachers use marking very well to inform pupils when they have achieved their targets and then how they can improve. In Key Stage 2, marking is used satisfactorily, usually celebrating pupils' achievements rather than moving them on. There are good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development.

63. Areas for development:

- Use of data to monitor the progress of ethnic minority pupils and identify their needs.
- The consistent use of marking to inform pupils how well they have done and then how to improve, especially in Key Stage 2.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. Parents' response to the inspection questionnaire and comments from those at the pre-inspection meeting show they are very supportive of the school. They are appreciative that the school works closely with parents, have confidence in approaching the school with problems and feel their child makes good progress. At the pre-inspection meeting for parents they felt attendance at school was good, with little absenteeism. However, attendance at school is poor. The rate is in the bottom 10 per cent of all schools nationally. This is inconsistent with parents' perceptions of it being good. Homework is regularly set and appropriate for the age of the child. The vast majority of parents appreciate the good quality of leadership in the school and also recognise that teaching is good. A very small percentage of parents think that there is an insufficient range of activities outside lessons. Inspection evidence does not support these views and extra-curricular provision is judged to be good.

65. Three parents' evenings are held each year where pupils' progress can be discussed and parents have open access at other times where they have an opportunity to raise concerns with staff. Written information provided by the school for parents about their children's progress is generally good, but there are differences in practice between some subjects and year-groups. This was the case at the time of the last inspection. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are well reported, with clear statements telling parents what their children can do and how they can improve. Regular newsletters are of good quality. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents give the parents appropriate information.

66. Parents' involvement in their children's learning is very good. Support is willingly given when asked, such as the parents who regularly prepare fruit for the younger children. The school works hard to encourage parents to get fully involved in their children's education. Parents are encouraged to help in classrooms and to approach staff with any worries or concerns they have. The partnership with the community base, 'The Family Zone', provides a wealth of opportunity. There are sessions to enable children to play with toys that many lack at home and the parents to develop skills that will support their children's learning.

67. Parents' views of the school are very positive. Many parents of pupils with special educational needs get involved in supporting their children's learning. They take part in termly reviews of their children's progress. Parents and teachers share information regularly about improvements in skills, knowledge and understanding.

68. Since the last inspection, satisfactory progress has been made. The school has retained the positive views of parents and continues to consult with parents on a wide range of issues. At that time a significant minority felt they did not have enough information regarding their children's progress. This number has now been reduced.

69. Areas for development

- Take advantage of the school's very good relationships with parents, agencies and community partnerships to raise expectations and stress the importance of regular attendance to school; make clear to parents the implications to their child of irregular attendance.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

70. The headteacher provides the school with good, dedicated leadership. There is a clear commitment to promoting high standards in the school and to building up a strong team of teachers which will further enhance pupils' achievement levels. The school is very well managed. The headteacher has developed well-organised systems which communicate clearly to teachers, governors, parents and pupils the priorities of the school. This is demonstrated clearly in the school documents. The well-planned, smooth transition from the old building to the new accommodation epitomises the very good strategic thinking of the headteacher. The school community trust his judgement because they know it is based on proper consultation and reliable analysis. The many strengths reported in the last inspection have been maintained.

71. The headteacher is given valuable support by the deputy headteacher who fulfils her role well, especially as curriculum co-ordinator and as mentor of newly qualified teachers. She has a good grasp of current trends in education and has ensured that a well-balanced curriculum has been maintained in the school. She works closely with the headteacher in the analysis of school performance and in shaping the school's priorities for the future. In general the co-ordinators fulfil their roles well and have a good understanding of their areas of responsibility. There is a good, sensible approach to developing the role of co-ordinators, which is based on a four-year cycle and the current school priorities. This means that subjects are reviewed periodically and action is taken to improve provision and raise standards. The senior management team fulfil their roles properly, but it is difficult for the team leader in the nursery and reception classes to monitor the work of colleagues because of her own teaching commitments. At present the headteacher and deputy headteacher are temporarily overseeing the subjects of history, geography and physical education due to staff illness and absence. This is appropriate in the short term but in the long term the lack of permanent leadership in these subjects could hamper progress.

72. The co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs is committed to helping pupils achieve as well as possible. She maintains the register of pupils with special educational needs appropriately and holds high expectations of the school's role in supporting these. However, there has been no formal monitoring of the teaching and learning of pupils on the register within the classroom.

73. The governors have a strong commitment to the school and fulfil their statutory requirements well. Over the years a good committee structure has developed which monitors and evaluates the work of the school. Key co-ordinators give presentations to governing body meetings which enable governors to keep abreast of current school developments. Governors also make random visits to school, working alongside teachers as voluntary helpers and observing lessons. Although there is no structured system for visits by all governors, it does allow governors to gain an informal view of the school during the working day. The governors are properly involved in shaping the direction of the school. The school improvement plan is presented to them by the headteacher for discussion and they confidently make their views known and offer suggestions for alterations or a shift in emphasis of school policy direction. The governors played an influential role in the planning of the new school building and supported the headteacher very well in negotiations with the various agencies.

74. The school vision of 'providing a happy and safe environment in which all children and staff are encouraged to develop their full potential' is largely achieved. Pupils and parents like the school and feel secure within its environment. Staff work well together and there is a good capacity for further improvement as the school expands and the facilities that the new site offers are increasingly exploited. The aims and values described by the school in the school prospectus are well embedded into the life of the school. There is equality of opportunity for pupils and staff; pupils are encouraged to adopt positive attitudes and acquire a very good set of moral and spiritual values, and children have a sound understanding of the world in which we live and develop reliable and responsible attitudes to other members of the school society.

75. There are good systems in place for the monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and senior staff. Observations of lessons are followed by constructive oral and written feedback and teachers are given a clear indication of what they are required to do to further improve the quality of teaching and learning in their classrooms. Judged by the high percentage of good and very good teaching in the school this system is proving to be successful, although a small percentage of teachers set their expectations of what pupils can achieve too low. The school has well organised programmes for the appraisal and performance management of teachers. An annual cycle of interviews, reviews, observations and target setting has been established over the years. After proper discussions, teachers are set specific targets related to their management roles, priorities of the school and individual requirements.

76. The school improvement plan is a well-constructed document which sets out the school priorities over a four year period. The action required is clearly identified and the personnel to lead initiatives are identified. There are realistic timescales for the achievement of targets and financial support is clearly earmarked. Monitoring and evaluation takes place at regular intervals against defined success criteria. It is a working document that shows evidence of modifications as circumstances change over the four-year period.

77. The school analyses its own performance well using both national and local data to pick out trends in school results and changes in the school 'make-up'. Senior staff and the core co-ordinators are provided with some of this information but they do not all have a deep

understanding of the systems for deciding on the overall level of school performance. In general, information from data is used well to set school priorities and identify the long-term needs of the school.

78. Systems for the management of school finance are good. Funding is used well to target areas for improvement. Up-to-date information is provided for governors and expenditure is monitored closely, with cut off dates clearly identified. Finance is delegated properly to key co-ordinators based on specific needs in order for their subject to be developed along the lines laid down in action plans. Day-to-day finance and administration are efficient and effective. Teachers have minimal administrative duties which allows them to concentrate on their designated role of teaching. Specific grants are used properly for their designated purposes. The most recent audit report of the 20th November 1999 rated the school highly for its financial management procedures. There were four recommendations for improvement and all were of a minor nature.

79. Induction systems for newly qualified teachers are very good. They receive full entitlement for release time and training. Their performance is monitored appropriately and their undoubted enthusiasm and innovative approaches are welcomed by existing staff members. These teachers are making a valuable contribution to the good quality teaching in the school. There are a good number of part-time and temporary teachers in school, many covering for absence due to teacher illness. Although the school does its utmost to ensure there is a good liaison and smooth transition between teachers almost inevitably there is some loss of continuity involved in the changeover between teachers of the same classes. This is particularly apparent in Years 3 and 4.

80. The school has made rapid progress in the last two years in developing its use of new technology. This is used very effectively in office systems, internal communications, in the school library and for the analysis of data and assessment of pupils' work. Teachers' planning also shows that an increasing number of teachers have competent ICT skills.

81. The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been addressed well. Standards in speaking and listening have improved significantly due to the effective school strategies. ICT provision and standards are much enhanced and opportunities for spirituality are now evident within the curriculum provision. In general, higher attaining pupils are given more challenging work and are achieving higher standards than previously in national test results.

82. The school is judged to give good value for money. The expenditure per pupil is below the national average. Curriculum provision and the quality of teaching are both good. Social and economic factors and children's attainment on entry are judged to be below average and pupils' progress overall is good.

83. The teaching and non-teaching staff have a good range of qualifications and experience to respond to the needs of the curriculum. Staff are committed, hard working and generous with their time. Due to staff absences the school are employing a number of part-time and temporary teachers. These teachers are properly inducted and demonstrate a good level of commitment in their work; even so, the rate of pupils' learning is slowed because of a lack of continuity and a change in expectations. All teachers have good access to professional development opportunities and a very good induction programme has been arranged for newly qualified teachers and those new to the school. The quality of the accommodation is excellent. Although it is unfortunate that the excellent nursery accommodation is separated from the reception classes, and the library area is adequate for the needs of groups of pupils but is not designed to allow study by a whole class. The computer room has transformed the teaching and learning of skills in ICT but during the

week of the inspection there were times when the facility was underused. However, the new accommodation has had a significant impact on the quality of the curriculum and enhanced opportunities for teaching and learning.

84. The outdoor accommodation has been very well designed, and there are benches for pupils to use during break times and shaded areas for shelter during the summer months. There is a school playing field for games lessons. The grounds have been sensitively developed and pupils are proud of their involvement. Pupils in Key Stage 2 use the large three-dimensional play apparatus, which includes chess, on a rotational basis. The outdoor play area for the nursery, and its overall safety floor covering provides wonderful opportunities for pupils to explore colour and different levels. Further playground markings to encourage imaginative play and team games are being discussed by representatives of the school council.

85. Pupils' work is highly valued and displayed carefully and attractively in the hall, classrooms and corridors. Together with the impressive indoor decoration, a colourful and stimulating learning environment has been created. Classrooms are well furnished and provide adequate space for teaching and learning. During the week of the inspection, the temporary caretaker and cleaning staff continued to maintain the building well and keep the site free from litter.

86. **Areas for development:**

- Share more detailed information of data analysis with the senior management team and key co-ordinators.
- Construct a programme of regular visits for all governors.
- Seek ways of reducing the number of part-time teachers and temporary staff.
- Consider a more efficient use of the computer room.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

87. The inspectors recognise the good level of progress made by the school since the last inspection, but to improve further the headteacher, staff and governors should:

Increase pupils' rate of achievement in junior classes, especially in Years 3 to 5 by:

- seeking ways of reducing class size and the number of part-time and temporary teachers;
- enabling pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning through increased opportunities to use computers and books for research;
- raising teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities so that learning is enhanced;
- sharing existing good practice so that teaching and learning are consistently good throughout the school.

(paragraphs 9, 17, 19, 23, 34, 5, 79, 115, 119, 121, 127, 133, 135, 136, 137, 154, 194)

Improve standards of writing throughout the school by⁶:

- using information derived from assessing the writing progress books to identify areas of weakness so that they can be addressed;
- taking every opportunity to allow pupils to write freely and at length, allowing sufficient time for them to do this across a range of subjects.

(paragraphs 3, 4, 31, 110, 115, 117, 119, 136, 162)

Raise the level of attendance in the school by reducing authorised absence.

(paragraphs 20, 21, 55, 56, 57, 64)

⁶ This issue has already been identified by the school as a priority for development.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	80
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	18	34	28	0	0	0
Percentage	0	23	43	35	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents slightly more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR-Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	45	497
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		63

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6	93

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	5.4

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
	2002	35	30	65

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	29	30
	Girls	29	29	29
	Total	55	58	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (93)	89 (94)	91 (93)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	30	30
	Girls	29	29	26
	Total	55	59	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (91)	91 (90)	86 (96)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89(89)

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
	2002	37	27	64

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	27	28	35
	Girls	18	18	21
	Total	45	46	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (73)	72 (51)	88 (75)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	29	28	31
	Girls	18	18	23
	Total	47	46	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73 (73)	73 (56)	86 (73)
	National	73 (73)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	468	2	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	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)	19.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	24.9

Education support staff: YR-Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	339

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	45
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65
Number of pupils per FTE adult	15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	879,856
Total expenditure	881,283
Expenditure per pupil	1,626
Balance brought forward from previous year	9,470
Balance carried forward to next year	8,043

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	504
Number of questionnaires returned	134

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	43	1	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	46	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	62	3	1	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	57	11	0	2
The teaching is good.	55	43	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	60	9	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	49	0	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	47	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	66	4	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	46	48	4	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	48	1	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	52	10	1	16

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

88. The Foundation Stage consists of a separate nursery and three reception classes. The nursery was established in 2000, and has part-time provision for 45 three-year-olds. Children transfer from the nursery to the reception classes either in September or January during the school year. Classes are organised by age, with five-year-olds and four-year-olds, working in separate classes. The nursery has close links with 'The Family Zone', which is located on the school site and caters for pre-school age children and their families from the local community.

89. Parents are very happy about the high level of care in the Foundation Stage, and the way young children settle into nursery and make good progress. This positive start is helping to create a strong partnership between learning at home and school. This is evident in the pleasure children gain from sharing their drawings and writing from home and in the favourable comments parents make about how well their children are achieving, particularly in reading, since starting school.

90. The standard of provision in the Foundation Stage is good. In the nursery, experiences are rich and exciting and planned with the six areas of experience in mind. There is a good balance between the activities children choose themselves and those requiring teacher support. Children are encouraged to make decisions and to experiment with their learning and so quickly gain in confidence. As yet, however, monitoring of the experiences children choose to visit is not tight enough, and teachers' ongoing assessment linked to learning in these experiences is sparse.

91. In the reception classes, experiences are built around the Early Learning Goals, with a clear focus on learning through first-hand experiences. There is scope for children to work at different rates and staff provide opportunities for this to happen. For instance, in their study of living things many children show the capability to work towards National Curriculum levels and this ensures good progress in their learning. Planning for outside experiences is not clear enough and this does not help with moving learning forward. In both the nursery and reception classes, a closer evaluation of the use of time and space in physical experiences would help to raise the quality of provision and ensure regular access for all children.

92. At the start of nursery, simple checks show that children achieve below average skills in all areas of experience, except in personal, emotional and social development, where attainment is average. Progress is good over time, and by the end of the reception year, most children reach the Early Learning Goals in all areas of experience. Personal, social and emotional development remains above average. Since 2001, attainment on entry to the reception year has been rising, with assessment results starting to show the benefits made by improved learning and progress because of the good nursery provision.

93. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is good, with pockets of very good teaching in both the nursery and reception classes. The staff team plan experiences well, but also builds very effectively on the learning children initiate themselves. Creative and role play activities in the café, for instance, develop learning in an incidental way, as children write out orders and use their mathematical skills to count out cakes for customers.

94. Learning is moved on well in the reception classes, where links between the spoken and written word are taught effectively. There are examples of children writing for a range

of different purposes, as they label, make lists and write instructions. The basic skills are taught well and, when given the opportunity, children use their knowledge of letters and their sounds (phonics) and recall simple, regular words in their independent writing.

95. The staff team quickly respond to any children with special educational needs and draw from expertise and support from outside the school. There are no children at the early stages of learning English as an additional language, but the school can tap into relevant expertise if needed. Boys presently account for 60 per cent of the nursery population and, whilst some activities are monitored, they tend to dominate the large wheeled toys and ball games in outdoor experiences.

96. The Foundation Stage is well managed and the staff team work well together. However, because the nursery and reception year are housed some distance apart, informal access is restricted. There is a need for the time and opportunity for the Foundation Stage manager to 'step back' and monitor provision. Then issues such as the best use of accommodation for physical development and the organisation of literacy and numeracy lessons, within an appropriate curriculum for younger children, could be considered.

Personal, social and emotional development

97. Teaching is good and the children are well settled and happy. This in turn is supporting good progress and ensuring that children exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year. A strength is the quality of relationships. Teachers encourage children to join in lessons and because their contributions are valued, they respond confidently and are keen to learn. Children learn how to take turns and share equipment, for instance when using ingredients and mixing batter for their pancakes. They act as monitors at fruit and drinks time, and take responsibility for tidying away. Children in the nursery make choices about their learning and are proud of their achievement. One child was very excited about matching 's' with *spider* and *spring* on the 's' table. The children are kind to each other and learn to understand right from wrong. In the reception class children listen to each other and begin to concentrate for greater lengths of time. They are pleased when others do well, for instance, when sharing their work on simple repeating patterns in feedback sessions (plenary) in mathematics. The children's behaviour is very good.

Language, literacy and communication

98. Children make good progress with their speaking, reading and writing skills and achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year. This is the result of good teaching in the nursery and reception classes. At the start of nursery speaking and listening skills are below average. However, teachers' good questioning skills and the high quality of experiences provided are encouraging a more detailed response from children. Role-play experiences linked to the café and the hospital provide good examples. Here children use their talk to gain attention, and negotiate their plans. Two policemen decide which motorist to check and interact with each other; taking turns in asking the driver questions. In the reception class children make good progress with their communication skills as they begin to sequence and clarify their thinking. This is evident when one child suggests 'we sometimes call a stem a stalk', or when another explains, 'the cress seeds look like little brown dots'.

99. In both the nursery and reception classes, teachers make good use of exploring stories and sharing poems and rhymes to develop skills with speaking and reading. In the nursery parents and children enjoy choosing library books to share at home. Children handle books carefully, hold them the correct way up and turn over pages. They recreate their favourite stories using pictures for cues. Older children in the nursery recognise their

own name and begin to link letters with their sounds. They use play dough, for instance, to recognise and cut out the letters 's' and 'c' and 'a'. The majority of older children in the reception classes read simple stories by themselves and have a good recall of everyday words by sight. Those who make a slower start with their reading are supported effectively by learning support teachers in class lessons and make steady progress. The children are learning that information can be retrieved from non-fiction books and the computer.

100. Good teaching in the nursery enables children to explore writing and make marks in an incidental way, for instance writing out bills or prescriptions in the café or in the hospital. Parents are pleased that their children are beginning to recognise and write their names after a short time in school. At the start of the nursery day, teachers record the date and weather and model simple written sentences. This learning is built upon in the reception year, and there is higher expectation for older children to 'have a go' with their early writing skills. However, children reaching average standards with their work still are encouraged to copy over and under writing when they have the capability to write on their own. In a similar way, more capable writers are not encouraged to explore different strategies, when attempting to spell unknown words and some are over-dependent on the teacher for providing the correct word.

Mathematical development

101. Teaching is good and children reach the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year. Incidental learning is used well to develop mathematical understanding. Children count the members in their 'family group' and suggest how many boys and girls are present. They use their mathematical knowledge across all areas of experience, for instance when counting the cakes on the plate in the café, or sorting and matching objects by colour and shape in child chosen activities. They begin to learn how to use mathematical language when sequencing in order of size or finding the heaviest and lightest. Children test out their thinking. For instance, when weighing, some suggest that all large objects are the heaviest. Others describe objects as 'big', 'middle big' and 'little'.

102. In the reception classes, children enjoy making patterns and shapes and using circles and squares to develop their knowledge and understanding of sequencing. They learn how to form their numbers correctly and count and order to 10 correctly. They explore using data in simple bar charts, and from this information can identify which fruits children like the least and the best.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

103. Teaching is good with effective links with the community and local environment. Children make good progress with their learning and reach the expected goals. In the nursery children use their senses as they mix ingredients to make pancakes. They look at what happens when they roll out and cut play dough, mix paint and experiment with pouring and containing water. They are fascinated by handling exotic fruits and looking at what is inside.

104. In the reception classes, children learn about how living things grow and change. They understand that seeds and plants need food and water to live. They achieve well, as they ask why things happen and how things change. A child talking about the plants in his garden remarks 'we haven't watered my plants in the garden and they aren't droopy'. After pertinent questioning, the teacher is told by other children in the class, 'because it rains at night'. Throughout the Foundation Stage, children develop their ICT skills well and in the reception classes use the computer suite to click on and label and print out work on plants.

Physical development

105. By the end of the reception year children are expected to achieve the Early Learning Goals. Teaching is sound. Planning for experiences varies and can be too vague when related to the development of physical skills in outdoor experiences. However, children learn how to move in larger spaces, are aware of working with others and learn how to guide and push wheeled vehicles. In the reception year, they negotiate spaces and move with greater control and co-ordination. They follow commands and stop and start. Due to the wide range of experiences, children gain confidence in handling small apparatus and gain in dexterity with, cutting, gluing and joining materials.

106. Due to the large number of children in the Foundation Stage, the use of the outdoor area is over-subscribed. The staff team plan for physical experiences in the hall, but have limited access considering the large number of children for whom they are catering.

Creative development

107. Teaching is good and so is progress. Children are expected to reach the Early Learning Goals. In both the nursery and reception classes, children explore a wide range of creative and imaginative experiences. Resources are of a good quality and accessible. In the nursery children regularly experiment with paint, collage and play dough. They listen to an interesting range of African instruments and suggest how sounds are produced. They explore famous pieces of art, such as 'Sunflowers' by Van Gogh, and use brushes and flat knives to create texture and colour in their own original work. Musical experiences are well planned in the reception classes, and children perform and create simple pieces with untuned percussion. Their progress is good and the children can stop and start on cue and produce loud and soft notes.

108. The school has generally maintained its good provision for children in the reception classes as reported in the last inspection. The nursery provision is comparatively new, being opened when the school moved to its new site in May 2001. The up-dated facilities and the opportunities provided for children on a part-time basis are having a positive impact on learning and standards are rising steadily.

109. Areas for development

- Provide more opportunities for the Foundation Stage co-ordinator to monitor standards in the nursery and reception classes.
- Improve the planning for children's physical development and seek ways of giving children better quality access to equipment.
- Develop suitable systems for monitoring and assessing children's learning experiences.

ENGLISH

110. The overall standards being achieved by pupils in Years 2 and 6 are average. This represents a significant improvement since the national test results that followed the last inspection. Reading in Year 2 is average and is better than the test results in 2002, which were below average. Writing, however, is below average which, in broad terms, matches the 2002 results. However, this is a more capable year-group and there are likely to be more pupils gaining the higher level of attainment (level 3) and fewer who do not achieve the expected level 2. Overall results are likely to be depressed by the number of pupils gaining the lower level 2⁷ – a higher number than is found nationally. Results in reading and writing

⁷ Pupils are graded on a three-point scale within each level of attainment, e.g at 2A, 2B or 2C. In Year 2, pupils are expected to achieve level 2B or above. The number of pupils gaining below 2B affects the overall standard.

had been improving between 1999 and 2001 but fell back in 2002 because that year-group contained a large number of pupils with special educational needs. This year is likely to see a recovery. In Year 6, the 2002 results were just below average mainly because of writing. The school has concentrated on this element this year and current standards are better. Results in the past four years have stubbornly remained below the national average, though they are average when compared with similar schools.

111. After the last inspection, the school was required to address the issue of below average standards in speaking and listening. This has been successfully achieved and standards throughout the school are now average. Some pupils in all year-groups are very articulate and most are confident and keen to join in discussions. Not all speak loudly enough for everyone to hear, however, and teachers do not always rectify this. Nevertheless, pupils in Year 2 often give lengthy explanations, for example in support of the man who swapped a few beans for a cow being a good and not a bad man. By Year 6, pupils discuss sensibly, listening to others' arguments and responding reasonably, as when expressing to inspectors their likes and dislikes about school. Many still find it difficult to talk about their innermost feelings, often because they lack a sophisticated vocabulary. In an RE lesson, for example, when tasting samosas and bhajis, they struggled to find a word other than 'nice' to describe the taste and had difficulty in expressing how they would feel if, like Muslims, they had to fast during the hours of daylight. This lesson illustrated well how teachers use every opportunity to promote speaking skills and to introduce pupils to the vocabulary that is specific to each subject. Pupils make good progress across the school. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection.

112. The overall standard of reading in Years 2 and 6 is average. All pupils enjoy reading and there are regular opportunities to read individually and in groups to adults in school. Reading diaries are well maintained and older pupils write short reviews in their diaries after they have completed a book. Teachers too keep satisfactory records, but the quality varies. In the best examples, pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses are recorded so that the teacher and the pupil know what to do to improve performance. Teachers of younger pupils, in particular, keep good records of the letter sounds and key words that pupils know. Pupils regularly visit the school library to change books and librarians from Year 6 are on duty at lunchtimes to help. The older pupils know how to locate particular non-fiction books using the classification system and even the youngest understand how to use the computer to record that they have borrowed a book. Book resources generally through the school are good and the library is an attractive and well-organised place. However, it has limited space for pupils to work there, for example to carry out research, and only a small group can be accommodated at a time.

113. Infant pupils make good progress in reading so that, by Year 2, most have a good understanding of individual letter sounds and even the least able look at the first sound of an unknown word to give them a clue. Most talk knowledgeably about their stories. However, some have books that are too easy because they are required to work through every book at a particular level of the reading scheme before moving on to the next level. A more flexible approach is needed. The great majority receive support at home for reading. The more able pupils read accurately and with expression, for example when reading a speech. Words like 'weirdest' and 'particularly' present no problems. Average pupils are not so expressive because they sometimes have to look closely at words to read them. However, one girl sounded out 'lumbered' successfully and worked out what it meant by reading the whole sentence. The lower ability pupils read word-for-word. Sometimes they use illustrations to help with a word like 'photographer', but others, such as 'glared' have to be supplied by teachers or adults.

114. Pupils make satisfactory progress through the juniors so that, by Year 6, there are some highly competent readers who read aloud with good expression, who are not daunted by words such as 'indomitable' and who understand such words because of the context in which they are used. Most pupils talk about a favourite book or author knowledgeably and give reasons for their choice. They have strategies for reading unknown words. One boy, for example, corrected 'intensified' once he realised that the word he initially said doesn't exist. The less able pupils struggle to read fluently and sometimes pass over words that they do not recognise but, with help, they manage to break up words, apply their knowledge of the letter sounds and build them again. A pupil with special educational needs pointed to each word while reading and sounded out *r-e-s-t*. Enjoyment of the story was not affected by this hesitancy.

115. Though standards of writing are just below average in Year 2, many pupils are making good progress because teachers are concentrating on developing confidence in writing and extending pupils' limited vocabulary. However, many have difficulty with the technicalities of writing although most understand how to demarcate a sentence. In practice, however, some do not include every full-stop and capital letter. Most write in simple sentences but a more able pupil includes some that are extended by the use of 'and' and 'because' in an appropriately 'chatty' letter that contains some imaginative phrases such as 'zooming past' and 'sprang up into the night sky'. Spelling is a problem for many pupils and some writing by the less able needs interpretation. Common words still present difficulties for some of these pupils, for example, 'woz', 'wen', 'mi' and 'wet' (for went). However, most pupils' spelling is phonetically correct and the narrative is readable. This is due, in part, to their good phonic knowledge. Handwriting is practised regularly throughout the school but the standard in everyday written work varies, depending on the expectations of the teacher. In the lower juniors, for example, some work on display is not of a high enough standard. Pupils in Year 2 are beginning to join letters and in Year 6 most have developed a fluent, legible style. There is, however, no requirement that they write regularly with a pen and most choose to use pencils.

116. Pupils make steady progress in the juniors that accelerates in Year 6 so that standards are currently average. Literacy skills are well promoted in other subjects, particularly in history. A poem inspired by a study of Ancient Egypt is evocative:

*Deep in the darkness
Mummies and treasures are found.
Death traps are waiting.
Spells on the walls protecting.
Secret entrances not found.*

117. Computers, too, are used satisfactorily, but mainly to present work neatly using a word-processor rather than to promote skills such as re-drafting. Classes do not have a specific time allocated for them to use the computer suite for literacy work. Pupils experience a good range of work and homework is used well across the school to support work in lessons. In Year 6, a more able pupil has produced a very good autobiography, mainly completed at home. It includes headings, photos, and interesting factual information. When writing a story, this same pupil produces work that is accurately punctuated with good spelling and, though paragraphs are not regularly used, there is some imaginative vocabulary and some more complex sentences such as 'We came out of the Captain's cabin, walked across the deck and got back in the rowing boat'. Most pupils find it difficult to write lengthy sentences and sustain the meaning but, in a very good lesson, the teacher correctly concentrated on this with very good results proving that, with help, several are capable of producing work at this level. Spelling remains difficult for some pupils. Words like 'freined', 'triped', and 'screamd' were found in one story written by an average pupil and a less able classmate displayed continuing problems with common words such as 'dose' (for

'does') and 'where' (for 'were'). Less able pupils also are not as accurate with punctuation and find it difficult to conjure up a more adventurous ending to a story than, 'He went home'.

118. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons by teaching assistants, enabling them to make the same progress as their classmates. In Year 6, for example, the assistant takes out a group during the activity session of the lesson so that they can talk about a story at length and understand how to answer questions based on it. Teachers are skilful at including everyone in the question and answer sessions of the lessons, including any whose first language is not English. Many of these pupils are in the higher attaining groups and have no difficulty coping with English. Some pupils in Year 6 are currently withdrawn for 'booster' lessons prior to the national tests so that they might achieve the expected level. They are taught well and display very good attitudes. Unfortunately, they regularly miss other subjects such as history. The school does not operate other national initiatives⁸ aimed at improving attainment in different year-groups but the National Literacy Strategy is effectively delivered to teach literacy skills.

119. Teaching is good overall in the infants. In the juniors, it is satisfactory overall with good teaching in Year 6. Pupils in most classes display positive attitudes and very good behaviour. There was some minor disruption in a Year 3 lesson caused partly because of the large number in the class but it resulted in a slow pace to the lesson. Teachers plan well and many share with the pupils what it is that they want them to learn. Activities are prepared that address the different needs of the pupils. However, in a Year 4 lesson, the more able pupils were simply required to complete more work than the others instead of having more challenging tasks from the start. Teachers have good subject knowledge and, particularly in the infants, they teach basic skills well. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, the teacher encouraged pupils to, 'stretch out the word' enabling them to work out the spelling of s-t-i-c-k. Resources are well prepared and, though too many worksheets are used in some year-groups stifling the opportunities for pupils to practise their writing freely, sometimes they are used well. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, a 'Wanted' poster for the Giant in 'Jack and the Beanstalk' inspired pupils to assemble a good variety of words to describe him.

120. Teachers have a warm rapport with pupils and this was most evident in a very good Year 6 lesson where humour was used effectively to convey to the pupils the meaning of a 'flashback' using an episode of 'The Simpsons'. Pupils who had seen the programme enthusiastically recalled the flashback incident and reinforced the concept in everyone's mind so that they then could include a similar episode in their story. Teachers in Year 6 are also skilful in the way that they use the literacy hour flexibly and allow pupils to take more responsibility for their learning. A good discussion occurred, for example, when a pupil asked about the necessity for always planning a story before writing it. The teacher wisely seized the opportunity to explore this question even though it eventually reduced the time for summing up the lesson.

121. Characteristics of teaching that vary in quality across the school, particularly in the juniors (with the exception of Year 6) are marking, expectations for the presentation and volume of work and the degree of challenge presented to pupils in activities. There is also a variation in the accuracy with which teachers assess work in the writing progress books that have been in place since the beginning of this year. This is a good innovation whereby pupils produce a piece of writing each half-term. Teachers assess the work and this enables them to track each pupil's progress. As yet, they do not identify in year-groups any common weaknesses that they notice occurring. Other assessment systems are good. Standardised tests are administered each year and the data is used to track progress and to enable

⁸ Additional Literacy Support (ALS) for pupils in Years 3 and 4; Early Literacy Support (ELS) for pupils in Year 1; Further Literacy Support (FLS) for pupils in Year 5.

predictions to be made for future attainment. Data is beginning to be analysed to identify areas of weakness. However, the co-ordinator is not fully aware of these findings because they are carried out by another teacher. In other ways, she leads the subject competently and has identified the correct areas for development. It is some time since she has been given time to observe lessons but she monitors the subject adequately through a scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work.

122. Areas for development

- Use information derived from assessing the writing progress books to identify areas of weakness so that they can be addressed.
- Enable pupils, particularly in the juniors, to take more responsibility for their own learning through increased opportunities to use computers and books for research.
- Take every opportunity to allow pupils to write freely and at length allowing sufficient time for them to do this.

MATHEMATICS

123. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 attain the standards expected nationally for pupils of their age. This represents an improvement since the year of the last inspection when results in national tests showed attainment to be below average for seven-year-olds and well below average for eleven-year-olds. Since that time standards have improved steadily and have in fact, risen faster than the national trend in Year 6. The gradual increase in the proportion of pupils gaining higher standards in national tests is due to better teaching methods and higher expectations of teachers. The 2002 National Curriculum tests results showed that pupils were reaching just below average standards in mathematics. The present Year 6 classes contain a slightly higher proportion of more able pupils than previous years. In general, pupils make good progress through the school. There is no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys, and pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils because of the support they receive. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language are reasonably fluent and are not disadvantaged in their mathematical progress. The planned provision for higher attaining pupils is beginning to yield results, though teachers could still expect even more from their pupils.

124. By the end of Year 2, pupils read and write whole numbers and recognise the value of each digit in numbers up to 100. They recognise number sequences and have good mental recall of twos, fives and ten times multiplication tables. Most pupils use suitable units to estimate and measure in length, mass and capacity, and use the vocabulary for distance and direction. They are familiar with some of the properties of two-dimensional shapes but are less secure in their knowledge of three-dimensional solids. Pupils at this stage show good development in knowledge, understanding and skills but many lack confidence in problem solving. Many pupils begin to use mathematical vocabulary and are confident when explaining their mental strategies. This is because teachers encourage speaking skills and allow sufficient time for pupils to articulate their ideas.

125. By the end of Year 6, pupils make calculations using the four rules of number and understand the relationships between fractions, decimals and percentages. They use standard metric measures, calculate area and perimeter, measure angles and classify quadrilaterals using appropriate mathematical properties. They are familiar with the language associated with probability, can plot and interpret graphs and find the median of a set of data. There are opportunities to use and consolidate mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum and this is particularly effective in science and design and technology. Many pupils still lack confidence in applying their knowledge to unfamiliar contexts, and teachers are making efforts to address this area of mathematics. Problems are often given 'real life' settings to provide familiarity, and the learning content of some

lessons is used to solve a problem in the plenary session. While both of these strategies are successful, many pupils cannot separate the component parts of a problem or choose the best strategies for arriving at a solution.

126. Teaching and learning are good overall and consistently good or better in the infant and upper junior classes. Learning is good when teachers are well prepared and the activities are well matched to the ability of the pupils. They are even more effective when the learning is challenging and the lesson proceeds at a brisk pace. An example of such an effective lesson was in Year 2 where the class was well managed and pupils were continually challenged to think about the partitioning of numbers and to discuss their methods of working. Further evidence was seen in Year 6 where good planning and well chosen teaching strategies ensured continuity through the phases of the lesson and a high level of application from pupils. In both examples pupils were productive, they sustained concentration and the majority attained the learning objectives⁹ set by their teachers. Attitudes to learning and the behaviour of pupils are good overall and often very good, particularly in the infant classes. Pupils collaborate well on mathematical tasks and this contributes to their social development.

127. The most significant improvement since the time of the last inspection has been in standards of attainment. The National Numeracy Strategy is now well established and provides a structure that enables teachers to improve their planning and procedures for assessing pupils' progress. It also ensures full coverage of the curriculum for mathematics and creates the right balance between mental and written activities within lessons. The setting of pupils in Year 2 and throughout the junior classes is promoting the efficient delivery of mathematical skills to all ability groups. While the accommodation and provision of resources has improved greatly, insufficient use is made currently of the school's outstanding resources for ICT. Additional support in the form of teaching assistants and parents has improved but there is some inequality of help within some classrooms due to the disparity in pupil numbers between classes. A particularly effective contribution to a lesson was seen in Year 2 when the learning support assistant was active in helping lower attaining pupils to take part in the oral phase of the lesson that was being led by the class teacher.

128. Planning is well matched to the abilities of pupils and often modified to take account of the variable rate of learning acquisition achieved by individuals and groups. The school was chosen to take part in a national project in which the mathematical performance of pupils was monitored. The accumulated data has enabled senior teachers to analyse areas of weakness and to re-focus planning and resources. This effective monitoring of the curriculum has been instrumental in improving standards and is being continued by the new co-ordinator who provides good management of the subject. Her role also includes responsibility for higher attainers and the current action plan identifies the need to focus on good practice in provision for the more able. The procedures for assessing pupils' progress are effective and the appropriate information is reported to parents. Marking is generally consistent and the provision of homework is regular and well matched to pupils' needs. Additional focus is given to the curriculum by the successful

129. Areas for development

- Make better use of ICT to support mathematical development.
- Give pupils strategies to apply their mathematical knowledge to unfamiliar settings.
- Continue to identify and to extend the more able.

⁹ Learning objective - the expected outcome of the lesson in terms of what pupils learn.

SCIENCE

130. In 1998 test results showed that by the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment was well below the national average. In 2002 attainment had improved and the number of pupils reaching the expected level 4 and the higher level 5 was broadly in line with that of other schools nationally and compared with similar schools. Overall standards have improved significantly since 1998 because of an increase in good teaching, the focus on scientific enquiry and improved accommodation and learning resources in the new school building. Currently standards across the school are average.

131. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 in summer 2002 showed that the number of pupils reaching the expected level 2 and the higher level 3 was below the national average. Pupils currently in Year 2 are judged to be reaching average standards; there are a higher percentage of more able pupils in this particular age-group.

132. Teachers challenge pupils in experimental and investigative work, introducing principles to help them investigate. Most pupils know that science is about asking questions and finding answers. As they observe the teacher varying the height of a ramp, Year 1 pupils begin to understand that the speed and distance covered by a toy car is changed. This concept is developed in Year 2 as pupils think and talk about how they can prove that seeds require light, water and warmth for healthy growth.

133. Skills of enquiry and investigation continue to be developed, as pupils in Year 3 measure their pulse rate after exercise, using basic scientific vocabulary such as measure, changes and fair test. Some pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 find it hard to work effectively when in groups because they do not have sufficient previous understanding and sometimes because of difficulties with the text. This is particularly evident when lower achieving pupils have no immediate support available.

134. Higher achieving pupils in Year 6 apply the principles of investigation as they explore materials that conduct and insulate electricity. A story told by the teacher led pupils to reflect on how they could measure the potential dangers of different sources of noise in their own lives. The animated discussion about noise pollution provoked by this story allowed them to explain their thinking to others and helped clarify their understanding.

135. An analysis of pupils' work shows that progress across the school is uneven. This is due to a range of factors including large classes and use of part-time teachers, particularly in Years 3, 4 and 5. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. They receive very effective support from learning support assistants and from other pupils in the class. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also make similar progress to their classmates. All are fluent English speakers and they are not disadvantaged in any way. At times pupils are withdrawn from science lessons for work elsewhere which limits their access to the full curriculum.

136. Pupils generally participate with enthusiasm, showing good concentration and application. In Years 1, 2 and 6 they are given an appropriate degree of independence, increasing their capacity to make good progress. The most frequent method of recording investigations is on a writing frame, designed for the purpose. These are a helpful support when pupils are thinking about new ways of presenting their work. On the other hand, it limits the progress pupils make in learning how to plan and carry out practical investigations. It is important that pupils are allowed to plan for themselves, set up a fair test, and assess their results and record results in their own words.

137. The school now places emphasis on scientific enquiry, and this shift is contributing well to the improvements in learning. Most teachers demonstrate an understanding of this in their planning. Some lessons are over-complicated, however, placing more emphasis on the process of the investigation than on the learning outcome. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally sound. Pupils in the main are well organised and managed, although groups in Years 3 and 4 are sometimes too big and this slows progress.

138. The overall quality of teaching is sound but there were examples of very good teaching observed in Years 1, 2 and 6 during the inspection. This very good teaching accounts for a number of pupils increasing their knowledge and understanding of science. The most effective teaching takes place in school when teachers have very good subject knowledge and know their pupils very well. Good teaching also occurs when planning is detailed and matched to the different needs of individuals and groups of pupils. Learning is good when the lesson is very well managed ensuring that pupils know what to do and how long they have to complete a task. When teaching is less effective, too much emphasis is placed on the process of the investigation rather than on the learning outcome and explanations are not sufficiently clear to allow pupils to follow instructions accurately.

139. The planned curriculum is well balanced and ensures a full coverage of the relevant elements of the National Curriculum. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. A revised system for assessing and recording pupils' learning has recently been introduced. There is effective leadership from the co-ordinator, who has a good grasp of the subject. Monitoring of teaching and learning across the school, conducted by the co-ordinator provided some constructive evidence of how the subject can be improved.

140. Resources for science are good and generally very well prepared for lessons. The allocation of time is appropriate for pupils in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6, where science lessons last for more than one hour many pupils tend to lose their concentration and learning is less effective towards the end of the lesson.

141. Areas for development

- Increase opportunities for pupils to develop individual skills of presenting their work and recording results in their own words.
- Ensure that activities and instructions are appropriate for pupils who require support with literacy skills but at the same time challenging for pupils who are capable of achieving highly in science.
- Consider withdrawing pupils from lessons at more appropriate times.
- Re-consider the length of time allocated for science lessons in Years 3 to 6 in order to meet the needs of primary age pupils more appropriately.

ART AND DESIGN

142. Only a very limited number of lessons were observed in art and design, and none were in the infant classes. Evidence from pupils' past work, displays and discussions with pupils have helped to inform judgements.

143. By Year 2 and Year 6, standards in art and design are average and similar to those found nationally. Pupils make sound progress overall, but in some year-groups, such as Year 6, standards and progress are good at times. These good standards often reflect the expertise and higher expectations of individual teachers.

144. Since the previous inspection, the study of the work of different artists and sculptors has maintained its strength. For instance, in Year 6, pupils create three-dimensional

landscapes in clay, drawing successfully from the images used by El Greco in his painting of Toledo. In a similar way, pupils in Year 2 create images on clay tiles after looking at the work of craftsmen during a visit to Ironbridge.

145. Over a period of time, there are pockets of interesting work being developed which are linked to the 'Environmental Zone' and the use of art and design to enhance the school environment. Pupils looked at the structure of buildings and sketched designs of decorative features that enhance their surroundings. Drawings linked to this work show steady progress with the use of finer detail and skills with line and tone.

146. Some weaknesses still exist that were identified in the previous report; in everyday lessons in art, skills are not built upon progressively year on year. This is evident in work in sketchbooks and in the development of skills in textiles, where gaps in learning affect the standards pupils reach. The development of painting shows more progression over time. This is because experiences are planned more regularly, particularly in skills involved with mixing and applying paint. ICT is used appropriately in art and design to enrich the curriculum and pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are developed satisfactorily.

147. Discussions with pupils show they enjoy art, because they are able to use their imagination and create something new for themselves. Some refer to the new skills they have learned, such as the use of perspective and the notion of a vanishing point. In lessons pupils act in a mature way and although keen to get on with their own work, take great interest in the success of others. Pupils with special educational needs make steady progress with their learning, as do pupils with English as an additional language. All of these pupils are fluent speakers and their development is similar to other pupils in their classes.

148. No teaching was observed in the infant classes because of the timetabled provision for art. In the junior classes teaching is sound overall and on one occasion very good. In the very good lesson, the expertise of the teacher was evident in the way new skills and techniques were modelled for the class, but pupils also had the chance to explore ideas and modify their work for themselves. In general, teachers' assessment of pupils' work and skills in art is still at an informal level and as such, does not help to guide planning for learning.

149. The subject co-ordinator has the commitment and expertise to provide support for less confident colleagues, but is shortly to relinquish the role. There is a new subject manager undergoing training. Further monitoring of the subject will help to identify gaps in expertise and learning and so help raise standards overall. Resources in art are appropriate for pupils' learning.

150. Areas for development

- Introduce a suitable assessment system to guide future planning.
- Ensure that pupils' skills are built up progressively through the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

151. A judgement on standards in design and technology by the end of Years 2 and 6 has been made after observing three lessons; one lesson in Year 2 and two in Years 3 and 5. Additional evidence includes an analysis of photographs; examples of past work; a review of planning; talking to the co-ordinator and, more valuably, talking to pupils in Years 2 and 6. Examples of work on display such as puppets in Key Stage 1, and the use of cams in Year 6, indicates a good level of finishing and a consideration for quality. All this evidence shows that standards are average and typical of what is expected for pupils by the end of Year 2, and that standards have improved to average by the end Year 6, with 'making' given a higher priority.

152. An analysis of long-term planning indicates that design and technology is undertaken each term, and that skills are developed term-on-term and year-on-year. For example the initial use of wood-sawing under supervision and measuring in centimetres is developed in Key Stage 2 by accurate measurement, often in millimetres. Pupils in Year 6 recognise different wood types and are aware how to refine the finish when using cams and pulleys to design a fairground ride. Pupils in Year 2 use reinforced corners and adhesives to assemble chassis for mechanical toys and are developing a good understanding of the differences between 'fixed' and 'free' wheels and axles.

153. Pupils of all abilities participate fully in all lessons, especially those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. They are knowledgeable about the skills needed for design and technology and understand the importance of choosing materials in order to plan for refinement. Older pupils shared their experiences about the properties of materials as well as the techniques they had acquired, such as when joining wood and card; and 'not to use too much' when using adhesives. In discussion pupils enjoyed their activities and shared their 'disasters', which had the desired effect of helping them to understand what had gone wrong and how to improve, essential requirements of designing and making.

154. In the lesson observed in Year 2, pupils were managed well, and the teaching of skills and technical language such as 'chassis' and 'axle' were used to good effect. In the two lessons observed in Key Stage 2 time was not used as effectively due to the over excitement of pupils, causing the teachers to interrupt the flow of the lesson to manage behaviour. This was not helped by the large numbers of pupils in Year 3. The development of speaking and listening skills were good with the teachers insisting on all pupils sharing their ideas in full sentences.

155. The co-ordinator has collected a good range of previous work from all classes and pupils have taken a pride in their presentation and used their knowledge and understanding to good effect. When evaluating their experiences it is impressive to witness comments like 'If I did this again I would change...', and when involved in group activities, 'we had our disagreements but we sorted them out'. The co-ordinator has yet to contribute to the quality of teaching and learning by monitoring lessons, but has provided a good policy and scheme of work based on national recommendations. She checks planning and prepares well, maintaining the good quantity and quality of resources, which are stored and managed efficiently - easily accessible to teachers and pupils. However, assessment procedures are still to be developed in this subject.

156. Areas for development

- Plan to enable the co-ordinator to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.
- Devise consistent procedures for assessing what pupils know understand and can do in order to build on skills in a continuous way.

GEOGRAPHY

157. Most pupils achieve nationally expected standards in geography by the time they leave the school. Since the last inspection standards by the end of Year 6 appear to have fallen slightly as a result of the many set-backs involved in moving to a new school building, a significant increase in pupil numbers and a corresponding increase in new teaching staff. These issues are being managed well and the school is to be commended for maintaining standards in line with those expected nationally.

158. As a result of good management, improved teaching and an injection of new resources pupils make sound progress by the end of Year 2 to reach average standards and progress from Year 3 to Year 6 is at least satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are well supported and make similar progress to other pupils.

159. Year 1 pupils locate and draw buildings on a simple map of Gornal, positioning the shops, public house and church in relation to their school. Year 2 pupils develop their knowledge of maps and plans through studies of local places. They compare and contrast Gornal with Ironbridge, recognising and representing similarities and differences on a simple map. Using maps they trace the world travels of 'Robert Rabbit' while on holiday. This leads them to extend their understanding of the links made between the United Kingdom and the other countries of the world.

160. In a Year 3 lesson pupils develop their awareness of different lifestyles and are thrilled by the idea of tasting foods associated with Germany. Higher achieving pupils locate Germany on a map and know that Bonn was the capital city previous to Berlin.

161. There was a mood of high excitement generated amongst Year 4 pupils when they debated the chemical reaction of compounded rubbish and its undesirable effects on the local environment. Such activities increase pupils' environmental understanding usefully as well as speaking and listening skills and boost their confidence to state a point of view.

162. By the end of Year 6 pupils have extended their skills in map work. They are familiar with atlases and use the contents and index pages successfully. They locate countries of the United Kingdom and the world and name capital cities, but they are not confident in using grid references to locate places. Insufficient emphasis is placed on the use of specific technical vocabulary and although pupils are introduced to geographical language at an early stage many do not confidently use precise terms when discussing their work. Much of the work is recorded on writing frames specially designed for the purpose. Although this is a useful way of introducing new ways of presenting work, it also limits opportunities for pupils to develop their individual skills of presenting their work and recording their findings in their own words.

163. It was not possible to observe lessons in geography in Years 1 and 2 during this inspection. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory in junior classes. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and co-operate well during group work. Opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills are used appropriately in geography. Previous learning is revised at the beginning of each lesson and built on so pupils make at least satisfactory progress. However, many lessons are too long in Years 3 to 6 and pupils' interest and concentration are not always maintained.

164. The curriculum is well balanced and enriched by class visits to places of interest. All elements of the National Curriculum are covered, providing pupils with suitable activities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills.

165. There are effective links with literacy through speaking and listening and written work. Geography also contributes to mathematics as pupils record results, using charts and graphs. In Year 6, use of the Internet for research contributes to the development of skills in ICT.

166. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Assessment procedures are being reviewed at present. However, monitoring of teaching and learning and use of assessment information are not yet used fully to inform teachers about pupils'

progress. Resources for geography are good. The school's Environmental Zone provides very good opportunities for developing skills of geographical enquiry. The accommodation is very good and gives teachers ample opportunities to display pupils' work and to use the new outdoor facilities.

167. **Areas for development**

- Plan opportunities for pupils to share ideas, and to record findings in their own words.
- Monitor teaching and learning and use assessment information to improve standards.

HISTORY

168. Standards in history are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils make sound progress throughout the school. Those pupils with special educational needs also make sound progress because they receive appropriately matched work in lessons and receive additional support from teachers and occasionally learning support assistants. The very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language make similar progress to their classmates. They are all fluent speakers of English and participate fully in lessons. Teachers ensure that all pupils are fully included in lessons; no specific group is overlooked.

169. The school has maintained a similar provision for history as that reported at the last inspection. Despite the turmoil of movement to a new building, which was only completed in May 2001, the good provision and breadth of curriculum has been maintained, even though the co-ordinator has been absent for much of that time. Standards were reported as above average at the last inspection in both Year 2 and Year 6, but this was based on a much greater number of lesson observations than was possible during the present inspection.

170. Pupils in Year 2 know how to find out about the past by using reference books, the Internet, by asking older people about their experiences and by looking at photographs. Higher attaining pupils correctly point out that photographic evidence can only be used for the recent past because cameras were not available a long time ago. Pupils tell the story of Captain Scott clearly and his brave group of explorers who reached the South Pole only to find that another explorer had beaten them and hoisted his own country's flag. They correctly explain that he and his men died on the return journey through lack of food and the cold. Pupils have a sound sense of the passage of time but it is only the more able pupils who can estimate when they were born and locate the date on the timeline of the last two decades.

171. In Year 6, pupils understand the work of archaeologists and know that they must take greater care when working on an excavation site, using brushes and probes to remove the soil around relics of the past. They use technical terms correctly to describe historical features, such as artefacts and hieroglyphs in their studies of Ancient Egypt. Through using reference books, radio tapes and some drama activities, they gain a clear understanding of the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in Egypt and the value of this find to Howard Carter and his fellow Egyptologists. Pupils' sense of the passage of time is soundly developed. On a timeline, they locate some significant events of history of the last 2000 years, such as the Second World War, the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb and higher attaining pupils even locate Tudor times, but they are not able to plot the relevant times for the Roman and Viking invasions of Britain.

172. It is not possible to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching and learning because an insufficient number of lessons were observed during the inspection. Of the three observed, two were very good and one was satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach enthusiastically about events of the past, transmitting

interesting and accurate information to pupils. They use an investigational approach and encourage pupils to find information for themselves by using resources such as books, photographs and computer programmes. In one very good lesson, the teacher set up a simulated 'archaeological dig' and pupils took turns to 'unearth' artefacts such as a scarab beetle and a medallion. This stimulated pupils' interest and gave them first-hand experience of finding how the past can be unearthed. Lessons are well planned and tasks cater for all ranges of abilities within the class. Classes are well managed and pupils work hard and concentrate well. In satisfactory lessons, the pace is a little slower and tasks are not sufficiently varied to retain pupils' interest over the whole length of the lesson.

173. Pupils have positive attitudes and enjoy history lessons. They work well together, discussing elements of their work sensibly. They are very keen to answer teachers' questions but do not shout out or interrupt. Their behaviour is usually good.

174. There is a good, varied curriculum which builds on pupils' experiences through the school. Adequate provision is made for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. It is enriched by visits to places of local interest, visitors who take on the role of historical characters and special focus days when pupils dress in the style of the period. Learning resources are good and are generally used well to enliven lessons. The new accommodation is excellent and provides teachers with space to display pupils' work, artefacts and posters related to historical topics.

175. The deputy headteacher is acting co-ordinator in the absence of a permanent member of staff to lead the subject. An action plan for development has been produced but it does not focus sufficiently on raising standards in the subject. Assessment procedures are informal, although the school sees the development of formal systems as a long-term goal.

176. Areas for development

- Appoint a permanent history co-ordinator.
- Introduce a manageable assessment system.
- Focus action planning more tightly to the raising of standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

177. Standards in ICT are broadly average at the end of both the infant and junior stages. This represents an improvement since the time of the last inspection, when attainment at the end of Year 6 was judged to be below average. The provision of a computer suite and the growing confidence of the teaching staff have been significant factors in bringing about this improvement. The suite is sufficiently well resourced to allow whole classes at a time to use computers, and the additional provision of an interactive screen ensures a more efficient delivery of ICT skills.

178. In the lower infant classes pupils use a simple graphics package to design and label a vehicle in order to enhance their understanding of 'pushing' and 'pulling' forces. In Year 2 pupils control direction and distance by entering a sequence of instructions into a programmable robot and observing the outcome. They consolidate this knowledge by using the mouse to control changes of direction across the computer screen. During the course of the year, infant pupils use the computer to word-process stories and to present information in the form of graphs. The majority of pupils make good progress at this stage.

179. In the junior department pupils learn to refine their word-processing skills by amending and improving text in literacy lessons. They design Christmas cards and use graphs to represent the data from a traffic survey. Studies of the Tudor period in history are well supported when pupils use their research skills to find information and clip-art for their

projects. Word-processing skills are extended higher up the junior department when changes of size, font and style are used to give effect to the writing of fables, prayers and recipes. Older pupils research websites to support their studies of the Second World War in history and to discover facts about a foreign country in geography. In Year 6 pupils use a spreadsheet to calculate house points and create their own newspaper pages to report on the discovery of an Egyptian pharaoh. In support of an investigation in science, they monitor noise levels in different environments using a sound meter. There are few opportunities however, to use e-mail and to engage in control technology. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress.

180. Teaching and learning are good in the infant classes and are satisfactory in the junior classes. Teaching is satisfactory when classes are soundly managed and tasks are matched to ability. Good teaching was demonstrated in Year 1 when the teacher's confidence and enthusiasm was transmitted to her pupils and their pace of learning increased. Attitudes to learning throughout the school are at least satisfactory and often good. Pupils show well-developed collaborative skills when working at the computer and this contributes to their social development.

181. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum for ICT. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress. Higher attaining pupils are not always extended, however, and opportunities are missed to use the computer as an outstanding resource to engage in problem solving. The co-ordinator provides sound management and has produced a coherent program of work but some ICT strands lack progression in skill development. This deficiency should be addressed when current plans are implemented to introduce procedures to assess and record pupils' progress. The enthusiasm of pupils and the very good resources present favourable conditions for teachers to maximise opportunities for pupils to use computers across the curriculum.

182. Areas for development

- Develop procedures for assessing and recording progress in ICT.
- Ensure staff awareness of the progression of skill development within the strands of ICT.
- Extend opportunities for pupils to use e-mail and control technology.
- Encourage teachers to maximise opportunities to support other areas of the curriculum.

MUSIC

183. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards are average in music and are similar to those found nationally. Some aspects of music are good, such as singing in the choir and the way in which pupils perform confidently with others. A mature approach is evident in Year 6, when boys and girls work together confidently and add an effective percussion accompaniment to a favourite song.

184. Standards in speaking and listening have improved since the previous report, and no longer inhibit pupils' ability to express their ideas and feelings in response to music. For instance, by the end of Year 6, pupils evaluate their own performance and that of others, use technical terms, such a pulse beat and dynamics, and respond in a critical way to the mood of different pieces.

185. By Year 2, regular experiences with untuned instruments enable pupils to handle instruments carefully and contribute appropriately in lessons. Lessons move on at a good pace and so teachers can concentrate on developing new skills. This was evident in a Year 2 lesson, when pupils made good progress as they drew from their past experience with

handling and using instruments, and developed new skills linked to exploring how many sounds their instruments make.

186. Singing is promoted successfully across the school, with the subject manager's expertise evident in encouraging the good quality of singing in the choir. Pupils sing tunefully, enter on cue and learn how to improve their diction and breathing techniques. These are then put to good use in the production of simple rounds and two and three-part songs. Music is often an integral part of the 'Friday Assembly', when pupils' performance adds to the quality of experience.

187. In school, music is valued for its creative links with other subjects in the curriculum. History lessons about the Second World War are enhanced by the contribution of a visiting musician, who performs war-time songs, such as, 'Run rabbit run' and 'The White Cliffs of Dover' to the pupils' delight. All school groups, including pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, have the opportunity to play a musical instrument and to sing in the school choir.

188. The quality of teaching is sound overall and when teachers have confidence and expertise in the subject, teaching is good. In good lessons, teachers model skills successfully, and build on learning in a progressive way. For instance, firstly introducing the verses and chorus of a song, then experimenting with different rhythms and finally enabling pupils to use different percussion instruments for accompaniment. As yet teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment in music is informal and does not identify the next step in planning. ICT is used appropriately in lessons to extend pupils' learning.

189. The co-ordinator has expertise and the subject is managed effectively. In shorter music sessions, often related to singing and action songs, learning objectives are less clearly thought out and planned. Resources are appropriate to meet the pupils' learning needs.

190. Areas for development

- Develop assessment systems that help to inform the next step in teachers' planning.
- In shorter sessions, plan more clearly for specific learning outcomes.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

191. Standards in physical education are average and typical of those found nationally across the full range of activities required by the National Curriculum. Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to improve their performance in all aspects of physical education, including swimming.

192. During the period of the inspection, two lessons were observed in each key stage involving gymnastics, dance and games skills. Standards in gymnastics and games skills were average, standards in dance in Year 6 were good. Progress is satisfactory for all pupils including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

193. In the two lessons seen in Year 2, teachers had clear teaching objectives and pupils were well managed. Pupils used space safely and were made aware of the effects of exercise on their bodies and explained the benefits of 'warming up' and 'cooling down'. In discussion, all pupils enjoyed their activities and worked well in pairs, although sometimes a little noisily. The teachers asked pupils to demonstrate their skills, giving pointers to others as to how they might improve their own performance. Gains in skills, both in gymnastics and

passing and catching with large balls were evident before the end of each lesson. There was also clear evidence that the quality of movement improved as the lessons progressed.

194. In the two lessons observed in Key Stage 2, activities were planned well to build on previous skills and experiences. Pupils responded positively when challenged to refine the quality of their movement, and they enjoyed their activities, collaborating well when combining with others. In Year 6, the quality of dance was good. All pupils including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language made good progress. They interpreted the music expressively, and linked their movement to their knowledge of Ancient Egypt. Very good facial expression, and accentuated hand and limb extension typified the contrasting movement of pharaoh and slave. In the Year 5 lesson, pupils were undertaking their first gymnastics lesson since the early autumn term and initially the movement was laboured, the pace was slow and unsatisfactory for pupils of this age. Eventually, the quality returned and good questioning and prompting by the teacher resulted in refinement. By the end of the lesson pupils had made sound progress, and linked balances, jumps and rolls into sequences which they rehearsed in groups with increasing control. In both these lessons there was evidence that pupils are capable of quality movement when they are managed well and the pace of the lesson is maintained throughout.

195. There is evidence so show that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met by the rotation of activities so that gymnastics, dance, games and outdoor adventure skills are acquired term-on-term, and year-on-year. A new policy gives useful advice. Outside coaches provide very good experiences that include mixed games skills for pupils in Years 3 and 4, and more specific games skills such as football and basketball in Years 5 and 6. These skills are then available as after-school activities with tournaments against other schools, encouraging competition and the development of team building skills. These activities are further developed during the spring and summer months involving pupils in hockey, rounders, netball and cricket. Swimming is planned for pupils in Year 4 and there is evidence of satisfactory progress.

196. The accommodation for physical activities is very good. One large hall and two smaller halls, one with a heated linoleum surface particularly suited to dance, are available, and there are adequate outdoor surfaces which have yet to be marked for team games. A school field enriches the facilities, and is ideally landscaped for sports days. The resources for physical education are good.

197. Although assessment strategies are being trialled in Year 4, there are no consistent procedures for recording gains in skills in physical education. Teachers use pupils to demonstrate their skills and there is a developing trend of encouraging pupils to comment on and evaluate the quality of movement of others.

198. **Areas for development**

- Devise consistent procedures for assessing attainment in order to record what pupils know, understand and can do and then to build on skills in a challenging and continuous way.
- Maintain a good pace to lessons by insisting on good behaviour.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)

199. Pupils in Year 2 and in Year 6 are achieving the standards specified in the agreed syllabus for Dudley schools. Standards have therefore been maintained since the last inspection. Too few lessons were seen to form a secure judgement about teaching throughout the school but, through discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of their work, it is

clear that pupils make satisfactory progress towards a sound understanding of Christianity. Year 2 pupils acknowledge that Jesus' teachings specify how we should live our lives and, in particular, how we should treat other people. The story of 'The Good Samaritan' enables them to appreciate that everyone is our neighbour. They also recall stories from the Old Testament, such as those of Noah and Joseph and explain some of the rituals associated with Christianity, such as baptism.

200. As a result of a good lesson in Year 1, pupils learnt about the Jewish faith. Building on their own knowledge of Christianity, they were able to contrast a church with a synagogue, the Bible with the Torah and the Christian symbol of the Cross with the Jewish Star of David.

201. Pupils make steady progress in the juniors so that by Year 6, they understand more about Judaism, for example, the rules associated with food, and their understanding of Christianity has widened. They explain, for example, the symbolism of the bread and wine offered by Jesus to his disciples at the Last Supper. In a good lesson about Islam, one pupil said, "Different people believe different things," and in a conversation with an inspector, another said, "We learn to be more tolerant when we understand why people have different ways of living." These are valuable insights, helping pupils to develop an awareness of the variety of beliefs and customs in our multicultural society.

202. Pupils are interested in the subject. In Year 2, they displayed good attitudes and a willingness to talk sensibly in groups of three when considering the concept of sacrifice linked to a well-known secular story. Similarly, in Year 4, pupils worked amicably when sorting and then writing the sentences of the Lord's Prayer into the correct order. In this lesson, the teacher organised a more practical activity for the pupils with special educational needs who found writing difficult. The sentences were printed and the pupils stuck them into books in the correct sequence. Pupils with different needs and different ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated into lessons and they make similar progress to their classmates. ICT is used appropriately to further pupils' learning in religious education.

203. The co-ordinator has achieved a great deal since her appointment. She has re-written the school's programme of work based on the agreed syllabus and constantly asks colleagues to evaluate whether or not activities have been successful so that amendments can be made. However, there is no formal system for assessing the standards and the progress that pupils make and computers are not being used regularly to support the subject. The co-ordinator has encouraged colleagues to plan for quiet times of reflection in lessons and inspectors observed this. RE is therefore contributing well to pupils' spiritual development. Assemblies often support the work in RE and stories are drawn from various faiths. During the inspection, for example, pupils learned about Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday and heard the story of Guru Nanak. Resources are adequate although more religious objects would be beneficial. Not many displays of work were seen around the school, indicating that the subject does not have as high a profile as it might. However in the Year 1 classrooms, the displays clearly demonstrated the work that had taken place around Christian baptism. One Year 6 class has visited an exhibition entitled 'Faith City' and they benefited from the practical activities arranged by the representatives of the different religions. Pupils also visit a local church but there are no opportunities to visit the places of worship associated with other faiths. This was highlighted at the last inspection.

204. **Areas for development**

- Encourage the use of displays throughout the school to raise the profile of RE.
- Establish links with places of worship other than a church so that pupils may visit.
- Evaluate and adapt the newly introduced programme of work so that it fully meets the needs of the pupils.
- Develop an assessment system.