

INSPECTION REPORT

COLESHILL HEATH SCHOOL

Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham

LEA area: Solihull

Unique reference number: 104070

Headteacher: Mr D Dunkley

Lead inspector: Mrs H Evans

Dates of inspection: 15 – 17 September 2003

Inspection number: 255855

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	416
School address:	Marlene Croft Chelmsley Wood Birmingham
Postcode:	B37 7JT
Telephone number:	0121 770 4340
Fax number:	0121 779 3128
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Tadd
Date of previous inspection:	17 May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This larger-than-average school is situated within a housing estate with high-rise flats in the borough of Solihull. There are 416 pupils on roll who are taught in 14 classes. There is also a nursery class for 54 children who attend on a part-time basis. Linked to the school there is a pre-school group called 'Chuckles' and a play centre known as 'Chums', which many pupils attend before the start of each school day, in the evenings and in the school holidays. Although a few pupils are from other than White British backgrounds none speaks other than English at home. The area is listed as being in the bottom 5 per cent of national statistics for social deprivation. About double the national average of pupils claim their entitlement to free school meals. At the time of the inspection this was 37 per cent of pupils.

In the nursery and reception classes there are nine children with identified special educational needs, and many others suffer from asthma. A number of other children, new to the school, have been identified as having learning difficulties. At this early stage in the term these may be linked with the newness of the situation. In the main school there is a total of 73 pupils with identified special educational needs and of these three have statements of special educational need. Most of these pupils have difficulties with speech and communication and have a very limited range of vocabulary. Others have problems linked directly to difficulties with numeracy. Again other pupils have barriers to learning such as health and medical problems that cause them to attend erratically and therefore to miss learning opportunities. On entry to the nursery and the school children's attainment varies. For the majority, however, it is very low when compared with that of children of the same age nationally.

The headteacher is seconded to the local authority for three days each week to support other schools. He still ensures that the school is fully involved with local and national initiatives such as 'Investors in People' and work with the local excellence cluster. The day-to-day management of the school is led by the deputy headteacher with the support of the rest of the senior management team known as the 'Standards Team'.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21374	Mrs H Evans	Lead inspector	Design and technology Physical education English as an additional language
9970	Mr J Acaster	Lay inspector	
19507	Mrs B Andrews	Team inspector	English Geography History
21893	Mrs V Brittain	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Music Special educational needs
23204	Mrs C Wojtak	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design
8420	Mrs V Roberts	Team inspector	Religious Education Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
Strathblane House
Ashfield Road
Cheadle
Stockport
SK8 1BB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	9
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	15
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	18
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2	20
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school that provides satisfactory value for money. Most pupils make steady progress in all areas of learning, although progress in mathematics is slower than in other subjects. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory in every part of the school and in many lessons they are good. Pupils respect the school and want to learn. The care and support available for pupils who have special educational needs and other barriers to learning are good. The leadership of the senior management team is good; they work well together. The procedures in place to tackle the weaknesses in English, mathematics and science have been tested in selected classes and are clear and practical. The use of these strategies across the entire school is too new to make any firm judgement about their total effectiveness so early in the term. Despite the many positive elements, until the standards in the subjects that have statutory testing are raised the school is judged to provide satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very high level of pastoral care and community links successfully involve parents in their children's education.
- The low overall standards attained in tests in English, mathematics and science.
- The development of pupils' self-esteem through attaining high standards that exceed national expectations in creative and physical subjects such as music, art, and physical education.
- The lack of consistency when using both the marking policy and the new methods of setting precise targets for improvement, particularly in mathematics and science.
- The good shared commitment by the standards team and the governing body to raising standards in all of the academic subjects.
- Pupils' increased levels of competence in using skills learned in information and communication in other subjects across the curriculum are proving to be useful.
- The establishment of a culture and pattern for learning in the nursery and the reception classes is good.
- The below average level of attendance.

Since the last inspection teaching has improved and is more consistent. Clear procedures for assessing learning and planning new work are in place. The provision for teaching and using information and communication technology across the curriculum is good. Resources are good for most subjects. There is good provision in the nursery and the reception classes and the play area for younger children is safe, stimulating and exciting. These improvements have prepared the school well for its next steps forward that are properly aimed at raising standards in English, mathematics and science.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	E	E	C
Mathematics	D	E	E	D
Science	D	D	E	D

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

Pupils' achievement is good in many areas and is satisfactory overall in academic subjects.

In the nursery and the reception class the pupils make good gains in all areas of learning especially in their personal, emotional and social, creative and physical development. From the very low starting level many children have not attained the goals that they are expected to reach by the end of the reception classes. Across the school pupils' achievements and standards in lessons are better than those shown in the statutory tests. In Years 1 and 2 standards have been improving steadily, providing a good base for the further improvement seen in Years 3 and 4. By the end of Year 6 standards are still well below average in English, mathematics and science and in 2003 the standards in mathematics were very low. In part, this is because many families move in and out of the area very frequently so that the nature of the Year 6 classes in recent years has changed significantly. Pupils with troubled backgrounds who transfer to the school from other places have a persistent and negative effect on the slow but real improvements in standards. Standards in information and communication technology have risen productively. Standards of attainment in subjects that do not depend on a wide vocabulary, skills in speaking or academic competence such as those in the performing arts and creative and physical subjects, are above expectations.

Pupils' personal qualities and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Most of the pupils like school and respect the established values. Most attend regularly and on time. There are, however, a few pupils whose attendance is poor or who are regularly late. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their respect for what the school is offering them are obvious in lessons and in the way they tell of residential visits and competitions with other schools. Pupils' good understanding of spiritual, cultural and social aspects of life is enriched by the many opportunities to celebrate sporting events, attend concerts and compose music and perform for parents and the community to a very high level. Moral development is an essential part of achieving the harmonious and well-balanced community that makes up this school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good and the quality of teaching is predominantly good with instances of very good teaching. The inspection was at an early stage of the term when routines were being established. Relationships between teachers and pupils were being built up and as a result work was not always matched precisely to pupils' prior attainment. Teaching was always at least satisfactory, in a quarter of lessons seen was very good and one lesson was judged to be excellent. Pupils' learning builds steadily on their existing knowledge. The curriculum provision is very good and is well balanced. Skills learned in subjects such as literacy and numeracy are practised sensibly and are used well to support work in other subjects. Teachers work together well to evaluate and assess completed work and to share lesson planning. There is superb provision for many activities out of lessons, in the evenings and at weekends. Initiatives such as 'Chums' and 'Chuckles' provide invaluable links that help pupils to learn better. The school's grounds are very well developed and provide rich opportunities for play, sport and learning. Good use is made of the facilities such as the sensory garden and the pond area. Opportunities to share in cultural and educational events are shared by pupils and their parents. The involvement with parents and the community increases pupils' achievements.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher is the strategic leader of the school. He has a charismatic vision for the school's future that sets the direction for the work of staff and the governing body very well. The deputy headteacher is the day-to-day operations manager. Decisions made by the governors are carried out thoroughly under his direction. His thoroughness means that the standards team works together efficiently. The skills of the special support manager in his work with pupils and their families make a tremendous and sometimes dramatic contribution to the school. He successfully implements the planned and committed work of the well-informed and democratic governing body.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

In conversations, at the meeting and in their questionnaires, parents expressed very high satisfaction about the school and how it provides for their children. Most pupils have very positive views about the school and what they learn to do. They are pleased that this term the bullying that has sometimes occurred in the past is not happening at all.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Improve standards attained in tests across the school in English, mathematics and science as set out in each of these subjects' action plans.
- Use the established marking strategy consistently to promote day-to-day assessment.
- Rigorously implement the well-structured assessment procedures in order to set precise targets for improvement for each group or when necessary each individual.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement in many subjects in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3 to 6 is good but in the past two years it has been barely satisfactory in mathematics. Standards attained in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 are well below those expected, although they are like those in similar schools in English, but are below in mathematics and science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards achieved in art and design, music, design and technology and physical education are above those expected from pupils at the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6.
- Standards in English, mathematics and science are too low.
- Achievement is good by the end of Year 6.
- The improved standards and the regular and successful approach to independent work by pupils in Years 3 and 4 are positive features.

Commentary

1. From a very low base on entry children in the nursery and reception classes known as the Foundation Stage make good progress and achieve well. By the end of reception, however, many children have not attained the expected levels particularly in literacy, numeracy and in their knowledge and understanding of the world.
2. In Years 1 and 2 and again in Years 3 to 6, pupils' achievements in terms of added value are at least satisfactory in English and science but are unsatisfactory in mathematics. Most of the pupils who have been educated at the school since the nursery do very well and attain standards that are above the expected levels in all subjects. The population in the area around the school is very mobile and one reason for limited achievement is the change in the structure of classes. Most times, as last year, these changes bring disruptive and unsettled groups into the Year 6 classes. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are much better than in 1999 and are used well to support learning in other subjects. A positive sign is the improved approach to independent work by pupils in Years 3 and 4 that is showing success in increased achievement and a more rapid rate of learning.
3. The school works to overcome the difficulties facing pupils by providing rich and supportive opportunities for developing self-esteem and personal worth in subjects that depend far less on their academic strengths. This results in standards in the creative and performing arts and physical subjects being well above expectations providing opportunities for pupils to 'shine' and achieve at a level far above that shown in formal tests. From this strong base of belief in personal success by pupils, the other important subjects of English, mathematics and science as well as geography, history and religious education are now being promoted.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	14.3 (15.1)	15.8 (15.7)

Writing	13.2 (14.1)	14.4 (14.3)
Mathematics	16.1 (17.9)	16.5 (16.2)

There were 58 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.0 (24.3)	27.0 (27.0)
Mathematics	24.6 (24.5)	26.7 (26.6)
Science	26.2 (27.5)	28.3 (28.3)

There were 67pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. The trend over the past four years has been of improvement in line with that of schools nationally. This means, however, that the gap between pupils' attainment at the school and the average for all schools has not been reduced. Those pupils who have done well by the end of Year 2 have often moved to other areas and have been replaced by pupils with poorer scores and a less successful academic history. This creates difficulties for pupils and the school in making the upward leap that would encourage everyone to believe that academic success was not just an aspiration but a reality.
5. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress in lessons because of the quality of support they receive and the work that is planned to meet their needs. Their attainment matches that of their peers because of the additional support provided for them and is appropriate when account is taken of their learning difficulties. Achievement over time is satisfactory. Initiatives that provide these pupils with extra support have only recently been put in place.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The general standard of pupils' attitudes and behaviour is good. The school promotes their personal development well. Despite this, attendance overall is less good than it should be. The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Those pupils who tend to have poor records of attendance and punctuality are very effectively targeted and encouraged to improve, but despite the school's efforts increasing numbers of pupils miss school through holidays being taken during term time.
- Most pupils think highly of their school, and are happy in it. They like the helpfulness of teachers and the content of their lessons, and they are keen to learn.
- Behaviour is predominantly good, it is friendly and self-controlled; staff keep an appropriately close eye on this and effectively address the few behavioural difficulties that arise.

Commentary

6. Many pupils on entry have very low social skills and it is much to the credit of the school that most quickly find enjoyment in listening well to others and taking part co-operatively. Through the leadership of the headteacher and key staff a friendly but strong tone of self-discipline and responsibility is set. This very good ethos permeates pupils' attitudes.

Assemblies, for example, are imbued with integrity, based upon good family and Christian values, and pupils' behaviour in school naturally reflects much of the very caring and inclusive attitudes they encounter. Consequently exclusions are infrequent.

7. The good attitudes and behaviour securely established among the overwhelming majority of pupils now form a very good base from which to focus upon individuals' improvement in academic standards. Though absence is not a major factor in the school's low examination results, and punctuality overall is satisfactory, a higher level of consistent attendance could benefit the attainment of many pupils.
8. Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to learning because work is matched to meet their individual needs and this enables them to achieve success. The school is a very inclusive community and special needs pupils are well accepted and integrated.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.5	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Black or Black British – Caribbean

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
306	6	1
3	0	0
24	0	0
4	0	0
1	0	0
4	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

9. Pupils' knowledge of the world and their personal development are stimulated by a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme, supplemented by a wide range of high quality activities outside lessons, including residential visits. Most pupils towards the top of the school enjoy the responsibilities open to them, and their class committees produce sensible observations for school improvement. Last year's Year 6 pupils, for instance, took the initiative to organise themselves to raise funds to purchase benches on which they and their successors could sit during assemblies.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good** and the quality of teaching is **predominantly good with instances of very good teaching**. In one lesson teaching was judged to be **excellent**. Curriculum provision is **very good** and is enriched by many opportunities for reinforcing work learned in class, in the community where its relevance is made clear to pupils.

Teaching and learning

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	5 (12%)	24 (59%)	11(27%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

10. During the inspection the teaching observed in classes across the school was predominantly good. Where the teaching was judged to be only satisfactory it was frequently because the pace of learning was slowed as a result of pupils working very slowly in new classes where they needed constant revision of work learned before the holidays. In these lessons teachers were patient and supportive and gradually increased the work rate as pupils remembered skills from previous years.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong subject knowledge by teachers and a commitment to raise standards.
- Sensible and shared planning across age groups.
- Practical and sensible assessment strategies.
- A good workable marking policy.
- Inconsistency in marking is a weakness that creates a mismatch of work for some pupils.
- Teachers' unfamiliarity with the new assessment strategies creates an inconsistent approach so that small-step targets are not sufficiently precise in all classes.
- Supportive homework to reinforce learning in lessons is proving to be an aid to learning.

Commentary

11. In all lessons teachers' knowledge of the subject was secure and the objectives set were clearly explained to pupils. Whenever possible they linked their teaching to earlier work or to practical experiences that most pupils remembered. Resources selected and methods chosen were always suitable. Teachers in matched classes plan together effectively but where new pupils had joined the class at the start of the term sometimes learning was slowed for others in the group as these children were helped to settle in. Teachers always engage pupils' interest at the start of lessons and the pace of learning is then brisk. Pupils are often tired, especially during the first lesson of the day, and maintaining their concentration sometimes proves difficult. Teachers across the school constantly encourage them to complete tasks and continue trying even when the work proved difficult. The tired pupils have only limited concentration. The most skilled teachers change the focus of lessons in subtle ways to rekindle such pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Challenging work is more evident in Years 3 to 6 where the pupils have more experience of success. In one or two lessons the work set was too difficult and the teacher then needed to change the work set.
12. These instances reinforce the need for all teachers to follow the agreed marking policy meticulously as an important strand of the new assessment procedures. These were devised in response to the evaluation and assessment of disappointing test results. The procedures have a clear focus for analysis of strengths and weaknesses and setting short measurable targets for improvement. They have been tested successfully in selected classes for the past six months and have now been adopted throughout the school. The more experienced teachers are more skilled than others in applying them at this early part of the school year.

13. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs is good overall and support staff, including learning mentors, make a powerful contribution to this. It is particularly effective in English and mathematics lessons when year groups are arranged so that pupils are taught in smaller classes. Work is well matched to meet pupils' needs and basic skills are well taught. Most make good progress. Support assistants and learning mentors are used well to enable special needs pupils to be fully involved in whole class discussions so raising their self-esteem.
14. Homework is set at suitable levels and during the inspection was seen to be a positive aid to learning. Many pupils who find homework difficult ask for help and support at the 'Chums' after-school facility where a calm atmosphere and skilled support provides help with reading and more formal homework.
15. The staff realise that to accomplish the task of raising standards, there has to be total compliance with the agreed behaviour policy. This is managed calmly and effectively from the nursery onwards to good effect. The special support manager is available to deal with pupils who have particular or urgent needs or who need help in understanding how the good atmosphere for learning is maintained. This means that lessons are now calm and productive, which has not always been the case in the past. Trained classroom assistants help with supporting and encouraging pupils who think of adopting poor behaviour as a tool to gain attention or to spoil a lesson. Sensitive intervention at possible 'flash-points' was seen to defuse possible problems just as they showed signs of erupting. This approach by the teachers and the support staff is a strength of pupil management that provides a genuine way forward in the task of promoting success in learning.

The curriculum

The curriculum provides very good enrichment experiences and is a significant strength of the school. It fully meets statutory requirements and has been greatly improved since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The broad and rich curricular opportunities effectively prepare pupils for later life.
- There are very good opportunities for enrichment and personal development.
- Curriculum development is strong, particularly in the creative arts.
- There is wide participation in sport, the arts and other activities.
- The infant and junior buildings are separate, which affects the ease with which pupils in Years 3 to 6 pupils can access the computer suite.

Commentary

16. The emphasis placed on joint planning has resulted in a wealth of linked experiences that emphasise skills as well as knowledge in a number of areas. Additional staffing helps to provide access to a relevant curriculum for smaller groups in English and mathematics, and outside specialist provision for music is resulting in confident learners. The development of the ICT curriculum is a good improvement and is helping to strengthen literacy and numeracy skills, which are taught satisfactorily through other subjects. Pupils are prepared for later life in a number of ways. Good examples include the school council and the Year 10 'study buddy' initiative, which helps to bridge the jump from Coleshill to the local high school.

17. Lessons in citizenship are carefully planned and are about democratic bodies and processes. They are part of the comprehensive personal, social and health education programme, which includes well-planned opportunities for pupils to manage their emotional health. People from outside agencies support teaching about sex and relationships education, and drug awareness very well. The school values outdoor education and ensures that all pupils have access to a good range of residential visits. These begin in Year 2 and, through the opportunities on offer, pupils develop a greater spiritual appreciation of the world and their place in society. The surrounding fields have been imaginatively developed to provide an environment that can be used for creative play or for structured learning during science, geography and physical education lessons.
18. In addition to the excellent residential and day visits, interesting visitors such as artists, dancers and the community health professionals add another dimension to the curriculum for pupils. The older pupils enjoy ice-skating sessions and involvement in the ice-hockey league. The strong programme of after-school activities generates pupils' enthusiasm for learning. These are very well attended and promote a love for the creative and performing arts and sport. A prime example of imaginative curriculum development is the creative arts project organised by school staff on Saturday mornings. This unites the older junior pupils with other students from the local community in a shared enterprise of fun and social development.
19. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The good procedures identify pupils with learning difficulties at an early stage. Support is put in place swiftly. Those pupils with behavioural difficulties or with other special needs are well supported. The individual educational plans prepared for these pupils are implemented well by class teachers and support staff. These plans specify targets that are short-term, measurable and achievable. All of these pupils have equal access to the whole curriculum, including extra-curricular activities.
20. The teaching staff is a strong team of youth and experience and pupils look to the adults as powerful role models. They forge natural links across subjects, which works well to reinforce skills.
21. The accommodation is good, although the infant and junior buildings are not linked, and this has an adverse impact on the ease with which the older pupils can access the I.C.T. suite for independent research. The space and the cleanliness of the building are of a high order. Each new improvement has been planned and executed with care by the forward-thinking school leaders and the skilled team. This team of workers, led by the site-manager, work wonders to turn the vision into reality. The work that is carried out is of high quality because the team cares strongly about the school environment. Very good attention has been paid to the safety aspects of the building and the first phase of security fencing has greatly improved the safety of whole site. This was noticeable during the inspection when a child with behavioural problems ran out of one of the doors, was stopped by a safety barrier and came to no harm.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares for, guides and supports its pupils well. Teachers pay careful attention to their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standard of care and support for pupils' welfare is good and the school constantly seeks to find ways of improving it.
- Strongly inclusive pastoral attitudes and systems are in place throughout the school so that pupils feel increasingly confident in expressing themselves.
- Pupils' views are listened to and discussed with respect, but challenged when necessary with sensitivity, so that maturity in thinking is promoted well.
- Close and prompt support is given to those experiencing difficulties of all sorts, but the general use of information gathered during assessment for pushing on academic improvement is not sharply developed in all classes.

Commentary

22. The school sets great store on understanding the personality and background of its pupils as individuals. Home visits are invariably made before entry to the nursery, for instance, and liaison with parents continues as much as possible throughout each child's time in school. The special support manager and his team are assiduous in guiding and monitoring those pupils having difficulties concerning attendance, behaviour or attitudes. Child protection procedures are similarly well established. As part of the re-modelling of the entrance hall and administrative block, begun the week after the inspection, the school has responded promptly to the need to lodge these records more securely.
23. Practical pastoral care is broadly based, ranging from a daily breakfast club through to after-school provision. Pupils are generally very appreciative of the supportive ethos and come forward to take advantage of it. They will, for instance, report when others have been unkindly treated and are confident of the way in which this will be handled. The school swiftly picks up poor behaviour by pupils and deals effectively with it. In this trusting atmosphere pupils are not afraid to criticise where they see a need for improvement. This includes defective toilet arrangements or drab walls. The school has a well-structured programme for continuous improvement that takes note of pupils' views.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community is very strong and is a successful feature of the school's work. Good co-operation in this area is properly considered to be vital for any effective educational improvement of its pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is consistently welcoming and encouraging to parents.
- more parents are taking their children away for holidays during term time, damaging pupils' progress.
- the quality of links with the local community is outstanding.
- The school uses the very good links it has built up with other schools and providers to ensure that any concerns are handled as smoothly as possible for pupils.

Commentary

24. Parents are almost unanimous about the high quality of the arrangements for settling their children into school. They also speak very well of the friendly reception they themselves always receive. About one parent in five has reservations about the quality of behaviour in school but there is general recognition that problem behaviour is addressed well. Teachers of each year group provide much information and guidance for parents. The consultation evenings each term, where behaviour and progress are discussed, are attended by about four

parents in five. Academic reports are satisfactory and provide the information that parents need. The interim ones sent home in the autumn and spring terms set more generalised targets.

25. The school has close links with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and their views are taken into consideration at all times. Parents are kept fully informed about the progress and the needs of their children through a useful home/school booklet. Parents are encouraged to be involved in regular reviews and they receive copies of all documentation.
26. The school values parental assistance and is keen to enhance the opportunities for parents and other members of the local community to enjoy the benefits of extending their knowledge and skills, with their children. The school works diligently to support their working and social needs. Appreciation in the area is consequently growing steadily and a community focus group has been formed to plan and respond to suggestions. Similarly, through much joint working with local partner schools, a very good level of understanding and consistency has been achieved, for instance in relation to behavioural and attendance expectations, staff training and liaison over transfers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, deputy headteacher, key staff and the governing body demonstrate good leadership and management skills.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The commitment of all the leadership and management team in the drive to raise standards.
- The vision and drive of the headteacher.
- The work of the special support manager is pivotal to creating an atmosphere that permits learning to take place and enables pupils' achievement to flourish.
- The deputy headteacher as the 'operations manager' is good at getting things done.
- The confidence and competence of the governing body acting as challenging and democratic friends of the school.

Commentary

27. The headteacher, who is seconded to the local authority for part of each week, and his deputy work in tandem with the very effective support and co-operation of the rest of the standards team and all of the subject co-ordinators. As a result both the leadership and management of the school are good. The standards team sets an atmosphere for living and learning that exemplifies the aims of the school. There is a total commitment across the entire staff to maintaining what is recognised as being good and developing a strong and positive culture for academic success. Once this has been achieved, the team will be able to consider themselves very good, but the steps towards this success are slow in coming. From the strong base of controlled pupils' behaviour, improving attendance, good teaching and the rich foundation in the subjects that do not depend on academic prowess, the entire team knows that work to raise standards must be the main focus of the school. The attention to detail and care includes teaching, welfare, administrative, maintenance and management staff. Indeed, the awareness of the support staff in alerting the attention of others often enables action to be taken at just the right time to encourage pupils. Since the last inspection the vision and leadership of the headteacher have enabled the school to develop a strategic plan for the future. This is not enough in itself but with the structured action plans for subjects and training there is a

framework that provides a springboard for increased success in the future. The school recognises the need for constant review, evaluation and refinement of existing good practice. In this way the newly introduced patterns of work for assessment and target setting are used by every teacher to achieve the declared aims.

28. Teachers have played a productive part in reviewing the curriculum and in extending the management role of subject co-ordinators. The headteacher, designated governors and co-ordinators observe lessons and share the best practice with others. Teachers are empowered to plan for the improvement of their subject through the use of designated funds allocated from the school budget that is tied to the school improvement plan. They audit initiatives and report to colleagues and governors as to how the planned work is progressing. Staff share the process of evaluating work, reflect about the standards achieved and the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
29. The governors form a democratic body and are involved in monitoring work within the school to good effect. All of the members participate well, bringing various skills and talents to the task. They all have a very strong sense of the school's place in the community. Teachers, support staff and governors share regular training. The learning resources are of good quality and are readily accessible.
30. The management of provision and spending for special educational needs is good. The headteacher has a strong commitment to ensuring high quality provision for pupils that is shared by the staff and governors. Training is considered to be a priority and all staff are familiar with recent developments. Those working with pupils with specific needs such as autism have attended relevant courses and this is reflected in the quality of provision.
31. The school's arrangements for financial management and control are good. The competent administrative staff work well together with the senior management team to ensure that the budget is tightly controlled, and the requirements of the governing body are met. The governors have benefited from training in performance management. They have responded well to their role of setting targets for the senior managers and in monitoring how well their plans and procedures are working. Despite all of these positive elements, until pupils' attainment matches the expected standards the school is judged to provide only satisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	990,124	Balance from previous year	58,998
Total expenditure	984,163	Balance carried forward to the next	28,041
Expenditure per pupil	2,236		

The large amount shown as a balance from 2001 was as a result of a debt repayment to the school from the previous year.

What is the effectiveness of the schools involvement with the community?

The work of the school as shown through its community links is superb. The school is committed to providing child-care from 7.00am until 6.00pm throughout the year and the

implementation of a full programme of family learning, health and social care and study support. The links with a wide range of agencies and providers are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Deep knowledge and understanding of the needs of the families whose pupils attend the school.
- Strong support provided by the linked organisations known as ‘Chums’ and ‘Chuckles’.
- Very effective provision at a Saturday Club known as Northern Lights.
- Superb support for pupils and families in crisis.
- Valuable learning opportunities provided for parents ranging from basic literacy and numeracy to parenting, homemaking and recreational skills.

Commentary

32. The additional provision by the school to educate the whole child and support the family is a vital provision that reflects the philosophy and work of the school.
33. The well-established pre-school provision for very young children and total care for the family as seen in the linked provision through ‘Chums’ and ‘Chuckles’ is an important part of what makes the school so important to the community. The opportunities provided for parents to increase their own skills in literacy and numeracy are extended to ways of using ICT to help their children learn and to recreational pursuits such as flower arrangement and singing. The support for families’ health and well-being is always available with pre-natal and antenatal support via the Sure-Start programme and continued links into the secondary phase through the peer mentors programme.
34. All of these elements in a learning process for children and adults, through links with Solihull College, and the linked secondary school increase the high value that parents place on the work of the school. It is through the work with parents that problems such as truancy, disruptive behaviour and poor attitudes have been and are being addressed with such a high level of success.
35. Teachers give unstintingly of their time in the evenings and at the creative and performing arts club known as Northern Lights that meets on Saturdays and is linked with the Solihull Music Service. During these activities past and present pupils develop high personal standards and they bring these into all of their work in school with increasing success. The school’s links with teacher training institutions and with the cluster of schools in the neighbourhood are so strong that opportunities for pupils from the school to ‘slip through the net’ have been minimised.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is good overall. The majority of children enter school with attainment that is very low compared with that of most children nationally. Most achieve well as a result of well-planned teaching and good support. Staff ensure that the learning needs of children are identified early through careful assessment. Subsequently, children with special educational needs receive good support and make progress alongside their friends. The outdoor area is greatly improved since the previous inspection and teachers have improved their planning for physical development, role-play and activities using computers.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is good. This is given high priority in the school. Children achieve well and make good progress in the way they work and play together.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well prepared activities and classrooms increase the independence of children.
- Good teamwork ensures strong support for children who need direction.

Commentary

36. The staff work as an effective team and children are introduced sensitively but thoroughly to good social conduct. Staff have a good knowledge of the needs of young children. They take time to talk to children and use praise sensitively to raise children's self esteem. Relationships between staff and children are very good. Nursery nurses and support staff, in and out of class, make a good contribution to children's personal, social and emotional development.
37. On entry to reception children learn the expected routines well. Most work as part of a group and take advantage of the well-planned activities that the teachers and support staff provide. In reception they behave well and share toys and experiences such as those in '*Percy's Park*' and they take turns at being the park keeper. With more direction from the teacher, children play their part in the '*Percy's* puppet show' with growing confidence.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision for communication, language and literacy is good. Children achieve well and make good progress although standards remain below the expected level.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and is carefully directed towards developing children's language skills; good links are made between all activities.
- Teachers sometimes attempt too much in daily planning.
- Support assistants are under-used during whole class discussions.

Commentary

38. In the nursery children quickly learn to settle quietly and listen attentively in stories such as 'Spot the dog'. By the time they reach the reception classes children rarely reach the goals expected for their age because of their narrow vocabulary. Many children have difficulty in framing their thoughts into whole sentences. They successfully name characters from stories but are less confident when re-telling well-loved stories. By the end of the reception most children 'read' stories successfully by referring to the pictures, and a few read simple books with repetitive texts. They make good attempts at tracing and copying their name and a few more able children recognise their own names and copy sentences written by the teachers.
39. The staff introduce a modified literacy hour gradually so that children recognise links between reading and writing. In shared work, support staff are not well used to assess children's levels of response and interaction in question and answer sessions. Whilst the level of challenge is often good, questions from the teacher involve too much teacher talk and not enough child response. Writing skills are developed well through painting and drawing.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is good. Children's skills in numeracy are slightly better than their language skills. From the low starting point progress is good and children achieve well, but by the end of their time in reception their attainment remains below average overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, particularly in the use of assessment procedures.
- There is good support for less able children but there is too little challenge.
- Sometimes introductions take too long and children do not get enough time to work and think.

Commentary

40. Children develop mathematical skills in practical ways throughout the day. Many groups of children have only been in school for a few days, teachers therefore concentrate on what children know and can do. Most children count up to ten but have difficulty in ordering numbers. Staff plan interesting activities but sometimes their instructions are too difficult for the children to understand. Most activities are well matched to the children's number skills. In these instances they succeed and learn well although a few slower learners are still asked to repeat activities when they appear to be ready to move on. Very young children begin to recognise and name shapes when colouring 'Spot the dog', and reception children reinforce their number recognition when on a treasure hunt finding hidden numbers in the bushes outside the classroom.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision is good. The very young children have limited experience of anywhere beyond the estate and have only limited communication skills. Children's opportunities to achieve are developed systematically over time and they make good progress. Nevertheless by the time they leave reception many have not reached the level expected of their age.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of opportunities provided to extend children's experiences is very good.
- Children's ability to tell of experiences prior to starting school is very limited.
- Teachers use display skilfully to reinforce learning and refresh children's memory.

Commentary

41. The school offers a wide range of rich and exciting opportunities to visit places of interest. Children are involved in many activities. Work on display and that retained from the previous year as well as photographic evidence show that teachers and children set out to discover how things are made. "The time of our lives" was inventively displayed showing children learning the days of the week. Children plant seeds and as they grow they record their observations through pictures and words. Other illustrations showed work about exploring their immediate locality. Teachers organise visits to Tamworth castle and the theatre. When using computers a growing number of children can click and drag confidently using the mouse to move around the screen. Children also enjoyed using a program related to story lines and to a reading scheme.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for this area is learning is good. Children have physical skills close to those expected for their age and they make good progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of climbing apparatus and wheeled toys is extensive and attractive.
- Teachers plan well to make full use of the refurbished outdoor area.
- Stimulating activities develop children's physical skills in writing, drawing and painting.

Commentary

42. There is good access to indoor and outdoor areas. Many children have good control of their wheeled toys and ride with enthusiasm. They explore the climbing frame, with imagination and confidence, which is seen equally in their handling of small tools and brushes.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision is good. There was too little evidence to make a firm judgement on standards. Work on display and that of pupils now in Year 1 indicates that by the end of reception most children's achievement will be close to expected goals.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' planning is good for all parts of this area of learning.
- Teachers use a good range of resources and materials as shown by the inventive displays of work including the use of digital photography.

Commentary

43. Teachers include a wide range of interesting creative activities in which children can work with colour, texture, shape and music. Children use paint and collage materials well supported by members of staff who work to develop their skills in listening and speaking as they help children to describe what they are doing and making.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is satisfactory overall and is improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English are too low.
- Pupils are well managed and there are good relationships between staff and pupils.
- Work is not always precisely matched to the prior attainment of groups or individuals.
- All staff are committed to working together with the aim of raising standards in English.

Commentary

44. Overall, the standards in English of pupils at the end Year 6 remain below average, but have improved since the last inspection. Results in the statutory national tests in Year 6 in 2002 show that standards were comparable with those in similar schools. A greater number of pupils achieved at the higher level in writing at the end of year 6 this summer. Standards in Year 2 are well below average, reflecting the standards attained in national tests following the last inspection. Reading in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2002 was in line with similar schools, although standards in writing are well below average.
45. When pupils enter school they lack confidence in speaking and their listening skills are poor. There are planned opportunities for ‘pupil talk’ throughout the curriculum but these are too few and teachers do not consistently expect pupils to use specific subject language. Consequently, although most pupils listen well they struggle to explain their ideas because they have limited vocabulary. One boy in Year 6, however, skilfully articulated the differences between a ‘broadsheet’ and ‘tabloid’ newspaper, and other pupils talked confidently with inspectors about their work. Younger pupils, excitedly talking about the story of ‘Baby Owl’, struggle when asked to think of questions. Lessons in Year 6 demonstrated good planning to promote speaking skills. Pupils took the role of a headteacher in turn and adeptly responded to searching questions from classmates.
46. Given the limitations of pupils’ skills on entry they do well to make steady progress. Despite making gains, the standard of reading remains below average across the school. Pupils read regularly to adults, records of progress are kept and parents make comments in their child’s reading diary. Younger pupils are taught strategies to decipher meaning. A boy struggling with the title of his book used picture cues to read ‘Ray at the Fair’ instead of ‘Ray at the Fun Park’. The school libraries are adequately stocked but at this early stage in the term were not used frequently enough. Pupils explain how they enjoy visiting the public library. The most capable pupils enjoy reading and talk about the different authors and stories, identifying key characters. They have sufficient skills to research information. There are still many pupils who find learning difficult and make progress very slowly. For this reason a ‘catch-up’ programme has recently been introduced to support pupils struggling with their reading.
47. Attainment in writing is well below average but work in books reflects satisfactory progress for most pupils including those with special educational needs, from their very low attainment on entry. In Year 2, higher attaining pupils use conjunctions to join their ideas. Lower and

average attaining pupils make less use of conjunctions. They write in simple sentences containing one idea. More confident writing is supported by 'code-breakers', a recently introduced spelling system.

48. By Year 6 pupils show a growing grasp of punctuation and spelling and are starting to write in different styles. Lower attaining pupils spell words of one syllable correctly but struggle with words of more than one syllable. Teachers are inconsistent when modelling the way that pupils should speak; so that too many pupils misspell words such as 'sisa' (sister) 'techs' (teachers). There is systematic progress through Years 3 to 6 with evidence of better work in Years 3 and 4 that promises more rapid improvement. Standards of handwriting in special books are good. Not all teachers, however, insist on the same standards in other subjects. Marking does not always offer enough help to encourage pupils to improve. There is little evidence of re-drafting in books. Computers are used for word-processing and to support other literacy skills. Pupils use computers to draft work where the spell-check provision increases their confidence to use more difficult words.
49. Relationships are very good. Pupils respect adults in school and teachers manage behaviour well. Provision for the subject is satisfactory and is improving. Pupils with special educational needs are supported in lessons by teaching assistants and make similar progress to their friends.
50. The standards in English reflect the quality of teaching, which is satisfactory overall with examples of good lessons. Good lessons feature brisk and imaginative introductions and analytical discussions at the end of the lesson. Group activities that require all pupils to copy from or complete a common worksheet or writing frame are less effective. These tasks are sometimes useful supports but do not always meet the precise needs of different abilities. Too many pupils therefore do not progress at a suitably competitive rate.
51. Staff contribute well to the detailed records kept of pupils' progress. Assessment information is analysed, appropriate priorities identified and shared. The new strategies appear to be useful and very relevant but are too new to ensure proven success as yet. Teachers are committed to raising standards and work together with increasing effectiveness.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. English skills are used frequently and effectively across the curriculum to extend learning in subjects such as history geography and religious education. The use of these learned skills sometimes tends to be incidental as teachers choose to use skills acquired in English to extend work in other subjects rather than planning to strengthen their use from the outset.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is satisfactory and has been improved recently.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average in Year 6 and pupils' progress and achievement are limited.
- Careful analysis of weaknesses and precision teaching have led to improvements in specific aspects of mathematics, such as accuracy in reading scales and subtraction strategies.
- The strong emphasis on the development of a correct mathematical vocabulary has improved pupils' understanding and use of mathematical language.

- There are too few opportunities for pupils to investigate problems independently and learning is often too directed.
53. Standards have remained well below average at the end of Year 6 for the last three years and achievement for many is unsatisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection is very limited, although the proportion of pupils who do better than expected has increased this year. Most pupils make good progress and achieve well when they complete seven uninterrupted years at the school.
 54. The strategy to modify termly lessons plans so that identified weaker areas are taught in a step-by-step approach is working well. The recent focus on subtraction methods, for example, has increased pupils' confidence and competence and helped them to experiment with a variety of strategies. The emphasis placed on improving techniques, is however, in danger of destroying the active engagement of pupils. Across the school there are a number of pupils with limited concentration spans who learn best when they are actively involved in their learning. Most of these have poor literacy skills and benefit from short amounts of repeated practise over a period of time. Understandably teachers are at pains to close the gap for them in the shortest time possible in order to accelerate their learning. So that every pupil is involved and is able to complete work set the class sizes have been reduced in mathematics and this process of setting is working well. Occasionally it is noticeable that pupils are either tired or bored and are 'switching off' when they are required to sit and listen for very long periods. The challenge for teaching staff is to tailor the right mix of activities to suit each teaching group and to inject excitement into learning. They do this well including pupils of all levels of prior attainment in the lessons.
 55. Teaching and learning are mostly satisfactory with some good and even outstanding features. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. In one exceptional lesson the teaching and learning were excellent. In some classes the pupils assess their own understanding in every lesson and then their achievement level and progress are very good, but this good practice is not commonplace. From time-to-time there are still some weaknesses in the way that marking is undertaken and then assessment and teaching points are missed. The best lessons are driven by the teachers' skill and enthusiasm that improves learning at every step by responding to the pupils' own ideas. In a lesson in Year 5, pupils really enjoyed an exhilarating learning roller-coaster of a lesson that was tremendously successful in accelerating learning. The lesson was fast and fun, and the pupils' understanding was clear to see. The teacher intervened skilfully consistently focusing on promoting achievement and learning through bite-sized pieces; encouraging pupils to explain their mental strategies. This was teaching at its finest and minds were racing to keep up.
 56. Most lessons achieve a good balance of explanation, guided and independent practice and reinforcement. Although the quality of marking is inconsistent, this problem is often offset by the quality of the oral work between teachers and pupils as they evaluate work accomplished at the end of lessons. The work set for groups is too often aimed towards the middle of the group with good support offered for pupils who find learning difficult. This results in there being a sizeable number of pupils who need more challenge who are not making the progress they should. The targets set in these lessons are too general so that too many pupils are unclear about the small steps they must take to achieve their goals. Structured analysis and a shared vision underpin the strategic plan. The systems for monitoring learning and setting precise targets are very new and after just two weeks cannot be expected to provide evidence of success.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57. Pupils are encouraged to use skills learned in mathematics across the curriculum. This was seen to good effect in science and pupils' described how they used such skills in design and technology and in geography. In these lessons teachers draw sensibly on previous experiences and reinforce such learning in useful and practical ways.

SCIENCE

The quality of provision in science is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving but are still below the national average.
- The use of assessment, to set targets and to enable science skills to be developed systematically, is not yet sufficiently precise.
- Pupils' independence to record their own ideas and findings is too limited.
- The commitment of teachers to investigative learning is high.
- Pupils' use of correct scientific vocabulary is well developed.

Commentary

58. Since the previous inspection, the use of investigations has improved significantly. Standards have improved in line with the national trend as a result of the greater use of practical, experimental and investigational work in lessons. Levels of achievement as shown by the developing assessment process in Years 1 and 2 and through the added value points between Years 3 to 6 is at least satisfactory for pupils at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 and is beginning to show good improvement.
59. National test results for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2002 show standards to be well below average when compared nationally and were below those in similar schools. The most recent results in 2003, and inspection evidence, show a rise in the numbers of pupils reaching and exceeding national expectations. Higher attaining and average attaining pupils can talk confidently about the areas of science they have studied and have acquired sound and often good knowledge and understanding. For example, average attaining pupils readily explained the processes of evaporation and condensation scientifically. Pupils' science skills are below average because until very recently they have been given insufficient opportunities to plan and carry out their own investigations.
60. The assessment by teachers of the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2002 show that standards were well below national expectations when compared nationally and with similar schools. Teacher assessments for 2003 give a similar picture but discussions with those pupils, the present Year 3, show that almost all pupils have knowledge and understanding at the expected level though not at higher levels. Other pupils have limited recall of scientific vocabulary such as 'material' and this impedes their ability to express their ideas.
61. Teaching was good in over two-thirds of the lessons seen. Most pupils work at expected levels in lessons and make good gains in their learning. Lessons are well planned to build on earlier experiences and provide activities that are carefully matched to their previous learning. Where possible, pupils learn through investigation. In these practical lessons, motivation is high and pupils work with enthusiasm. Where learning support assistants are present they are

used well to ensure that lower attaining pupils achieve as well as the more capable pupils. Teachers develop the use of correct scientific vocabulary well. In Year 6, skilful questioning challenged pupils' thinking and clarified their ideas when investigating the time taken for different sugars to dissolve in water. This enabled the most confident pupils to use their scientific knowledge when predicting what might happen.

62. In lessons in Year 3, pupils were challenged to find their own method to record results. In some lessons the teachers needed to revise specific scientific vocabulary that pupils had forgotten during the holidays. This sometimes slowed the pace of learning. Although the amount of practical work has increased since the previous inspection much of it is too tightly directed and pupils have insufficient opportunity to use their own ideas to plan and carry out investigations. This practice dates from an earlier time when too many pupils displayed disruptive behaviour that spoiled such work. Skills of recording are inconsistent and in too many cases pupils copy what the teacher has written. This limits their achievement. Assessment systems have been improved but the use of information to set clear and precise targets for improvement is inconsistent. Where information gathered is used best, pupils' rate of achievement is rising rapidly. Some teachers need to be more rigorous in this new approach to planning future work.
63. Improvements set in place to enhance provision are recent and it is too soon to see a significant rise in standards. Training opportunities have been used well to improve the teaching of investigation and a useful planning guide for teachers is intended to ensure consistency in how pupils record practical work and enable older pupils to work and learn independently.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for information and communication technology is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very strong leadership has had a very positive impact on improving the quality of provision.
- Pupils throughout the school achieve well and standards are now at expected levels.
- Teaching is good overall and is very good for pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have regular but not easy access to networked computers; this difficulty limits their opportunities to practise their independent research skills.

Commentary

64. At the time of the last inspection standards were below average for pupils at the age of seven and eleven. A key issue in the report was to raise standards and to improve unsatisfactory provision. This has been done by creating a computer suite, by providing training for all staff and by introducing a scheme of work to widen the range of pupils' skills and to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are taught. As a result standards are now in line with those expected nationally.
65. By the end of Year 2 pupils understand the various forms of communication such as CD-ROMs, tape recorders, text and photographs. They use the computer for word processing, using the mouse confidently, and are beginning to find their way around the keyboard and icons. They confidently log on, edit text, save their work and log off. By Year 6 many pupils are confident and competent users of computers. They know the usefulness of Information

and communication technology (ICT) in their work and in the outside world. For example, pupils readily collect information and present it on spreadsheets and graphs. They use secure search engines to access websites on the Internet. Their skills in control technology are the least strong, because the school does not have relevant software. By the end of the year, when resources that have been ordered will be in place pupils will have experienced all aspects of the subject at the appropriate level. All classes will have constant access to computers linked to the Internet in the very near future.

66. Teaching is good overall and has a positive effect on raising standards. All teachers have good subject knowledge and present their requirements to pupils with confidence. Lessons are planned well and the learning objectives are made very clear. Emphasis is placed on the development of relevant technical vocabulary. Teachers achieve a good balance between formal instruction and the time allowed for pupils to practice skills. This results in good learning. In the best lessons the pace is brisk and learning is broken down into manageable steps. Skilful questioning fully involves pupils in their own learning and support is well targeted at those who need it most. Positive attitudes and good behaviour are important factors in pupils' achievement in lessons.
67. Leadership of the subject is very good and strategies to raise standards have been very well managed. After-school booster classes were begun last year for pupils in Years 2 and 6. These are very well attended and enable pupils to practise skills. The co-ordinators have carried out a comprehensive whole-school audit to evaluate their impact. As a result they have a very good overview of provision and standards across the school. Good assessment systems are used well to chart progress and to enable teachers to provide relevant follow up work.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

68. The use of ICT across the curriculum is stronger than at the time of the last inspection. Teachers' planning for other subjects identifies opportunities for its use. Information and Communication Technology lessons often use work from other subjects as the means to develop computer skills. Literacy skills are improved by the pupils' growing proficiency in word processing and by the use of programs to improve their skills in reading and spelling. In Year 6 good use was made of a simulation to show particles of sugar dissolving in water. Pupils' use CD-ROM's and the Internet regularly for personal research in other subjects. Data handling in science, using computer skills is a new development.

HUMANITIES including geography, history and religious education.

For all of these subjects provision, resources pupils' standards and achievements are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Geography

- Pupils' attitudes and enjoyment of geography are good.
- The variety and range of visits enrich the geography curriculum.
- Teaching and learning are not monitored sufficiently to improve standards.

- There is a need to develop a commonly agreed system for assessing pupils work and using the information to plan for improvement.

History

- Pupils enjoy topic lessons and remember them with pleasure.
- Outings to places of interest and residential visits provide good opportunities for fieldwork.
- Match of work to the specific needs of pupils is imprecise.
- Teachers' expectations for the presentation and quality of pupils' work are inconsistent.

Religious Education

- There are good links with literacy in speaking and listening for pupils in Year 2 and in recording for those pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- Copied work limits the independent writing of older pupils.
- The systems for assessment to support ongoing planning lack detail and precision.

Commentary

69. The last time the school was inspected pupils across the school made sound progress in these subjects. The evidence from this inspection is that pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make steady gains in learning. Teachers are skilled in all these subjects at finding ways to involve all pupils at a level of work that enables them to achieve.
70. History and geography are enriched by fieldwork through the many visits made to places of educational interest. Pupils of all ages undertake local studies and many pupils have opportunities for additional learning during residential visits. Planning is monitored to ensure progression. There are good links with work in other subjects such as literacy, numeracy, history and information technology.
71. Pupils explain well how they have studied weather patterns, compared different regions of Britain and developed their work with maps. In Years 3 to 6, workbooks show the range of places and environments studied. Pupils track the journey of rivers in Britain and other countries, considering the effects of physical processes on people's lives. Older pupils develop this understanding of cause and effect as they study the growth of the chocolate trade, investigating links between Kenya, Cadburys and the development of Bournville village. In their study of the European Union, literacy skills are promoted.
72. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning in geography and history. This was evident in discussions with inspectors when most pupils in the group, nominated 'Topic' as their favourite subject. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are assessed regularly. The newly established policy is intended to address the identified weakness and indicate ways for putting them right. Previously, assessment has not been sufficiently rigorous to help pupils understand what they should do to improve. Just two weeks into the term, teachers have not used the new procedures enough to prove their worth.
73. Work in history covers the national curriculum. Through a planned series of topics in each year group, pupils learn about particular people, events and periods. They learn about changes that have taken place over time and the impact of those changes on their own lives. Pupils' conversations show that they appreciate the value of evidence and its use in interpreting information about the past. Visits provide good opportunities for fieldwork. Documentation indicates that pupils in Year 2 use their literacy skills well. There are also

strong links between history and geography with art and design, design and technology and numeracy.

74. Books show that there are inconsistencies in the presentation and the quality of work across classes and year groups. The school recognises this as a problem and new co-ordinators indicate that work is in hand to remedy the deficiencies, as acceptance of a problem is not enough. Pupils compare their own lives with the lifestyles of parents and famous people such as our present queen. In Year 2 they compare everyday activities and events from the past and present when they contrast present day school dress with how Victorian pupils dresses for school.
75. By Year 6 pupils have a strong awareness of chronology through the use of time-lines and the development of family trees. Older pupils have been enthused by their studies of the Tudor period, Victorian times and Ancient Greece. Project books demonstrate a growing use of secondary sources of evidence and research that enlivens activities and the study of objects of educational interest from times past.
76. Work in religious education meets the requirements of the local agreed syllabus. A suitable level of work has been maintained for all pupils since the last inspection. Achievement for all pupils is satisfactory, including those with special educational needs.
77. To support pupils' literacy skills, teachers present these subjects in discussion form for the younger pupils and use skills gained when recording for older ones. This practice has a positive impact on speaking and listening skills for younger pupils and increases their knowledge and understanding of beliefs and moral values in stories such as Moses and the Ten Commandments. Their recall of the main aspects of these and construction of personal rules through discussion and role-play was good in Year 2. Pupils in Year 6 used their vocabulary well when selecting key words when discussing the work of Amnesty International to describe the feelings of those who are falsely imprisoned. Initially, however, they required a high level of leadership and support by a skilled and well-organised teacher. Discussion with older pupils shows that aspects of the world faiths are covered imaginatively and pupils have a satisfactory recall of customs and beliefs from other cultures even after the summer holidays.
78. The subject is taught well, particularly in Year 6, where the teacher's introduction of Amnesty International created a feeling for reflection and drew out comments on false imprisonment such as "Is it real?" Similarly when discussing the symbol of the organisation, one pupil said "It could bring light into the dark". The poor presentation of work by pupils in Years 3 to 6 leads to lower attainment levels and demonstrates their limited achievement in literacy. In discussion where tasks are suitably matched to prior knowledge, pupils achieve well and attain at the expected levels.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Provision in art and design, design and technology, music and physical education is good and in subjects such as dance and music it is very good.

As a result of the integrated programme of work in these subjects, pupils' standards of achievement in all of these subjects are above national expectations across the school. The extra-curricular activities that involve many disciplines enable pupils with different ages, prior attainment and interests to be fully involved.

Art and design

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge understanding and commitment to high standards.
- Pupils select from a range of equipment and materials well.
- The growing ability to evaluate both their own and other pupils' work, showing knowledge and understanding of evaluation criteria, is good.
- There is a useful whole-school approach to the improved quality of displaying pupils' work and increased teacher awareness of the ability of pupils capable of higher attainment.
- The celebration of art and design throughout the school and the community, giving pupils' work a wide audience, promotes pupils' self-esteem.
- The system of assessment based on agreed levels is developing but is not strong.

Commentary

79. The quality of artwork on display and in collected portfolios indicates that standards of achievement overall are above the expected levels. The range of work is based around the national curriculum requirements but includes strong links with other schools and work inspired by the Arts Council. In lessons, pupils learn techniques, and teachers help them to select and test materials for different projects. This is where pupils begin to evaluate their own work and that of others through the guidance and questioning techniques instigated by the teachers. At the start of the term a few lessons were over-directed and the products had a sameness about them that is not seen in the work undertaken by pupils when they use the skills learned in individual art projects linked to work in history or geography. The large pieces of work linked to work about the Tudors, that are of a very high quality, were developed during a residential visit intended to link the creative arts with other topics. The enthusiasm for these activities is evident when talking to pupils about how they feel about art and of shared work with others. In these stimulating sessions pupils of different ages and attainment levels including those with special educational needs are all fully involved.
80. Teachers are sure of their personal knowledge of what the curriculum requires and how to inspire pupils to achieve. Planning is good and in lessons time flies, because the work is interesting. Sometimes the challenge is pitched at the correct level but time runs out and the end is rushed. Pupils do not care, and are happy to work on during playtime. But teachers are considering the need to plan for longer blocks of time as in design and technology so that pupils' enthusiasm for learning is not hampered by time constraints that can be managed differently. They intend these changes to enable ways of grouping pupils in different ways so that skills might be developed across age bands.

Design and technology

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Total commitment to usefulness and high quality of products made.
- Strong understanding of the importance of the subject by the co-ordinator and other teachers.
- Shared planning about the nature and purpose of work undertaken.
- Enthusiasm and interest of pupils of all ages.
- Pupils delight in showing and using products that they have made.

Commentary

81. This subject is taught in blocks and not as weekly lessons. None was observed during the inspection but the collected artefacts indicate that standards attained are above national expectations at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, because work is always clearly linked to a purpose and ideas are carried through to fruition. The items are designed to meet a need and are then used in other lessons or productions. They have to be functional and durable and during the process of design and making. All ideas are tested and then those that prove to be unsuitable are either modified, enhanced or re-worked until they are of an acceptable standard. In this way pupils learn that only high quality work is acceptable.
82. It was not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching except through pupils' very positive comments and the high quality of the objects available for inspection. Pupils say that the work they do is 'Ace' and that teachers are fun to work with.

Music

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge, understanding, enthusiasm and commitment to high standards.
- Pupils' enthusiasm and concentration in learning and performing.
- Pupils confidence when composing tunes and rhythms.
- The opportunities that are provided for pupils to perform for parents and friends.

Commentary

83. Standards across the school are above the expected levels and shine out as examples of what it is possible to attain by pupils of all ages and range of abilities through enthusiasm, commitment and dedication. The rich variety of experiences from the enjoyment of the African Dance workshop to visits with pupils and parents to the Primary Proms at the Symphony Hall includes many and varied experiences for pupils of all ages. Pupils in Year 2 practised and celebrated their skills during and after a residential visit promoting dance and music. Pupils enjoy opportunities to play drums, guitars and keyboards and delight in performing for their own pleasure and that of others. Singing is joyful and enthusiastic with harmonies included in hymns in assembly and in spontaneous singing as pupils dance in physical education. The inspired teaching and shared enjoyment lifts pupils' awareness that they are totally capable of reaching the standards aspired to. In these lessons the pace of learning and the contribution of ideas by pupils are almost breathtaking. There are no limits imposed by their lack of vocabulary and the test is only against their own previous best. The celebration of skills when performing with pupils from other schools, the Solihull music service and for their parents is a credit to the work of the teachers and to the pupils' own perseverance and confidence. In music, the teaching and pupils' learning, achievement and performance are outstanding strengths of this school.

Physical Education

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge understanding and high expectations for success.
- Pupils' enthusiasm, interest and skills.
- Pupils willingness to compete and perform at a sustained high level.

Commentary

84. Standards at the end of Year 2 are above those expected and better than those seen in many schools. By the end of Year 6, standards overall in swimming, games, gymnastics and dance exceed the national expectations and many pupils display a raft of talents of which they can be justly proud. This is due to the wide range of opportunities provided for pupils ranging from the simplest tasks required within the National Curriculum to competence and confidence when playing netball, football or ice hockey. The only limits to high achievement are the costs of transport and the confidence of each pupil. The school grounds offer very good opportunities for ball games and through working in teams many pupils have discovered ways of channelling their energy and enthusiasm for good. This determination to build team spirit and to foster a sense of sharing and fair play has enabled all but a few pupils to turn around their previous tendency to be disruptive or aggressive into a strong competitive force for good. The pupils like to win and know that determination and drive must be tempered by a strong understanding of the rules and personal discipline.
85. Physical education is taught well, lessons are interesting and move at a fast pace and behaviour has to be good to maintain a safe environment. For this reason pupils dress appropriately. They listen carefully to instructions and strive to do their best so as to gain praise and recognition for good performance. The school is using this strength in provision and pupils' achievement to capture and maintain an overall enthusiasm for success.
86. Teachers know that to channel the success in these subjects into more academic pursuits will not be easy. They see these achievements as a springboard from which to develop pupils' skills in more academic subjects.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).