

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wednesbury

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 103993

Headteacher: Mrs Jane Dalloway

Reporting inspector: Mr Tony Painter
21512

Dates of inspection: 14th – 17th October 2002

Inspection number: 246340

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 – 11

Gender of pupils: mixed

School address: Manor House Road
Wednesbury
West Midlands

Postcode: WS10 9PN

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Paul Pidcock

Date of previous inspection: 29th November 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Tony Painter 21512	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Music Physical education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
Ernie Marshall 14141	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
David Matthews 18505	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Raminder Arora 16773	Team inspector	English English as an additional language Geography History Special educational needs	How well is the school led and managed?

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	18
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	22
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	23
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school for pupils between three and eleven years although only half of the pupils are Catholic. It is around the national average size with 213 full-time pupils. In addition, 14 part-time nursery children are taught by learning support practitioners. The school is slightly smaller than it was at the time of the last inspection because the number of children entering the school has fallen. Pupils are mostly from white, English speaking backgrounds and come from a wide area of social diversity around the school, most from very disadvantaged areas. Fifteen pupils come from families where the home language is not English, mostly Bengali, Punjabi and Gujarati. This is above average but few of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals, at 17 per cent, is average. The attainment of children joining the school is below that expected of children of three year olds. Seventy-nine pupils have identified special educational needs, particularly behavioural concerns. This is higher than average; however, only one pupil has a statement of special educational need, for physical needs. The school is a part of the Wednesbury Education Action Zone (EAZ).

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education and gives sound value for money. There are strengths in pupils' personal development and, as a result, pupils have good attitudes to learning. Satisfactory teaching enables pupils to achieve average standards by the time they leave the school. Very good leadership and effective management are developing teamwork and this is leading to a shared view of how the school can improve.

What the school does well

- Very good leadership and good management are steering the school to further improvements.
- The governing body is closely involved with the school and has good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The school cares for pupils well.
- Good provision for pupils' personal development encourages them to want to do their best.
- Very good efforts to improve attendance are having a positive effect.

What could be improved

- Teachers' planning of the curriculum to ensure that pupils of all abilities make systematic progress in all subjects through the school.
- Teachers' strategies to control classes and improve behaviour, which are not sufficiently consistent throughout 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 inspected in September 1998 and made subject to special measures because it was failing to provide a satisfactory standard of education. It was monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectors and inspected again in November 2000 when the special measures were removed. However, despite the progress made, the inspection identified continuing weaknesses in teaching and standards, particularly of pupils aged five to seven. The school has made satisfactory progress since that time, despite very substantial changes of staff, including headteacher and deputy headteacher. The new headteacher took post in September 2002. She has quickly introduced a clear sense of direction for the school's improvements and good teamwork. The school's strategy for teaching pupils with special educational needs has been reviewed and improved. Teaching throughout the school has improved with more good and better teaching and there are indications of higher attainment in pupils' current work. However, variations in teaching are still apparent that restrict pupils' progress over time. Systems for monitoring attendance have improved substantially and are now very good. This is having a positive effect on the attendance figures, which are currently close to the national average.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	C	C	C	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	D	D	E	E	
Science	E	B	D	D	

Children starting the nursery have attainment below that expected for three year olds and many have very restricted experiences. They make satisfactory progress in the nursery and reception classes but their attainment when they begin Year 1 is still below the expected levels. Pupils' overall attainment at age seven, as shown in the national assessments, is still below average although they reach average standards in English. By the age of eleven, pupils' results in the tests show average attainment in reading although other subjects are below average. Mathematics and science results have been somewhat weaker because pupils have not had enough opportunities to apply skills to investigations and problems. Over recent years the results of the tests at age eleven have been improving faster than the national trend. However, the 2002 results were weaker, particularly when compared with similar schools, because the group of pupils contained a larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Increased analysis is helping teachers to set higher and more challenging targets that the school is likely to meet next year. These are already showing some effect, as inspection findings show that standards are average in English, science and mathematics. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those few who are new to learning English are supported effectively to integrate into their classes and make satisfactory progress with the other pupils.

Standards in music, art and design, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT) match those expected for pupils aged eleven and they achieve satisfactorily. Standards in history, geography and design and technology are lower because the range of opportunities offered to pupils is too restricted.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Attitudes are good and pupils are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Pupils are polite and considerate, and behaviour around the school is good. When teaching is weaker, there is some unsatisfactory behaviour by a minority of pupils in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are good and pupils work and play together well. They include pupils of all backgrounds naturally in all aspects of their activities. Pupils' independence is restricted by the limited opportunities they are given to take responsibility for aspects of their learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is improving and current figures are close to the national average.

Behaviour is only unsatisfactory in a few lessons where teachers do not use consistent strategies to manage pupils. Although there were seven exclusions last year, these related to few pupils and incidents. There have been no exclusions this year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is satisfactory, although nearly two fifths of lessons were good or better, particularly in Year 1 and Years 5 and 6. This enables the school to meet all pupils' needs and begin to raise attainment through the school. However, variations in teaching quality restrict the pace of improvements and pupils could still do better. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. English and mathematics teaching is satisfactory overall, with sound use of national advice on literacy and numeracy in lessons. However, limited opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects such as history and geography restrict their writing development. Teachers do not consistently use information about how well pupils are doing to plan further work at challenging levels. They plan too few ways for pupils to develop their investigational skills in subjects such as mathematics and science. This restricts learning, particularly for the higher attaining pupils.

Throughout the school, teachers give clear instructions and have effective resources to help pupils to learn. Most pupils respond well to this and are keen to work hard. Often teachers' questioning is well focused on making pupils think carefully. In the best lessons, there is a sense of pace and excitement that captures pupils' attention and leads to good learning. In these lessons, teachers make particularly good use of praise to reward pupils' efforts and this encourages them, helping them to learn faster and more effectively. In a few lessons throughout the school, however, teachers are not sufficiently consistent in their behaviour management. As a result, the pace of these lessons drops as teachers need to spend excessive time in controlling the class.

A thorough review of the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is improving the ways that teachers ensure that their needs are fully met and they are taught satisfactorily. Support staff, for example, are often sensitively and effectively used in classrooms. Ethnic minority pupils and those few pupils who are new to learning English are fully included in all aspects of lessons and make satisfactory progress with the other pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Teachers plan a satisfactory range of activities although some subjects, such as history, geography and design and technology, are not given sufficient attention.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Provision is satisfactory and recent reviews are helping teachers to meet pupils' needs more effectively.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The few pupils who are new to English are given satisfactory support to help them to settle and learn quickly. They play a full part in all lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. Effective provision within a secure and caring environment helps pupils of all backgrounds to gain maturity. The school is good at including all pupils in activities but pays only limited attention to increasing pupils' knowledge of the different cultures in Britain today.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school cares for its pupils well. Staff know pupils well as individuals and pay good attention to health and safety matters.

Very good strategies to monitor and improve attendance are having a positive effect. The school makes good efforts to involve parents in their children's learning and gives good information. Increased analysis of the school's results is identifying ways to improve the curriculum but the use of information to match work to

pupils' needs is limited. Links with Wednesbury EAZ contribute to the curriculum, particularly in music and ICT.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The new headteacher's very effective leadership and good management help the school to identify how to improve. She is well supported by other staff, including the new deputy, who take an increasing role in identifying and supporting developments.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and play an active role in ensuring improvements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Improved analysis of results and monitoring is giving more information on how well the school is doing.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial management is good and effective reviews of spending ensure that the school uses all its resources well.

The new headteacher has made a very good start to widening the management of the school and establishing a strong atmosphere of teamwork to promote improvements. Staffing, accommodation and resources are adequate although there are some accommodation deficiencies such as a lack of secure play space for Foundation Stage children. Contributions from Wednesbury EAZ are a positive contribution to resources, particularly in music and ICT. The school successfully seeks the best value from all resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good teaching, with high expectations, helps children to make good progress. • Children enjoy school. • Parents are comfortable approaching the school with any concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons. • The consistency of homework.

Parents were very supportive of the school and the inspection team agrees with many of the positive comments. Although there is an increasing proportion of good teaching, the overall quality is currently satisfactory. Teachers set appropriate homework that is often used well to help pupils' learning. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory but the school has plans to improve this.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children entering the nursery class have attainment that is below that expected of children of their age. A significant minority have very restricted experiences and need much support. Their progress through the nursery and reception classes is satisfactory in all areas of learning. By the time they begin the National Curriculum in Year 1, however, the standards are still below those expected nationally.
2. The school's performances in the National Curriculum assessments at the ages of seven and eleven have varied over time. In some years, the school has high numbers of pupils with special educational needs and this can depress its performance in national tests. However, teachers' efforts to improve the quality of education provided have been successful in creating a trend of rising attainment, higher than the national trend. In the 2002 reading tests, the results for pupils aged seven show attainment that reaches the national average. Their performance in writing and mathematics was well below that expected at the age of seven. Significant staff changes in the infant classes have had a negative effect on pupils' attainment and the school has sound plans to remedy the current vacancy in Year 2.
3. Standards by the time pupils leave the school are similar to those described in the last report. The results of the tests for eleven year olds in 2002 are a little lower than in the previous year although the standards in English maintained their average levels. This is due to stronger performance in reading. Results in science and mathematics fell to below and well below average respectively. The inspection confirms the school's own analysis that pupils have weaker skills in applying their developing knowledge to investigations and problem solving. However, this group of pupils contained higher than normal proportions of pupils with special educational needs and this depressed the results in the national tests. Most pupils made at least satisfactory progress and reached or exceeded their expected targets as indicated in the school's tracking system.
4. Many of the school's test results compare unfavourably with those of schools having similar levels of free school meals. At age seven, for example, although reading is average, standards in writing and mathematics tests are well below average. At the age of eleven, the results in English and science are below average with mathematics well below. However, the school is located in an area of severe hardship and the levels of free school meals are close to the top of the group of schools with which it is compared.
5. There are signs of improving standards in the school, notably where teaching is more consistently good, such as in Year 1 and in Years 5 and 6. Year 6 pupils' current work in English, mathematics and science is at an average level and the school is on track to achieve better results in the tests at the end of the year. In Year 2, staff vacancies and changes are limiting pupils' progress although the school's targets seek to improve the current levels of attainment. There are no consistent differences between the achievements of boys and girls and they make equally satisfactory progress in the infant and junior classes. Analysis of the gains made from the tests at seven to the results at eleven shows above average achievement. The school's systems for assessing individual pupils' standards and tracking their progress suggest that most make at least satisfactory gains through the school. This analysis is currently being developed further to allow the school to confidently set more challenging targets to spur

improvements. Observations during the inspection suggest that higher targets are achievable with more consistently good teaching.

6. Improving standards in English and pupils' literacy skills have been a focus in the school for the last two years. A number of initiatives such as Early Literacy Support and target setting have successfully helped to focus improvements. From a low starting point, pupils gain skills in speaking and listening through the school. By Year 6, most pupils have satisfactory speaking and listening skills; they are confident and articulate with a sound understanding of how to present their ideas and opinions. Those pupils with English as an additional language play a full part in class discussions and express themselves confidently. Reading throughout the school is the strongest aspect of English. By seven, pupils reach average standards and most read with accuracy and expression, beginning to explain key elements of stories. Pupils' reading is extended through the junior classes and they reach average standards by the age of eleven. They have growing understanding of more complex language and discuss favourite authors and books. Few, however, are good at recognising underlying meaning of subtle use of language. Pupils' writing is below average at the age of seven although most write neatly and present their work well. The range of writing is extended in the junior classes and presentation skills are developed well but standards are still below average at the age of eleven. Pupils have too few opportunities to produce extended writing in other subjects such as history and geography and this limits their application of literacy skills.
7. In mathematics, Year 6 pupils' current work is at an average level and early indications are that this group of pupils will improve the school's results in 2003. This is mainly due to the good quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6. Teachers develop pupils' numeracy skills soundly through the school and recent attention to developing pupils' mental arithmetic skills is having a positive effect although there is further to go. For example, pupils' problem solving skills are still limited, as shown in analysis of past test papers. Infant pupils increasingly use numbers naturally and know many properties of shapes. They use correct mathematical terms more readily in explanations. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils add and subtract two-digit numbers but most pupils do not have this confidence with number and work is below the standards expected of seven year olds. Junior pupils extend their knowledge and understanding and make particularly good progress in Years 5 and 6. By Year 6, most pupils are confident with a wide range of calculations including fractions, decimals and percentages. They know and use square roots in more complex problems.
8. Pupils' achievements in science are satisfactory and pupils reach average standards by the time they leave the school. Pupils gain skills and understanding in all aspects of the subject and become particularly knowledgeable about living things and their environments. Year 6 pupils begin to make generalisations and suggest some limited ways to investigate, for example, materials and forces. However, pupils have generally limited abilities in scientific enquiry because they have too few opportunities to select their own equipment and methods. This restricts their ability to carry out independent investigations and identify ways to apply their developing knowledge to problems.
9. Pupils' attainment in many subjects reaches the levels expected of pupils at their ages. However, attainment in history, geography and design and technology is below the expected level because the school does not yet have clear guidance for teachers to ensure that the subjects are effectively taught. Without adequate clear guidelines, there is insufficient clarity to ensure that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are developed sequentially through the school. In each of these subjects, there are currently moves to improve this position but

these are not yet in place. The curriculum for these subjects is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure pupils make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The school has maintained the good relationships and positive attitudes noted in the last report. Children under five enjoy a good start to their learning. The introductory part-time attendance sessions in the nursery are made interesting by the school's provision of a wide range of stimulating activities. In the reception class, children work well together. Nursery and infant pupils play together co-operatively before the morning start to lessons and show good developing relationships. Pupils of all age groups, including those for whom English is not their first language, take a full part in lessons and other activities. Pupils with special educational needs take a similar level of full involvement as a matter of course. Pupils show a wish to learn and most display an interest in their lessons, trying hard to please the teaching staff.
11. There is no oppressive behaviour and no evidence of any bullying or racist incidents. Pupils show good respect for each other and relationships are often good as a result. The staff set good examples and the respect they show to the pupils tends to set the standards expected of and reflected by pupils. Pupils' positive attitudes and good relationships are strengths of the school. This contributes to their personal development, which is good as a result. Pupils are happy to take on extra responsibilities such as running the tuck-shop or carrying out prefect duties, but these tasks are limited to the older children. Younger children have fewer opportunities to exercise personal initiative, particularly in the classroom, and this limits the potential for development of their independence. A School Council and new 'Buddy' system have been proposed but have yet to operate. However, most parents confirm their children's liking for school and feel the school is helping them to become mature and responsible.
12. Pupils behave well around school, at playtimes, lunch times and when changing lessons. Some inappropriate behaviour by a small number of pupils in the dining room was noted, however. Although the rate of exclusions last year was high, these related to few pupils and incidents and there are no recorded exclusions in the current year. Pupils' behaviour in class is satisfactory but is better when the teaching inspires them and keeps their interest level at full capacity. There were incidents of inappropriate behaviour in both infants and junior classes. These resulted in lost learning time, and hence lost progress due to the need for teachers to repeatedly stop the lesson to restore pupils' full attention. Staff have received training for behaviour management and there is a clear behaviour policy. Teachers do not always implement the techniques consistently enough within their classrooms across all age groups to ensure the lost time is minimal.
13. Pupils' poor attendance was an issue at the time of the last report. A concerted effort by the school has improved the situation and the attendance rate is now very close to the national average for similar schools and is judged to be satisfactory. Some parents still take children out of school for family holidays and some pupils from ethnic minority families take extended holidays to visit relatives abroad. This tends to adversely affect the overall attendance performance of the school. Registration procedures are efficient and meet statutory requirements. There is little evidence of lateness and there is no truancy. The school day and lessons start promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. Teaching is satisfactory overall. However, there are examples of good and better teaching throughout the school, notably in Years 1, 5 and 6. This is a stronger position than at the time of the last inspection. However, a few lessons in all parts of the school were weaker or unsatisfactory. Most weaknesses in lessons were due to problems in managing pupils and maintaining a consistent and positive approach to discipline. Many teaching strengths have been maintained since the last inspection and the school has managed to improve the relative weakness in teaching in the infants. However, the school has had problems in recruiting teachers; staff changes and the need to employ temporary teachers have had a negative effect, particularly in Year 2. The new leadership of the school is aware of the concerns and has plans for extending the monitoring and evaluating of teaching in order to share the best practice.
15. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory and teachers are giving pupils more chances to practise and consolidate their understanding in lessons. Explanations to pupils are clear because teachers have a secure understanding of the strategies for literacy and numeracy and know what they want the pupils to learn. Throughout the school, teachers use the correct terms when talking to pupils and this encourages pupils to use these words properly when talking about their work. Although there is an increasing range of writing for different purposes, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to write longer pieces. In particular, weaknesses in the curriculum planning for subjects such as history and geography restrict pupils' opportunities to apply their developing writing skills. Pupils use their developing numeracy skills in other subjects, for example when collecting information and setting out graphs. They apply their knowledge and skills in other subjects to their activities in the computer suite and this reinforces their learning. For example, pupils understand how spreadsheets work by thinking back to their work with function machines in mathematics. However, teachers do not make full use of the computers in their rooms to further consolidate pupils' developing skills in ICT.
16. Boys and girls learn equally well in lessons. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are taught soundly. They are seamlessly integrated into all aspects of lessons and they play a full part in all activities. Those few pupils who are new to learning English are supported effectively in lessons, allowing them to learn satisfactorily with the other pupils. Satisfactory teaching ensures that they understand any new vocabulary and use this correctly in their lessons.
17. Throughout the school, teachers have clear routines and organise their classrooms well. They ensure that suitable resources are prepared to help pupils to learn. Teachers help pupils to know what is expected of them by setting out clearly what they want them to learn. This prepares pupils well and often gets them excited about what they are going to do. In the best lessons, teachers capture and hold pupils' attention, using effective questioning to draw them on and help them to learn; for example when the Year 5 teacher challenges pupils to "make 100" as the initial activity in a mathematics lesson. This makes pupils eager to get started on their work and this leads to a good work rate and pupils putting great effort into their work. In many lessons, pupils behave well because teachers manage them well and set out clear expectations of behaviour. Relationships are good on the whole and particularly good in Year 6 where the teachers are sensitive to the pupils' needs and value their efforts extremely well. Skilful responses to pupils' answers ensure that even when errors are made they are used in such a way that pupils do not feel disappointed. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher checks and clarifies pupils' thoughts to ensure that all learn very well. This leads to the high number of pupils who are confident to have a go and eager to take part in activities.

18. In the weaker lessons, including those where unsatisfactory learning took place, teachers did not use consistent positive strategies to capture and hold pupils' attention. Their response to inattentive pupils breaks into their explanations and instructions and often slows the pace of the lesson further. This, in turn, leads to greater inattention from more pupils and the teacher needs to spend more time in creating control. In an otherwise satisfactory Year 4 music lesson, for example, the teacher's attempts to get all pupils listening carefully detracted from her explanations and this restricted pupils' progress. All teachers were able to keep control of the pupils but they varied in their effectiveness in building a positive atmosphere where pupils' good responses were praised and seen to be valued. In many lessons, although the overall learning was satisfactory, teachers were inconsistent in their application of the behaviour management strategies that they have learnt and adopted. When teachers used rewards and other positive strategies, pupils were attentive and the lesson was successful. When teachers were more negative or did not carry out sanctions that had been mentioned, pupils were less focused and learning was less effective.
19. Improvements have very recently been made to the arrangements for teaching pupils with special educational needs. A thorough review of pupils' needs has been undertaken to ensure that these are accurately identified and that individual education plans relate well to their needs. Targets are realistic and attainable and achievement of these is regularly monitored and recorded. The school has reduced substantially the level of withdrawal from lessons for these pupils. This ensures that pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all activities and enjoy full and equal access to the curriculum. Teachers provide satisfactory group teaching or individual support in the classroom. Other full and part-time classroom assistants provide sound support to individuals as part of groups within the classroom. Support staff are generally well deployed to support pupils with special needs. They liaise well with teachers regarding progress in lessons. Teachers do not yet, however, consistently and accurately match tasks with pupils' plans. However, a good programme of monitoring to ensure that effective teaching strategies are employed is being established to support teachers.
20. Usually teachers make sure that the work they prepare for pupils is at the right level of challenge. However, in some lessons, teachers do not make good use of assessments to match work precisely. For example, most Year 3 pupils had insufficient existing skills and experiences to successfully choose texts and make notes, despite the teacher's effective demonstration. Many teachers do not give enough opportunities for pupils to make their own decisions, such as when planning investigations in science lessons. In Year 6, however, pupils thrive when given chances to plan their own work such as organising themselves to compose music or plan warm-up exercises in physical education. In general, the school's schemes of work do not give teachers consistently good advice as to how to pitch work at a challenging level. As a result, higher attaining pupils sometimes mark time or the lower attaining need too much help from support assistants to be able to complete the work.

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

21. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for its pupils, as at the time of the last inspection. Teachers teach all the subjects required by the National Curriculum, together with religious education. The new headteacher has placed strong emphasis on teachers' use of national guidance to help them to plan pupils' work in each subject. This recent focus has improved teachers' plans and identified clearly where further development is needed. However, it has not had sufficient time to address the relative weaknesses in planning and so raise pupils' attainments in the different subjects.

22. The effectiveness of the school's strategies for teaching the skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. However, teachers do not plan systematically for pupils to use these skills in other subjects to enrich their learning. For example, there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills across the range of subjects. This restricts pupils' development of extended writing and weakens their learning in subjects such as history and geography. Teachers make good use of an interactive whiteboard to promote learning in some subjects but use of ICT skills is lacking in most, notably in science. Here they are rarely used, for example to record the findings of investigations, and this restricts pupils' choices in conveying what they have learned.
23. New plans for history, geography and design and technology have not yet addressed the lack of attention that the school has given to these subjects in recent years. This accounts for the low standards, notably the gaps in pupils' enquiry skills in history and geography, and their abilities to design, make and evaluate using a variety of materials and methods. Sometimes the school's plans do not help pupils to build their knowledge, understanding and skills in a structured way. For example, in science pupils repeat work about healthy eating that does not always extend their learning sufficiently. Plans for art and design outline what pupils will do, but they do not clearly specify which new skills they will learn in each year group and which learned skills they will develop further. As a result, progress is not always as good as it could be.
24. The school is good at providing for pupils' personal, social and health education. There is a strong and effective emphasis on healthy living that comes through science and physical education lessons. For example, children in the nursery learn that exercise is good for them as they feel their heart beating fast after vigorous exercise. The school nurse effectively reinforces the advantages and the dangers of medicines and how pupils need to be responsible with them.
25. There is satisfactory provision for activities outside normal lessons. Residential visits to Alton Castle, a Catholic venue, develop pupils' self-esteem as well as their spirituality. Other day-visits take place and pupils have opportunities to take part in activities such as music festivals. Through the year some activities such as music and sports activities take place at the end of the school day though they are currently limited in number. The school has plans to extend the range of out-of-school activities to foster learning in mathematics, music and physical education.
26. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils with special educational needs, mainly by ensuring that adults support them effectively. Teachers ensure that all pupils, whatever their special need, cultural or religious background or ability to speak English, are fully included in what the school offers. It does not always make sure, however, that pupils of different levels of ability receive work that accurately meets their needs. As a result they sometimes do not make the good progress that they might. Children in the Foundation Stage receive a suitable range of learning opportunities for their age.
27. The community makes a sound contribution to pupils' learning and there are satisfactory links with other organisations. There is a strong association with the local Catholic church and all pupils regularly attend Mass. Teachers foster the smooth transfer of pupils to the secondary school through visits by staff and pupils between the two schools. Teachers share training with those in local schools. The school makes good use of opportunities provided by Wednesbury EAZ. This enhances pupils' learning, particularly in music and art through

visiting specialists. Support assistants from this initiative have a notable impact on enhancing the learning of pupils' ICT skills.

28. The school is good at promoting pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, maintaining the position outlined in the last report. Its strategies for fostering pupils' cultural development are satisfactory and improving. Pupils' growing spirituality is supported well through religious education and particularly through collective worship. The headteacher is successful at ensuring that while assemblies are securely rooted in the school's strong Catholic traditions they embrace pupils from other faiths. As a result, all pupils, whatever their religion or background, feel fully included in the school's approach to their spiritual development. Lessons sometimes include time for pupils to reflect, such as when nursery children cooled down after physical exercise by listening to music and thinking about God's creation of the world.
29. Teachers, support assistants and visitors contribute well to pupils' moral development. In a Year 3 design and technology lesson, for example, the pupils talked about their likes and dislikes of different sandwiches. The teacher explained, "everyone has an opinion and everyone's opinion is valued". This approach effectively fosters pupils' respect for one another. Good use is made of incidents to promote understanding of the impact of pupils' actions on others and to help pupils to reflect on their behaviour. Pupils are well prepared for making moral decisions. The school nurse, for example, asked pupils what they would do in a situation when someone they know has taken drugs. Good opportunities for pupils to devise school and classroom rules and to talk about their 'job descriptions' enable them to consider what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
30. The headteacher has introduced new systems to enhance pupils' social development and more are planned. Older pupils are appointed as prefects, giving them a good sense of responsibility, such as when they escort younger pupils from hall to classroom. There are plans to introduce a School Council to extend pupils' involvement in the school community. Lessons provide some useful opportunities for all pupils to work effectively together in groups. For example, in a Year 1 physical education lesson, the teacher used competition well to ensure that pupils co-operated successfully in their teams. Where teachers do too much for the children, such as handing out everything they will use in a design and technology lesson, the development of pupils' independence slows.
31. The school's arrangements for developing pupils' cultural knowledge and understanding are satisfactory. They effectively extend pupils' appreciation of music and art through the expertise of visiting specialists and in lessons. Pupils gain a clear understanding of the work of a range of artists, for example. Some visitors effectively contribute to pupils' awareness of other cultures, such as in an assembly when pupils played drums from different countries. However, the promotion of pupils' awareness of cultural traditions and values from the wider world is limited. The headteacher has begun the important work of introducing strategies to improve pupils' awareness of other cultures and values. These include displays of books and artefacts from other cultures together with assemblies that introduce pupils to clothes that Asian people might wear, such as saris. This has yet to extend to a coherent whole-school approach where all staff systematically promote an understanding of other faiths and lifestyles.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The school successfully promotes a warm and friendly environment where pupils can feel secure. Induction procedures into the nursery and transfer to secondary education are carefully

organised to ensure children have sufficient confidence to overcome any doubts or problems. The headteacher and governors take a responsible attitude to health and safety issues and have updated the safety policy and risk assessment procedures. Routine testing of fire detection and fire-fighting equipment is systematically organised and regular fire drills are carried out with evaluation of any difficulties encountered. Testing of other equipment such as physical education apparatus and portable electrical equipment is up to date. First aid procedures are well organised and every classroom is provided with the required materials. Appropriate strategies have been adopted to ensure that pupils are protected from offensive material when using the Internet. Good procedures for child protection are in place and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

33. The monitoring of attendance has improved substantially from the time of the last inspection and is very thorough and efficient. The School Support Officer checks registers daily and monitors the attendance of every class and certain pupils against pre-set targets. Parents are regularly reminded of the need to ensure prompt attendance and the school makes effective use of the Educational Welfare Officer to conduct home visits. Help is arranged for any parents with language difficulties. The best weekly class attendance for both infants and juniors is currently rewarded with a certificate and additional playtime. As a result of these measures, the current attendance rate has improved dramatically to the national average. The school is planning to use funds made available through the Neighbourhood Renewal Scheme to provide for more personal prizes and additional staff time for parental contact.
34. The school promotes pupils' mutual respect for each other and for the staff by implementation of its ethos and aims. When the nursery, reception and infants classes attended the church, every child attended and was fully involved. The school's policy covering behaviour, anti-bullying and equal opportunities has been totally reviewed and updated. The absence of any oppressive behaviour is a good indicator of the success of the school's efforts in this aspect.
35. As a strategy to promote more consistent good behaviour, the pupils and headteacher have together discussed and drawn up a simple set of rules of conduct known as the 'Pupils' job description'. Most pupils fully observe the spirit of the rules but the minority who do not can be the cause of disruption in classrooms. Whilst behaviour is individually monitored, teachers' sometimes inconsistent approach to enforcing the rules does not promote the good standard of behaviour intended.
36. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development are satisfactory overall. Commencing with an initial assessment on entry to the reception class, the school continues to use a range of nationally recognised tests to assess pupils' academic progress over each year. In mathematics, reading, writing and spelling, pupils' progress is tracked and recorded on an individual basis. National test results are carefully analysed to identify areas of difficulty but the use of the information gained is not yet effectively used in the preparation of pupils' personal learning plans. The work planned for the more able pupils, in particular, is not sufficiently challenging as a result. Pupils with special educational needs are assessed individually and targets agreed with parents are set accordingly. The preparation of their individual plans is currently under full review to ensure that the school effectively meets their needs. Personal development is evaluated by means of the same initial assessment shortly after joining the reception class and by informal assessment in later years. The assessment is set down for parents' information in summary form on pupils' annual reports.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. Parents are generally supportive of the school and many share a view that the school is improving. Inspectors agree with them that the school is a caring and friendly place where children are made to feel secure and are respected by the staff. Parents feel welcome and able to approach the staff with any matter of concern relating to their children's education. Both staff and governors spend time in the playground before and after school in order to meet and talk with parents. Concerns were expressed about the level of homework but the school has established a clear policy and parents questioned are now positive. Inspectors found homework used productively to promote pupils' learning. Some parents expressed concern about the lack of extra-curricular activities such as after-school clubs. There is a satisfactory range of activities planned through the year and the school has plans to improve this further. Several parents express concern about the quality of parts of the school's accommodation and the inspection agrees. The school is making considerable efforts to begin significant improvements as soon as funding is awarded.
38. The range and quality of information provided for parents are good. A chart listing the programmes of work and school events for each half-term is issued to all parents. Parent evenings are arranged each term to enable them meet the teachers, inspect and discuss their children's work and set jointly agreed targets for the coming term. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are consulted by the newly designated co-ordinator and are involved in the target setting for their children. Separate evening meetings have been arranged to explain the purpose and procedures of the National Curriculum tests. Parents of children joining the nursery are invited into school to view the facilities offered, and can also attend sessions accompanying their children if they wish. Pupils' annual reports are informative and give parents a good indication of what children have learned over the year. Targets set, however, are rarely specific and reporting of pupils' personal development is very brief.
39. The school prospectus and the annual report of the governing body are comprehensive and cover all requirements. Newsletters are regular and welcomed by parents. The home/school agreement is well prepared and provides separate sections for the school, for parents and for pupils to complete.
40. The school has very few regular parent helpers in the classrooms and as a result the contribution and impact of their work are rather limited. Two helpers provide support in reading and help in the library. The school has recognised this problem and more parents have been encouraged to submit their personal details for security screening enabling them to help in the school. Parents now confirm that regular homework is helping them to be more involved in their children's learning, particularly for the older pupils. The Friends of School Association has a small nucleus of staff and parents who promote the school through the organisation of an annual programme of fund-raising and social events. Parents tend to support the school events such as the summer and autumn fairs better than other social events. Funds raised are intended for special projects that the school would be unlikely to achieve through normal budget allocation. In the past, parents have carried out environmental work such as preparing the pond and will readily help escort the children on offsite visits such as to the local swimming pool.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. The leadership and management of the school are good. The new headteacher provides very good and determined leadership focused on raising standards through high expectations of achievement. The headteacher maintains a supportive environment in which staff and pupils feel secure and valued, and where pupils work hard and enjoy good relationships, and show

respect for adults and their friends. All staff and governors are committed to the school's aims that include a strong emphasis on personal as well as academic development of all pupils. The school is very largely meeting these aims, especially in pupils' personal development. The essence of the school's mission statement is evident in all aspects of its work. The Catholic-based education with strong ethos underpins the delivery of the curriculum.

42. All members of the staff who have specific responsibilities carry them out well and play an important role in ensuring the quality of education the school provides. The headteacher is well supported by the new deputy head, who plays a significant role in the management of the school. The headteacher, senior staff and governors work closely together to provide clear educational priorities for the school, striving for improvement and driving the school forward. There is good teamwork, and this is identifying new clear priorities for the school.
43. The governing body fulfils all its statutory duties very well and plays an important role in the leadership and management of the school. Over the last two years, for example, it has had to manage the impact of the resignation of the last headteacher and the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy head. The governors are very supportive of the school and the headteacher. They are very influential, show much commitment and use their own expertise extremely well to bring extra resources into school. The governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through visits and regular reports from the school's staff. The chair of governors knows about pupils' standards of work and how much progress pupils make. He provides excellent support and direction for the school. Governors use their knowledge well in planning for the development of the school. There are various formal committees set up for most of the work, and sometimes work is tackled through effective organisation of working parties. Key governors have well-defined areas of responsibilities for areas such as literacy, numeracy and the Foundation Stage. These governors are actively involved in the work of the school.
44. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed well. The special educational needs governor is fully involved in this area of responsibility. The deputy head in her role as the special needs co-ordinator has effectively reviewed the high proportion of identified pupils. There are good arrangements in place for annual reviews and all parties involved with the child normally attend these. Suitable resources are being developed to further enhance the provision. Resources, including staff, are managed effectively to support both policies and pupils. The school satisfactorily meets requirements of the new Code of Practice.
45. The headteacher and deputy head are currently engaged in reviewing management systems. The senior management team, for example, plays an increasing role in reviewing the school's work and identifying developments. A new improved system for regularly monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom has been established. This will be done on a formal basis, offering support and guidance where necessary. Their aim is also to widen subject co-ordinators' monitoring of teaching and learning by releasing them to observe lessons in their areas. Where subject co-ordinators have had opportunities to observe lessons, such as in mathematics, they have a good view of strengths and weaknesses. This has contributed to the provision of training and the identified strategies to improve standards.
46. The headteacher, supported by the deputy, has reviewed the school's progress in meeting the priorities of the school improvement plan. This has led to the clear identification of future priorities and a shared commitment to improvement. Some effective action, such as in promoting good attendance, has already been taken to meet the school's targets. The school improvement plan is for the current year only, but sufficiently detailed. There is a brief long-

term overview securely based on careful analyses by the headteacher and the staff. There are clear outlines of how each agreed aim is to be tackled and monitored. However, all identified priorities are not yet carefully costed, and the financial source is not clearly identified. The new headteacher has plans in place for new systems to be adopted in the next academic year to improve evaluation and rectify any weaknesses. Given the strategies already in place and planned for the near future, the school is well placed to meet these priorities.

47. The headteacher and governors set the budget to meet the clear educational priorities identified in the school improvement plan, and they monitor spending and income regularly. The governors have a very clear overview of the school's performance and progress. They keep a close check on the budget and maintain a small surplus. Governors also ensure that the priorities in the school improvement plan are implemented effectively and that the money allocated for the pupils' education is spent wisely. Good use is made of specific grant funding made available to the school. The office is very efficiently managed and makes very good use of up-to-date technology and systems.
48. There is an appropriate number of teaching staff, all of whom are suitably qualified and experienced to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum. A nursery teacher is to be appointed in the next school year to extend the current satisfactory arrangements for nursery teaching. Following past local practice, teaching is presently led by two learning support practitioners with relevant qualifications, with overall responsibility taken by the deputy headteacher. The school has satisfactory arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers, teachers new to the school, and learning support assistants. Staff development is based on the school improvement plan and the school's performance management policy. There is a good programme of staff development to help teachers to gain the necessary skills to improve the school further.
49. During recent times the school has experienced significant staff movement. Six members of staff, including the headteacher and deputy, have left the school and the present headteacher took up her appointment as recently as September this year. The school currently has a vacancy for a Year 2 teacher and, despite its efforts, has not been able to secure a long-term appointment to cover this. The unsettled staffing situation has caused some concern amongst parents, but there is now a feeling of optimism that the situation has changed and the school is in a position to move forward. Learning support staff levels are to be increased by two new assistants immediately following the autumn half-term holiday. The school is well supported by efficient administrative staff and additional help given by the local education authority in such areas as budget monitoring. The Wednesbury EAZ gives good support to the school, particularly in subjects such as music and ICT, through its staff and resources. These make a significant contribution to the opportunities given to pupils in the school.
50. The school still uses a post-war timber building to house the kitchen, servery and dining room and the Year 6 pupils are taught in a prefabricated mobile classroom unit. Many classrooms, the library and computer suite are limited in size. There is some difficulty in teaching subjects such as art and design and design and technology in classrooms with higher numbers of pupils. This limits the extent to which teachers give pupils opportunities to carry out practical work, and restricts learning. Nursery children have no separate play area and share the infants' playground before school commences. This restricts the range of physical activities available to these children during the day. The school manages its accommodation as well as possible. The headteacher is acutely aware of the deficiencies and is currently engaged in earnest negotiations to secure funding for an early and phased programme of building work to extend and improve the facilities.

51. Within the accommodation available, the learning resources provided by the school are satisfactory overall. The nursery is particularly well provided with a wide range of equipment and materials to hold the interest of the children and promote their development. The number and quality of the computers in the suite are satisfactory. The school is providing more material to widen pupils' experiences of a range of different cultures. The school does not have sufficient large-scale maps, atlases and globes to support the history and geography curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in November 2000, despite very substantial staff changes since that time. The new headteacher has established a clear focus for improvement and a strong positive atmosphere to support this. In order to continue to raise standards, the headteacher, staff and governors should now:

- (1) Improve the planning of the curriculum to ensure that pupils make more consistent progress through the school. In particular to ensure that:
 - pupils have more opportunities to take responsibility and undertake independent and investigative work,
(Paragraphs 7, 8, 20, 24, 30, 65, 73, 80, 90)
 - teachers make better use of information from the assessment of pupils' progress to plan tasks that build the skills of pupils of different levels of attainment,
(Paragraphs 20, 23, 26, 54, 81, 98, 104)
 - subjects such as history, geography and design and technology receive adequate attention,
(Paragraphs 9, 23, 87, 91,92)
 - pupils have more opportunities to apply their developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects. (Paragraphs 6, 15, 22, 68, 81, 85, 103)

- (2) Improve teachers' strategies to control and improve behaviour in their classrooms and thereby improve the pace of pupils' learning.
(Paragraphs 12,14,18,35,55,70,77,107)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	39
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	5	9	20	4	0	0
Percentage	3	13	23	51	10	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 more than two percentage points.

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)	7	213
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	36

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	76

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	15

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
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	17	13	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	14
	Girls	13	13	11
	Total	24	24	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (84)	80 (74)	83 (84)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	16	17
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	27	29	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (74)	97 (84)	100 (81)
	National	89 (85)	90 (89)	91 (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	21	13	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	20	20
	Girls	8	4	12
	Total	26	24	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	76 (79)	71 (62)	94 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	18	19
	Girls	8	6	10
	Total	24	24	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (76)	71 (66)	85 (100)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
134	7	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
7	0	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	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)	9.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.9
Average class size	30.4

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	122

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30
Number of pupils per FTE adult	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001 - 2002
	£
Total income	537823
Total expenditure	531644
Expenditure per pupil	2352
Balance brought forward from previous year	21433
Balance carried forward to next year	27612

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate: 26.4 per cent

Number of questionnaires sent out	227
Number of questionnaires returned	60

Percentage of responses in each category¹

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	28	10	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	55	37	8	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	50	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	53	13	2	3
The teaching is good.	50	42	2	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	55	8	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	45	3	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	35	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	38	45	10	0	7
The school is well led and managed.	43	35	0	0	22
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	48	2	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	33	22	10	18

¹ Percentages are rounded and may not add up to 100 in each line.

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

53. At the time of the inspection, nursery children were new to the school, having just started attending regularly. They are taught by two qualified learning support practitioners, following past local practice, with overall supervision by the deputy headteacher. This is a sound arrangement with teaching that is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. However, the school has plans to improve provision further through appointing a teacher for the class. Children transfer to the reception class in the September before their fifth birthday. Children begin the nursery with overall attainment that is below that expected of children nationally. Although many have been to other pre-school settings, a significant group of children joining the school have had very limited experiences and low attainment. By the time children begin the National Curriculum in Year 1, their overall attainment is still below the expected level for their age.
54. Although the teaching in both nursery and reception classes is satisfactory, there are variations, with some unsatisfactory teaching in the reception class. All staff form good relationships with children and they have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of how children learn. The range of resources is good, although there is no separate outdoor play space and this limits the range of physical activities they can provide. Sound planning in the nursery and reception classes gives children experiences in all the areas of learning for children in this age group. Teaching makes effective use of the national guidance for teaching children of this age. In the reception class, teaching makes sound use of parts of the national guidance for literacy and numeracy to develop children's early reading, writing and number skills. Strong systems for assessing children's development are established in the nursery class. However, too little attention is paid to ensuring that children's progress is systematically built upon through both classes and many children could do better.

Personal, social and emotional development

55. Good arrangements to help children to begin the nursery class allow them to settle confidently. They quickly learn the normal routines and feel confident when with the nursery staff. Adults in the nursery create an atmosphere of good relationships and good teaching ensures a range of interesting activities that encourages children to begin to work together. For example, adults encourage children to think about what they have done and to identify what they have done well and their friends. This foundation is soundly built upon in the reception class where the teacher gives children a good range of activities to promote their independence. Individual children take increasing responsibility, for example when they carefully collected scissors and glues with good understanding of the need to be tidy. Children in the reception class still need much support in playing together and some find it difficult to initiate games co-operatively. This is particularly the case when the teachers' behaviour expectations are not made clearly or consistently enough. However, children are likely to achieve the standards expected of children by the end of the reception year in this area of learning.

Communication, language and literacy

56. Teaching is sound in both classes and children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning. Few nursery children are confident in their answers to questions although good

relationships are helping their progress. Children learn letters and their sounds and increasing numbers of children recognise their own names. Activities in all areas of learning include ways to enlarge children's vocabulary and give opportunities for them to speak. Children enjoy sharing books and stories. In the reception class, children gain confidence in answering questions and improve their listening to the teacher and other children. They are interested and involved in shared books such as *The Giant Sandwich*. Many enjoy listening together to tape recordings of books and stories. Most children hold pencils correctly and begin to form letters with increasing confidence. Higher attaining children know letter sounds and recognise an increasing number of words. Children begin to copy writing in activities such as writing a shopping list and use their increasing vocabulary in role-play, encouraging their speaking and listening skills. Their attainment is likely to still be below that expected by the end of the reception year.

Mathematical development

57. Good teaching in the nursery class provides children with lively and imaginative activities to promote their mathematical development. Counting while showing 'a scary face' captures children's attention and interest and this helps them to learn well. They learn about shape and volume through practical activities and effective questioning by nursery nurses. Children identify numbers and recognise a range of patterns, sometimes reaching the standards expected for their age. In the reception class, teaching is satisfactory. The children take part in a suitable range of activities to promote their counting, including number rhymes and songs. They gain increased confidence in using number in aspects of their play such as when sorting and matching items. They recognise and use coins with increasing accuracy in their play in the shop. In an unsatisfactory class lesson, the teacher prepared good resources and her questioning engaged individuals well. However, weaknesses in organising children and resources caused the pace to slow and many children began to lose attention. In group sessions, however, the teacher and assistant questioned well and made children think hard. This helped many children to reach the standards expected at this age although the overall standards are below those expected.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

58. Many children's limited prior experiences restrict their progress and they are unlikely to reach the expected levels of attainment by the end of the reception year. Teaching in both classes is satisfactory and children are given sound activities to widen their understanding. They have many opportunities to talk about themselves, their homes and their families although many children need much encouragement to do so. In both classes, children are taught to look carefully and to safely investigate objects using their senses. Reception children, for example, smelled a lemon that they were painting and effective questioning helped them to talk about their thoughts. However, few give clear explanations of what they know and how things work. Children use ICT, such as tape recorders and computers, with increasing confidence. For example, they control the mouse well, moving pictures around the screen. They know different shops and their products and a local visit to the shops helped them to learn more about the area, distance and time.

Physical development

59. The nursery and reception classes do not have a secure outdoor area available throughout the day and this limits the range of activities that staff can provide. However, teachers make good use of the existing facilities and the school is actively pursuing improvements in the

accommodation to make suitable space available. Children in the nursery class handle materials and equipment with increasing accuracy and confidence. For example, some boys worked together well in assembling farm buildings for their animal models. Good teaching in the hall challenged the nursery children well and encouraged them to exercise rigorously. The Learning Support Practitioner extended children's skills and ensured that they could throw and catch bean bags with increased accuracy. In the reception class, satisfactory teaching builds on children's development. In particular, teaching pays good attention to children's fine skills, such as cutting out and holding a pencil correctly. The teacher makes sound use of the hall and equipment to promote children's physical skills. These are likely to be similar to those expected for their age by the end of the reception year.

Creative development

60. Satisfactory teaching through both classes helps children to make progress but their overall attainment by the end of the reception year is below the standards expected of children of that age. Children enjoy making pictures and are introduced to a sound range of media including pencil and paint. Some effective teaching helps children to look carefully at the objects of their pictures and the quality of detail improves. For example, in the reception class, the teacher's good questioning helped children to identify and talk about the colours they could see. In both classes, children enjoy a range of songs and rhymes, particularly those with actions. Children feel increased confidence over time and join in more enthusiastically. Some nursery children, for example, worked together well when using a range of percussion instruments. In both classes, there are sound opportunities for children to play roles in activities such as the shop. However, staff in the reception class did not always intervene or question children effectively to develop their imaginative play and the sessions were not consistently productive.

ENGLISH

61. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection with some signs of improvement. By the age of eleven, pupils attain standards that are in line with the national average. Standards for the seven year olds are below average, but show a little improvement on previous performance. The school has put into place some appropriate measures to improve standards further. Improving standards in all aspects of English has been a major focus of the school in the last two years. Teachers have worked hard to address weaknesses in the subject. Effective use is made of initiatives such as the Early Literacy Support in Year 1. This extra support is targeted, particularly to pupils identified as in need of more intensive help to boost their progress in the acquisition of basic skills in literacy. In lessons, pupils are organised in small groups where specific language skills are practised and reinforced well. The recently introduced individual target setting in English is also used well by teachers to focus on what needs to be improved. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is being reorganised to ensure better identification of concerns and well-structured literacy programmes with realistic short-term targets. Most teachers are skilful in planning and teaching the basic skills in English, and have appropriate expectations of all pupils. From a low starting point, pupils achieve well as a result, and make broadly average progress over their time in school. Pupils with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language achieve equally well and make satisfactory progress.
62. Speaking and listening skills are below average for infants but average in the juniors and they improve as pupils move through the school. Bearing in mind pupils' limited starting points,

their progress in speaking and listening is satisfactory. Most pupils listen carefully to teachers and each other, follow instructions without fuss and contribute positively in discussions. In a few lessons, speaking skills are well promoted, but there are missed opportunities by most teachers to engage pupils in extended conversations. For younger pupils, small group work provides opportunities for adults to provide examples of good language and to encourage pupils to express themselves clearly. However, pupils' restricted vocabulary means that many six and seven year olds are imprecise and hesitant in producing answers, which keeps their overall level of attainment below average. Some teachers do not consciously plan to improve and extend pupils' speaking and listening skills through for example, role-play, or encourage them to express themselves clearly. This was noted in a Year 2 lesson, where pupils often only gave one-word answers and most found it very difficult to listen carefully during class discussion.

63. By the end of Year 6, most pupils are confident and articulate. When given opportunities through well-planned activities, pupils use speaking skills of a good quality across the curriculum. In a Year 6 numeracy lesson, pupils were constantly encouraged to articulate their thinking and explain their methods of calculations clearly. In a literacy session, the same teacher involved pupils well in analysing and annotating a written report. Most pupils know how to explain their opinions and ideas about stories in interesting ways. However, there are too few opportunities, especially for the higher attaining pupils, to speak at length and use a variety of expression and vocabulary. Pupils with English as an additional language make sound progress in speaking English. They interact confidently and make suitable contributions to class discussions.
64. In Year 2, pupils attain broadly satisfactory standards in reading. There is suitable emphasis on the teaching and learning of letter sounds and blends. Most pupils make expected progress as a result of an effective combination of direct teaching of letter sounds and other help aimed at developing pupils' vocabulary. The higher attaining pupils read simple text fluently. Their reading is usually accurate and often expressive. They are eager to answer questions about the text and improve their understanding. In a good lesson, Year 1 pupils showed satisfactory grasp of basic reading skills when they joined in the class reading of *Oscar's Story*. Most pupils master new words with reasonable confidence. They begin to show preferences for certain types of books and most understand the key elements of stories.
65. Pupils in Year 6 are on course to attain average standards in reading by the end of the year. The books read by pupils in Years 3 to 6 are appropriate to their interest and level of attainment. The range of reading material is extended as the pupils move through the school, and more able readers choose books freely. Pupils read with increasing fluency and accuracy as they progress through the school. Most pupils talk about favourite authors with discernment, and are developing a critical appreciation of books. While lower attaining pupils still interpret their reading literally, most average and higher attaining pupils show a growing understanding of more complex language. However, pupils do not easily identify the underlying meaning or appreciate the subtleties of humour. Pupils use non-fiction books to locate and retrieve information within the classroom, but the independent research and study skills of the majority are not fully developed, particularly in subjects such as history and geography.
66. Pupils make frequent references to reading at home, which is well established and has a positive effect on pupils' interest and attainment. Guided reading sessions also help pupils' progress in reading. Teachers keep good reading records, to identify weaknesses and target pupils' learning.

67. Standards in writing are below average by the end of Year 2 and improve as pupils go through school. In Years 3 to 6, the scope of writing is extended well and signifies good achievement for the majority of pupils. Younger pupils are regularly taught the skills of letter formation well as they begin to understand the sounds of particular letters. Year 2 pupils are further extended, and learn about letter combinations and common spelling patterns. The most capable seven year olds write neatly and present their work well. Pupils regularly practise handwriting in most classes. They join their writing and generally spell well. Most pupils have mastered these skills and are beginning to think about the overall structure of their writing, such as the setting, characters and plot, when writing stories. Year 3 pupils in a lesson analysed the content of non-fiction text about cheetahs, and learnt how to make accurate notes.
68. Junior pupils write for a range of purposes, including narrative, description, letters and instruction. Their spelling and punctuation are now well established. Some Year 5 pupils have produced poetry of good quality with phrases such as, “My mom; a refreshing cup of tea”, and “the sweet smell of daffodils” etc. By age eleven, pupils are introduced to the main features of different genres such as play-scripts and writing reports. Most pupils write neatly and many develop their own personal style, consistently using joined writing. Although a few are still striving to express themselves clearly in writing, most pupils are beginning to write fluently. However, opportunities to produce extended writing across other areas of the curriculum, for example when reading and writing about events of the past in history, or explaining and recording conclusions of a geographical or scientific investigation, are limited. The use of computers to draft or word process is currently less advanced. Where computers were used in lessons, some pupils were seen working with speed and accuracy.
69. English teaching is mainly satisfactory with some good features, especially in the upper junior classes. In the best lessons, teachers constantly challenge pupils through probing questions, and conduct lesson at a brisk pace. As a result, pupils of all capabilities were actively engaged and put a lot of effort into meeting the expectations set for the lesson. Teachers across the school have a sound understanding of how to teach reading and writing. They make sure pupils know what they are expected to learn and how this links with what they have covered previously. In the main, pupils’ achievements parallel the quality of teaching.
70. The National Literacy Strategy has been incorporated into the scheme of work, and teachers implement it effectively. Lessons are well planned and organised, with a good mix of whole-class, group and individual work. Most teachers use suitable methods and strategies to develop good listening, and to improve concentration and the pace of working. Most teachers are skilful at managing pupils’ behaviour. They have good relationships with them and encourage good manners and social skills. However, in some lessons, teachers lack good class control strategies and this affects pupils’ learning. This was noted in the two unsatisfactory lessons. While most teachers maintain a satisfactory level of support for pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, the lesson planning by some teachers does not specify a clear approach to meeting needs of different groups represented in the class. This leads to some mismatch of tasks to pupils’ abilities that slows learning. However, many teachers know their pupils well and often set clear targets of work for individuals and groups of pupils. Most pupils have good attitudes towards the subject, and these contribute well to their learning. In good lessons, pupils are attentive and eager to answer questions and join in class discussion, where they express themselves clearly.

71. The management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has good expertise and awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning throughout the school. The procedures for tracking and recording pupils' progress are good. The marking of pupils' work is generally helpful. In the best examples, teachers make constructive comments and give suitable guidance.

MATHEMATICS

72. Standards in mathematics are below average by the end of Year 2 but average by the end of Year 6. Although this is broadly the same as findings of the last inspection, it is higher than the 2002 national tests, particularly by the end of Year 6. The results last year were weakened because a larger proportion of pupils had special educational needs. The school has successfully implemented the National Numeracy Strategy and this is improving the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment. Teachers have a more effective framework for planning, and secure subject knowledge. The leadership and management of mathematics are good and this is helping the school's provision for the subject to improve. Thorough analysis of the results of school and national tests provides detailed information for teachers to support their planning. Monitoring of teaching helps identify some strengths and weaknesses in teaching. More thorough evaluations are needed to identify weaknesses and remedy them through sharing good teaching with others.
73. Teachers are making increasing use of the framework of the numeracy strategy to guide their planning. In particular, they begin their lessons with effective mental or oral sessions. This keeps pupils alert, develops mental agility and engages their attention. As a result, the standards in mental mathematics are improving along with pupils' ability to explain their strategies for working out their answers. Teachers' analyses of school and national test results revealed that there was too little emphasis on problem solving. Many teachers are now trying to include tasks to develop these skills and all pupils are becoming more aware of the steps and calculations involved. Some teachers, for example, make good use of short periods of time during registration to challenge pupils with simple number problems based on the register. However, a number of pupils still struggle to organise their ideas logically because they have not had sufficient opportunities to extend these skills through the school. Teachers make sound provision for pupils with special educational needs, often making good use of support staff to ensure that these pupils learn. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and those who have English as an additional language are involved effectively in all aspects of lessons and learn with their classmates.
74. Pupils in the infant classes make increasing use of number and begin to recognise numbers that add up to 10. They know a good range of properties of shapes and identify them using a mixture of common and mathematical terms. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils add and subtract two-digit numbers, they double and halve numbers and know that subtraction is the inverse of addition. However, most pupils do not have this confidence with number. Pupils make simple block graphs and begin to measure in centimetres. Higher attaining pupils begin to set out very simple multiplication sums.
75. In the junior classes, pupils build on their earlier learning. For example, Year 3 pupils extend their knowledge of shapes and develop a stronger mathematical vocabulary, referring to shapes as 'regular' and some triangles as 'equilateral'. Pupils make good progress in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is consistently better. This is beginning to lead to the rising standards that were observed during the inspection. Year 5 pupils use a good range of mathematical terms when describing their work, such as 'partitioning', 'doubles' and 'counting on'. This is

having a positive effect on their understanding of their learning and is helping to push them on well. Pupils show lots of enthusiasm for problem solving and are keen to contribute. This allows them to tackle challenging problems and sometimes to reach standards above those expected for their age. Some good links with pupils' learning in the computer suite further reinforce pupils' mathematical development. This good pace of learning is maintained in Year 6 where challenging activities enable some pupils to understand and use 'square numbers' and 'square roots' in problems that need more than one stage for calculating. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a range of attainment consistent with that found nationally. Most understand place value to multiply and divide by 10 and 100. They use the appropriate number operation to solve problems and check their results, with or without a calculator. They find fractions of numbers and begin to recognise the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages.

76. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory although there is significantly better teaching in Years 1, 5 and 6 and this is beginning to raise standards. These teachers used praise skilfully to motivate pupils to pay attention and apply themselves well to their tasks. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent, particularly in some teachers' positive control of classes and this affects the rate of learning for some pupils. In the best lessons, thorough planning provides a good structure to lessons. Teachers introduce lessons by sharing the learning intentions for the lesson and explaining new learning clearly. This sets the expectations for the lesson and enables pupils to understand what they are to learn. Teachers use and explain new vocabulary well so pupils use and understand it themselves. The good use of resources, such as whiteboards, number squares, or a number line, helps pupils to learn and enhance their understanding. They help to illustrate teachers' examples to clarify understanding and motivate learning. Skilful questioning helps to extend pupils' answers and encourages them to think. It provides opportunities for pupils to share what they know or explain their mathematical strategies.
77. No mathematics lessons were unsatisfactory but some lessons throughout the school were weakened by teachers' inconsistent use of strategies for controlling pupils. All teachers were able to keep order in classes but in some lessons this took too much effort. In these lessons, teachers sometimes did not make their expectations clear and apply this rigorously. They often focused on what pupils did wrong rather than praising those who were behaving well. This led to the pace of learning falling and to some further pupils becoming distracted.

SCIENCE

78. Standards in science, by the end of Year 6, are similar to those found nationally. In recent years pupils' achievements, as measured by the national tests for eleven year olds, have varied. These results reflect the changes in teachers and in the school's science planning. The number of pupils with special needs contributed to the lower performance of pupils in Year 6 in 2002 compared with previous years.
79. Progress is satisfactory through the school. By the end of Year 2, pupils achieve average standards. Most pupils know that creatures such as frogs and birds are found in various habitats. They clearly understand the benefits of exercise for the human body, and on the heart in particular. They have good understanding of the different properties of materials such as metal and wood. They know that a metal spring can be changed, for example by stretching. Higher attaining pupils competently sort living things into groups based on simple criteria and they are good at explaining why animals and plants are suited to particular habitats. One wrote, "If frogs did not live in water they would dry up and die." Most pupils, however, have limited independent skills of scientific enquiry.

80. By the end of Year 6, most pupils effectively identify living things from their physical features and they understand the relationship between plants and animals. They know correct terms such as ‘habitat’ and ‘food chain’ when writing about living things. Pupils of all abilities know about a range of forces and some can make generalisations about them. One pupil wrote, “The bigger the push or pull the further something moves or the more the shape is changed.” All pupils know about solids and liquids and how they can be separated from a mixture. Higher attaining pupils explain some of the effects of the earth’s movement, such as the apparent movement of the sun. They know that metals conduct electricity while some other materials do not. The main weakness in pupils’ attainment is generally poor ability in scientific enquiry, notably selecting their own equipment and methods and carrying out investigations with some independence.
81. Teaching is satisfactory. Most teachers have good relationships with their pupils and they value their ideas and suggestions. This results in pupils’ good attitudes to learning in science, particularly when teachers let them pursue their own ideas. They listen well to the teacher, taking turns to speak, and most behave well especially when they respect the teacher. Pupils who are new to learning English are effectively involved in all aspects of the lessons and develop specialist vocabulary well. A strength in pupils’ attitudes is the pride that they take in the presentation of their work. Teachers use questioning well to extend learning. For example, questions helped Year 5 pupils to realise that their graphs of pulse rates would look different for each pupil. When teachers clearly convey their interest and enthusiasm, such as in Year 1, there is a significant positive impact on pupils’ attitude and behaviour. Teachers generally do not make sure that they plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to use their skills in ICT. As a result they miss opportunities to enhance their learning in science, for example in the range of recording methods. Teaching does not always ensure that the work the pupils are given to do accurately matches their attainment. Where this does happen, pupils are sometimes given extra tasks rather than more challenging work to extend learning well. As a result, pupils of different levels of ability do not always make consistently good progress, and in particular the higher ability pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are generally supported effectively, particularly by the use of support assistants in the classrooms.
82. The management of the subject is satisfactory and the co-ordinator is identifying good developments for improvement. The school is increasingly using national guidance to plan pupils’ learning. Although it supports teachers in the work that they give pupils to do, it is too new to have made a significant impact on their achievements. Not all teachers are clear about the extent to which they should take account of this guidance. As a result, some work such as that on healthy eating is repeated too often without developing it enough. Other work, such as that on bones, is carried out at great depth while other areas of study are less well developed. For example, teachers place too little emphasis in their planning on extending pupils’ skills of independent enquiry and investigation. This restricts their attainment in important aspects of science such as being able to use their own ideas and decide on suitable methods and ways of recording what they find. While teaching in Year 4 effectively welcomed pupils’ ideas about how they might investigate each others’ hand grip, pupils had insufficient previous experience of devising investigations to support their efforts in this lesson.

ART AND DESIGN

83. Standards in art and design are broadly similar to those expected of pupils at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. All groups of pupils make satisfactory progress.

84. By the age of seven, pupils can use a computer to explore their artistic ideas and create a picture that can be printed. All pupils explore ideas in different media and processes including sewing, although the range of materials they use is narrow. Higher attaining pupils produce sketches and portraits with effective shading although lower attaining pupils work with less attention to accuracy and their work is sometimes not finished. Most pupils can talk about how they could improve their work. Their suggestions are sometimes too general, however, one pupil saying “make it neater”.
85. By the age of eleven, most pupils have good knowledge of a range of famous artists and more able pupils can talk at length about the techniques that they used. They develop increased insight and one pupil spoke of how the work of an artist can change as his or her mood changes. Most pupils use visual information such as the work of famous designers to help them to develop their own work. They have satisfactory skills in using materials and methods, such as screen-printing, to produce sound results. Some pupils explain how techniques such as smudging can bring a desired effect to images of flowers. Pupils tend to evaluate their work in terms that are too broad, although they sometimes modify their work as a result. For example, oval windows in a collage were changed to square. The use of ICT in art and design that begins in Key Stage 1 is not systematically continued through the rest of the school. Therefore, by the time pupils reach Year 6 they have limited skills in using it in their work.
86. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers encourage pupils to refer back to the designs that they have made and this focuses their attention on the accuracy of what they are making. Teaching effectively develops pupils’ ideas for design and colour combinations when, for example, Year 6 pupils look at William Morris designs and colours. Pupils’ attitudes to art are satisfactory and reflect the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. For example, when introductions are too long, pupils tend to lose interest. However, when teaching quickly enables them to become practically involved, their enthusiasm and concentration rapidly improve, as when making masks in Year 4. Sometimes teachers miss opportunities for pupils to talk about the effectiveness of their own and their classmates’ art and design work in any depth. As a result their skills in this aspect of art are not developed as well as they might be. The management of the subject is sound. There is a satisfactory level of resources generally. However, in one lesson, the lack of water pencils restricted pupils’ choice of methods and techniques.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

87. Standards in design and technology are below those expected by the ages of seven and eleven. This is because the school has placed insufficient emphasis on the subject. The school has provided an adequate, though limited, curriculum. As a result, pupils of all abilities in all groups, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, have not made all the progress that they should.
88. When pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6, they have poorly developed skills in designing, making things and evaluating what they have made. The limited opportunities given in the past mean that they have a restricted knowledge of a small range of materials. Their skills and techniques in arranging and joining these materials are similarly weak. Pupils’ judgements about the work that they have completed are very broad evaluations rather than looking to see if they have met the design intentions.
89. The subject has not been managed effectively in the past. However, the new headteacher has begun to address this weakness by appointing a teacher to co-ordinate the subject through the

school. In addition, the school is improving teachers' use of national guidance for the subject when they plan pupils' work. This is intended to ensure that pupils build up their skills, knowledge and understanding in a systematic way. These recent initiatives have yet to have a measurable impact on raising pupils' achievements. However, the new co-ordinator has devised an action plan for improving what teachers provide and she is providing satisfactory leadership of the subject.

90. Evidence from teachers' plans, pupils' finished work and the limited amount of teaching seen during the inspection indicates that teaching and learning in lessons are now satisfactory. Year 2 pupils' finished puppets show that teaching had effectively focused on enabling pupils to draw a design of what they wanted their puppet to look like. It enabled pupils effectively to join a range of materials in different ways, such as with paper clips and sticky tape and by sewing. As a result pupils' puppets are all different, showing originality and imagination in the way that they have used textiles, buttons and other materials. Teaching of food technology in Year 3 is satisfactory because it ensures that resources are well prepared and it values pupils' opinions about sandwiches. It misses opportunities, however, for pupils to take on responsibility, for example in distributing these resources. Pupils have to wait and, as a result, some tend to lose interest. Nevertheless, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally satisfactory through the school. Teachers do not yet plan enough opportunities for pupils to use ICT to enrich their learning in the subject.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

91. Due to the arrangement of the school's timetable, only one lesson was observed in each of the subjects. The additional evidence for judgement on standards is gathered from the analysis of pupils' recorded work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils about their work. The satisfactory standards reported previously have not been maintained. Most pupils attain standards below the expected levels by the age of seven and eleven. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and the few speaking English as an additional language, make unsatisfactory progress overall.
92. The school has now adopted the national guidance in the subjects, but not yet adapted this to the needs of pupils across the school. There are clear plans to improve the curriculum for both subjects more fully and to achieve better depth and range. However, currently there is no long-term overview of topics to guide teachers' planning. The skills in both subjects are not taught systematically for the recommended amount of time. Pupils' past work and discussions with pupils show that they have only adequately covered the required curriculum in both history and geography throughout the school. This is reflected in the amount of work seen in pupils' books, which is sparse and of uneven quality, showing little depth of knowledge and understanding. This is explained by the school's decision to focus strongly on English, mathematics and science with a view to improving standards in these subjects, while giving less emphasis to other subjects, including history and geography. This approach has resulted in significant weaknesses in pupils' geographical and historical knowledge and skills. Valuable opportunities to extend pupils' thinking, for example through evaluating historical evidence and to develop pupils' writing through subjects other than English, have been missed.
93. Evidence from two lessons and teachers' planning shows that they are now beginning to cover the required aspects of history and geography much more thoroughly. Planning based on national advice is clearly beginning to show the ground that is to be covered in both subjects. However, the order in which knowledge and skills are to be taught has not yet been finalised.
94. In geography, pupils in Year 2 are beginning to develop some understanding of their local area. Most pupils know where they live and many successfully identify human and physical features such as parks with flowers and trees and not so attractive features such as rubbish and foul smells. They have very little knowledge of places beyond own locality. The seven year

olds have limited experience of map work and preparing simple plans. The visits to local places of interest contribute well to learning. Year 6 pupils make a residential visit to Alton Castle. Most pupils have adequate knowledge and understanding of the use of keys and symbols when using atlases and maps. Their knowledge of human and physical features of the local area and understanding of places closer to home and further a field are very limited. Pupils in Year 6 are learning about mountain environments. They benefit from opportunities to research and use computers to make detailed presentations using slides. Pupils successfully evaluated their work with presentations and discussed how to improve it further. Pupils in junior classes also study the 'water cycle' and 'features of rivers'. Pupils have very little understanding of the process of the water cycle or how the rivers are formed. This indicates that the topics are not studied in sufficient depth and there is a lack of reinforcement of geographical facts.

95. In history, younger pupils learn about old and new toys. Year 2 pupils learn about past events through their study of famous people such as Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale. Pupils confidently use terms such as 'past' and 'present'. Pupils' past work shows excessive use of photocopied worksheets that do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to devise their own ways of recording what they have learnt. As a result, pupils of different abilities in the same class often do the same work.
96. The older pupils have some knowledge of a range of historical periods, such as the Tudors and the Victorians. They find it hard, however, to make sufficient connections between the different periods studied. They know the importance of evidence in learning about past societies but their knowledge and understanding of the interpretation of history are not well developed. The pupils have had an opportunity to dress up in clothes from Victorian and Tudor times when they visited a castle as part of the study. Their access to a range of sources of historical information is somewhat limited. In the one lesson observed, Year 3 pupils were suitably supported in their learning about the Anglo-Saxons by the use of archaeological photographic evidence of what was discovered at Sutton Hoo.
97. Pupils' attitudes to learning history and geography are satisfactory. They are interested and keen to share their knowledge and opinions. They listen attentively to their teachers and do their best to complete tasks. They work co-operatively in groups and pairs, giving suggestions and making amendments sensitively. In the lessons observed, pupils worked at a suitable pace, and reacted well to praise and encouragement by the teacher.
98. The teachers used appropriate methods and effective questioning. Expectations of pupils are generally appropriate and planning sets out what pupils need to learn. However, the tasks are not always closely matched to pupils' different levels of ability. This was noted in a geography lesson, which was less than satisfactory. The teacher's expectations of pupils' work in this lesson were inappropriate, as materials meant for Year 6 were used for pupils in Year 4 without any modification. Most pupils found the work too challenging, a few resorted to copying from others, while some became very restless and noisy. Most pupils lost interest in the task and this affected the quality of their learning. Teachers do not have a clear assessment system to inform their planning in the subjects.
99. The headteacher is currently caretaking both subjects and has a clear view of what needs to be done to improve the profile of both subjects. Resources are insufficient for effective delivery of the curriculum. For example, every class does not have a globe and the school has limited reference books and materials, including suitable atlases and large maps, and artefacts of good quality and range for history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

100. Standards of attainment in ICT broadly match those expected of pupils by the ages of seven and eleven. This is because all groups of pupils make satisfactory progress in learning and improving their skills as they move through the school. The school makes satisfactory provision to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are supported as necessary to develop their skills. Those pupils with English as an additional language are effectively involved in all activities.
101. By the age of seven, most pupils' standards are similar to those expected for their age. Pupils can use a computer to produce pictures to accompany their writing. Although they produce text, their skills in using computers to produce edited writing for different purposes are limited because teachers give them too few opportunities to develop these skills. Most pupils know how to save their work; they are less sure about how to retrieve it. All pupils effectively give instructions to robots to make them move on the floor or on a screen. Lower attaining pupils talk about how ICT is used in the wider world, such as how it can be used in a local library to find information about butterflies.
102. By the age of eleven, most pupils achieve the standards expected for their age. Pupils of all abilities effectively combine images and text, for example to present information to others about mountains. Some pupils incorporate sounds, such as a gun shot, in their presentations. All pupils show a growing awareness of their audience as they accompany their slides with a commentary. By evaluating their work, they have an understanding of the qualities needed for a good presentation. Pupils can use the Internet to find information. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of the need to word questions carefully when they use a search engine to gather information. They know that inaccurately worded questions can result in unsuitable responses. Most pupils have sound skills in controlling robots. However, they have poor abilities in using equipment to sense physical data because teachers do not secure enough opportunities, such as temperature sensing, for this skill to be developed. Some pupils, including higher attaining pupils, have limited abilities to talk about the range of uses of ICT in the wider world. They find it difficult to compare, for example, the alternative methods to using facilities such as e-mail.
103. The main weakness in the school's provision for the subject springs from the school's planning. Teachers do not plan systematically enough for pupils to use their developing ICT skills in their work in a range of other subjects, for example in recording data from science experiments or mathematics investigations. As a result, they miss opportunities for pupils to practise and improve these abilities as well as enhance their learning in those subjects. The new subject co-ordinator provides strong leadership and plans to resolve this deficiency through new software. The computer suite is well equipped and used effectively, and there is an interactive whiteboard that teachers are beginning to use with increasing confidence to enrich pupils' learning. The school has appropriate strategies to ensure that pupils are protected from offensive material when using the Internet.
104. Teaching is good. Teachers use the computer suite effectively, making pupils feel valued and confident in their efforts by praising them. They engage pupils' interest well and give them challenging tasks and so pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. One support assistant, for example, encouraged pupils who were unsure to "have a go". This fostered pupils' independence well. A significant factor is the school's effective use of support assistants from within the school and from Wednesbury EAZ. Their high levels of competence in ICT help

them to teach pupils new skills in well-structured lessons. Throughout the school, teachers and support assistants give pupils clear explanations so that they have a good picture of what they need to do and they are well prepared for each task. Staff ensure that they use correct terms, such as 'cell' when working on spreadsheets, and they help pupils to become familiar with them. As a result, higher attaining pupils in Year 5 talk confidently about 'formula builders'. They effectively develop pupils' understanding of spreadsheets by likening them to 'function machines' and enabling pupils to use calculators to perform a similar process. The main weakness in teaching is that through the school, teachers do not always accurately match the work that they give to pupils' differing levels of skill. As a result, pupils of different levels of ability do not always make best progress.

MUSIC

105. Pupils reach the standards expected of their ages by the end of Years 2 and 6. The co-ordinator has made a satisfactory evaluation of the school's provision and used this to introduce new materials to support teachers' planning. This gives the school a secure framework to improve provision over the coming years, supported by the developing system of monitoring. In particular, there is a wider range of music from other cultures that is used to extend pupils' cultural experiences, improving on the position indicated in the last report. Pupils perform in local music festivals and a number extend their music education by learning an instrument with peripatetic teachers supplied through the local authority.
106. Throughout the school, pupils sing with enthusiasm in assemblies. This contributes to the overall atmosphere for learning. Although no music lessons could be seen in the infant classes, hymn practice showed that these pupils make good attempts to sing. When singing unaccompanied, they are tuneful and most pupils follow the words well. When given the opportunity, they take particular delight in the actions to many of the religious songs they sing. The teachers give sound guidance to pupils to help them to improve their performances.
107. Pupils in the junior classes develop greater understanding of the structure of music. They recognise an increasing range of musical terms such as 'rhythm', 'pitch' and 'pentatonic', using them correctly in their answers to teachers' questions. They sing different types of songs and begin to tackle some difficult tunes, working hard to improve their performances. They show increasing confidence with a range of pitched and unpitched percussion instruments. Teachers provide a good range of activities to help pupils make up their own compositions and pupils use different forms of notation to record what they compose. Most pupils are keen to co-operate and work together in groups, although this is best where teachers give clear positive guidelines for pupils' behaviour. When teachers need to work hard to keep control, the pace of the lesson slows and this leads to increased inattention from pupils and less learning.
108. Teaching in music lessons is satisfactory throughout the school. Teachers prepare well and ensure that they have the necessary resources ready to ensure that lessons are paced appropriately. They make sure that pupils of all levels of attainment are fully involved in the lessons by asking good questions or supplying supporting materials. Many teachers are not fully confident with teaching the subject and make substantial use of the school's materials to plan their work. This is often effective although sometimes teachers are limited in their responses if pupils do not follow the lesson well.
109. The school makes very effective use of support from the Wednesbury EAZ, for example in widening pupils' experiences of percussion instruments. Year 5 pupils used a good range of

drums and other percussion to play a West African piece of music confidently in assembly. They know the names of the instruments, their origins and some of their important characteristics. They show very good levels of interest and enjoyment and take pride in playing for the school and their parents. This is a significant contribution to the personal and social development of the pupils. Year 6 pupils composed their own songs in a very good lesson taken by the EAZ teacher. She sets clear targets and gives good instructions that motivate pupils to try their best. Pupils use glockenspiels and other percussion to create their pieces, showing knowledge and understanding of music notation. Very effective questioning from the EAZ and class teachers encourages pupils to develop their work by pitching the tunes and making them more interesting. The lesson encouraged pupils to work together and was a strong contribution to pupils' social development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

110. The standards reached by pupils by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are typical for their age. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are new to learning English are effectively involved in all physical education opportunities and make satisfactory progress with the rest. The new subject co-ordinator provides sound leadership and management for the subject and has identified ways to widen the current curriculum for the subject. There is a sound range of well-attended sporting opportunities planned for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds, in after-school clubs and competitions. These include tag-rugby, netball, athletics and fitness fun for infants. Many of these use facilities or skilled coaching from outside the school and do not take place throughout the year. The school is currently exploring ways to widen the range of activities it can offer to pupils to extend their sporting experiences.
111. Pupils in the infant classes develop understanding of the effect of exercise on their bodies and some important reasons to maintain fitness. Year 1 pupils develop a good range of skills in simple games involving throwing, catching and jumping. They follow simple rules well and develop good attitudes to games as well as an understanding of scoring and competition. Many Year 2 pupils improved their ball control through clear instructions and good examples shown by the teacher. Pupils in the junior classes improve their approaches to teamwork and co-operation in their lessons and their games. They take part with energy and enthusiasm but handle materials with increased control. By Year 6, pupils have a sound range of games and gymnastics skills that they apply to their lessons. They have clear understanding of ways to keep fit and recognise important aspects of this that include the need to warm up and stretch muscles. The school makes good use of the local swimming pool so that most pupils reach the expected standards in swimming.
112. The teaching throughout the school is satisfactory, although there are variations in quality. Most teachers manage their pupils soundly and lessons are well organised. In some lessons, such as in Years 1 and 6, teachers are very clear about how pupils should behave and give much positive support. As a result, pupils in these lessons behave very well and disputes are rare. Occasionally, for example when Year 2 pupils were taken by a temporary teacher, pupils did not stop and listen as well as they might, and time was wasted in waiting for this to happen. Sometimes pupils lose interest when they are inactive, for example observing others or waiting their turn. However, most pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy their physical education lessons.
113. In the best lessons, teachers use a good combination of clear instructions and good use of examples of pupils' work to help pupils to improve. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to practise skills and then use them in small, exciting games. All of these features

contributed to a successful lesson in Year 6 where pupils made very good strides in developing a warm-up routine for the other pupils. The pupils co-operated well to plan an activity that included all the necessary elements that they had previously discussed. As groups worked together, the teacher engaged pupils in a discussion about ways to improve their ideas. As a result of her comments, their sequences of movements improved and they presented them confidently to the rest of the class, showing sound control and coordination. Other class members offered constructive and relevant comments that would be useful in improving their performances.