

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WALTER EVANS CE (AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Darley Abbey, Derby

LEA area: City of Derby

Unique reference number: 112917

Headteacher: Mrs L Gould

Reporting inspector: Mrs J P Hicks  
2063

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> February 2000

Inspection number: 188498

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Church of England Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Darley Abbey Drive Darley Abbey Derby
Postcode:	DE22 1EF
Telephone number:	01332 557139
Fax number:	
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss Enid Clarke
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Walter Evans is a Voluntary Aided Church of England primary school catering for boys and girls aged from three to eleven. It is large by national standards, having 305 pupils currently on roll in the infant and junior departments, plus a nursery providing 26 part-time morning and 26 afternoon places. The school, which is popular and over-subscribed, is situated in an advantaged suburb of Derby. Very few pupils are drawn from the minority ethnic communities, and none speak English as an additional language. Attainment on entry is above average. There are relatively few pupils on the register of special educational needs, but two children have statements of special educational need.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is an effective school in many respects. Teaching is good overall, resulting in consistently high standards in English, mathematics and science, but standards are not high enough in some other subjects. The school has been poorly funded for many years, and, with sound management, gives good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- By the age of 11, pupils achieve consistently high standards in English, mathematics and science.
- The pupils' behaviour is very good and the quality of relationships is a strength.
- Teaching is generally good, consistently so in some classes.
- Nursery provision is a further strength of the school.
- The school has a Christian ethos and a pleasant family atmosphere. There is good attention to the pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- The school maintains a constructive working relationship with parents.

#### **What could be improved**

- The school is not aiming for high enough standards in some foundation subjects, and standards are low in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Management, planning and monitoring of the curriculum are not strong enough to ensure a good balance and steady development in each subject area.
- The needs of children in the reception age-group are not fully met, largely because of unsatisfactory accommodation.
- Governors are not involved actively enough in school development planning.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in June 1996. Since that time high, sometimes very high, standards have been sustained in English, mathematics, and science. The quality of teaching has shown steady improvement, and nursery provision has improved significantly, with good systems of planning, assessment and target-setting now in place for this age-group. The school has implemented the national literacy strategy successfully and with appropriate flexibility. The numeracy strategy has also been effectively introduced, but initiatives in ICT have not had time to improve standards yet. Key issues identified at the time of the last inspection have not all been addressed adequately. In particular, long-term curriculum planning is still a weakness and the school has not developed rigorous enough systems for monitoring lessons. Some progress has been made in assessment, and further developments are in hand, but the links between assessment and teaching plans are not yet secure.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A*	A	A	B
Mathematics	A	A*	A*	A
Science	A*	A*	A	A

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

The table shows that for the past three years the results of national assessments in English, mathematics and science at the age of eleven have been consistently well above average. Where A\* is shown, the school's results were very high, amongst the top 5% nationally. Inspection findings indicate that standards in the current year 6 are well above average in English and science, and above average in mathematics, with strengths in mathematical reasoning. The pupils make steady progress in years 3 and 4, with an accelerating pace of learning in the top classes. This enables most individuals, including the most capable, to achieve well in English, mathematics and science. The school regularly exceeds the targets it sets itself, which are not always pitched at a sufficiently ambitious level.

Standards of reading are very high by the age of seven, with good progress made and high attainment sustained over a number of years. As the school knows well, the pupils are not progressing at the same rate in writing. Most pupils in year 2 write fluently, spell accurately and have a wide vocabulary, but some are unsure where to place full stops, and handwriting is not as good as it might be. Standards in mathematics, as indicated by national assessments at seven, have shown relatively wide variation in the past few years, but are above average overall.

The school does not achieve equally high standards in all subjects. In particular, standards of ICT are at present below average at seven and well below by eleven.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Almost all pupils enjoy their work and are proud of their school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is usually very good, despite overcrowded working conditions and inconvenient accommodation.
Personal development and relationships	There are very good relationships between the children, and friendly relationships between pupils and staff.
Attendance	Well above national averages.

The quality of relationships and the pupils' behaviour are strengths. Personal development is sound: pupils take on a good range of social responsibilities and care for others. They do not, however, have enough opportunities to use their initiative and seek out information for themselves as part of their regular lessons.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	Good

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

Teaching is generally good, and pupils in most classes are well motivated to learn and interested in their lessons. During the inspection 23 (96%) of the 24 lessons seen were judged to be satisfactory or better, whilst four were judged very good (17%). Only one lesson (4%) was unsatisfactory: here lesson content was pitched at the wrong level and the pace was slow. Teaching of under-fives in the nursery is thoroughly planned and well matched to the children's stage of development. Both here and in the reception classes there is some very good teaching. Staff have a very secure understanding of how to teach reading at both key stages, and literacy sessions are effectively taught throughout the school. Challenging English teaching is seen in year 6. Mathematics teaching is sound at Key Stage 1 and often good at Key Stage 2. Numeracy skills are effectively taught, with some well targeted questioning to involve all the pupils. Planning in literacy and numeracy shows how pupils working at different levels are to be catered for. This is not the case in some other areas of the curriculum, and the most capable pupils are not equally stretched in all subjects. Children with special educational needs receive extra support from their class teachers, enabling them to make good progress at much the same rate as other pupils.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory for under-fives and in years 1 and 2, but the curriculum for the junior age-group lacks breadth. Setting aside the nursery, there are some shortcomings in curricular management and planning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Individual education plans include suitable targets which support the good progress made by these pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good spiritual, moral and social development and sound cultural development. Collective worship gives pupils time and space for quiet reflection. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and learn something of historical traditions, but the creative arts are not a strong feature.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Staff know the pupils very well and take good care of them. Arrangements for child protection and welfare are well organised.

At present the curriculum has too narrow a focus on literacy and numeracy. English and mathematics are allocated more time than is necessary taking into account the capabilities and background of the pupils attending this school. Apart from science and religious education, other subjects tend to be given too little time and priority. Long-term planning is not clear or detailed enough to ensure the steady development of skills and understanding in each of these subjects. Provision for children below statutory age in the reception classes is not wholly appropriate for the age-group, largely because of unsatisfactory accommodation. Statutory requirements for the teaching of ICT have not been met for some while, with outdated equipment a contributory factor. Sport is well catered for, including extra-curricular team games for the older pupils. The school has highly effective systems for promoting good behaviour and regular attendance.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy head provide effective leadership, and the school is competently managed. Implementation of national literacy and numeracy strategies has been well organised by the respective coordinators, and leadership of the nursery is good. There are shortcomings in the management of some other subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	This is an area for improvement. Governors are loyal and supportive of the school, managing their financial responsibilities well, but they are not taking an active enough role in monitoring performance. The governing body does not have a significant role in school development planning, and admissions arrangements have shortcomings.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Useful analysis has been undertaken of national assessment results, especially comparison of performance in reading and writing by boys and girls. The school has recently instituted a promising system of tracking the progress of individual pupils to help evaluate the effect it is having. Apart from the analysis of results in English and mathematics, school self-review is not sufficiently developed.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school makes use of grants appropriately and for the intended purposes, but strategic financial planning is not linked closely enough with priorities identified in the school development plan.

Leadership effectively supports the school's commitment to Christian values, good relationships with families and the achievement of high standards in some key subject areas. The current development plan is not a useful tool for improvement, however, and fails to indicate long-term priorities clearly enough. The staff work well together, support one another and make a good team, but there has been limited monitoring of teaching, learning and the curriculum beyond scrutiny of planning. With exceptions including English and mathematics, subject leadership is not been strong enough, a key factor in a developing imbalance in the curriculum. Senior staff and governors manage the school's finances carefully, taking pains to make the most effective use of the limited funds at their disposal when purchasing equipment and awarding contracts.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost all the children like coming to school.</li> <li>• The children are making good progress.</li> <li>• The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• Teaching is good, and the the school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small minority feels that the school is not working closely enough with parents.</li> <li>• Homework is not set regularly enough; alternatively too much homework expected.</li> <li>• End-of-year reports are not detailed enough.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive remarks made by parents. Parental views about homework are divided, and inspectors believe that the school now has the balance about right. Parents rightly have very high aspirations for their children, but in some cases their expectations of teachers are unrealistic. End of year reports scrutinised by the inspection team were well written, detailed and informative.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **By the age of 11 pupils achieve consistently high standards in English, mathematics and science.**

1. A significant strength of the school is the consistently high or very high standards achieved in national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2. In English, results that are well above the national average have been sustained for at least the past four years. In the most recent English tests (1999) only a handful of individuals failed to reach the expected level (level 4), and more than one third of the pupils reached a higher level (level 5). The relatively strong performance of boys in English is contributing to the school's success, with a far smaller gap in achievement between boys and girls than that which is found nationally. In mathematics and science, national assessments present an even more encouraging picture. In 1999 all the pupils achieved at least level 4 in both subjects, and the proportion reaching level 5 or above was very high, more than half the group in science. Average grades in last year's tests were very high in mathematics and well above national averages in science, with boys and girls performing almost equally well in both subjects. When Walter Evans is compared with schools serving similar neighbourhoods, test results at 11 remain well above the average.

2 National assessments at the age of 7 provide evidence of considerable strengths in literacy and mathematics further down the school, too. Reading standards are exceptionally high by the end of year 2, and last year almost two thirds of the pupils achieved a higher level (level 3) in the reading tests. Trends have, if anything, been slightly upward in recent years, a significant achievement when standards are already high. Writing results at 7 are not as strong as reading, with boys doing less well than girls, but even so standards achieved in the 1999 assessments were above the national average and in line with those of comparable schools. The school is well aware of a gap in attainment between the younger pupils' reading and writing skills, and has thought about the issue carefully. Ways of improving standards further by giving more time to extended writing have been introduced and are currently being evaluated. This is a sensible and pragmatic approach, showing a flexible interpretation of the national literacy strategy. In mathematics recent assessments at 7 have generally been well above average, but there has been some fluctuation from year to year. For the past four years, boys have tended to perform slightly better than girls in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1, whereas the national results of boys and girls at 7 are virtually identical, but this may not be a significant trend.

3 Inspection findings are by and large consistent with recent assessment outcomes and indicate that the school is sustaining the high standards achieved in recent years. On the basis of the limited number of lessons and pupils' books seen, indications are that pupils in the present year 6 are achieving standards that are well above average in English and science, and above average in mathematics.

4 Throughout the school the pupils are highly articulate and have an extensive vocabulary. Speaking skills are generally above average when the children start school. Although some new to the nursery speak reticently, others use language imaginatively to communicate their ideas. In one session, for example, part of the sand tray was described by an able child as a 'steamy river full of crocodiles'. In a reception class science lesson, the children offered clear explanations about their choice of materials for a given purpose, and could also give sensible reasons for rejecting unsuitable materials. Pupils in year 2 have a good grasp of 'literary' vocabulary, for example understanding at once a reference to a pirate as an 'ocean thief', whilst high attainers in year 4 were able to provide a clear account of how the earth moves around the sun. Throughout the school the pupils show a ready capacity to acquire the technical vocabulary they need for their work in various subjects and to ask well formulated questions when they need information. By year 6, pupils are able to marshal arguments to support a viewpoint, listen thoughtfully and counter the views of others, whilst the most capable are beginning to summarise arguments effectively.

5 Very high priority is given to reading. With a thoroughly secure grounding in phonic strategies, the pupils make a rapid start, and continue to make good progress throughout Key Stage 1. By early in year 3, most pupils read fluently and with good understanding. They are beginning to develop preferences, discuss the style and humour of books they like and talk enthusiastically about favourite

authors such as Dick King-Smith. Suspecting that some older pupils were not reading widely enough, the school has recently developed an innovative system of graduated awards for pupils who read from a varied list of authors, including children's classics. This is effectively ensuring that personal reading includes a wide experience of children's books appropriate to the age-group. English lessons include some challenging literature, including a first introduction to Shakespeare. Writing develops rather more slowly. By year 1 most pupils are confident to write independently, attempting spellings by themselves, and by year 2 writing is mainly fluent and the content is interesting. Whilst spelling is generally good, pupils' ability to punctuate sentences accurately is not secure in many cases, and some handwriting is poorly controlled. Standards of writing improve greatly towards the end of Key Stage 2. The portfolios of year 6 pupils include well set out and persuasively argued letters, well constructed narratives and neatly presented work in science and the humanities. The pupils have good technical skills and organise their work into paragraphs.

6 Many of the mathematics lessons observed during the inspection happened to be dealing with aspects of shape and space, and the standards achieved in these topics were not significantly above average. However, work on calculating angles in years 5 and 6 was at a higher level than would usually be found in this age-group; here the strengths of the pupils' explanations and the quality of their mathematical reasoning provide a key to the school's success in national assessments. Incidental observations sometimes indicate the sophistication of the pupils' thinking, as when year 4 pupils argued that there was no such thing in reality as a two-dimensional shape. Number work in exercise books is above average at the end of both key stages, with some work of a high standard by year 6. The pupils apply their mathematical understanding well. In a science lesson, for example, older pupils understood well how to repeat tests and average results, using a calculator, in order to obtain improved reliability. This lesson showed the older pupils' all-round attainments at their best. The pupils successfully exchanged ideas within their groups and arrived at a decision. They competently applied their scientific understanding to set up a valid test, recorded their predictions, collected findings systematically and accurately, and explained their results on the basis of scientific principles securely grasped.

**The pupils' behaviour is very good and the quality of relationships is a strength.**

7 Standards of behaviour are very good in lessons, assemblies and during breaks outside. The pupils are well-mannered, mature and considerate towards others. This contributes to a friendly, relaxed atmosphere and, indirectly, to the high standards achieved in key subjects. Were it not for the forbearance and good concentration of the pupils, supported by a strong whole-school ethos and clear ground-rules, the poor design of the school's open-plan accommodation, exacerbated by overcrowding, would impede learning. As matters stand, pupils accept the limitations of their learning environment as a matter of course and behave accordingly, most showing consistent sensitivity to the needs of others. There is very little interruption between different classes, even though separate age-groups sometimes sit within inches of one another. Those working in confined spaces, such as the entrance hall, pay no attention at all to other people squeezing past or stepping round them. Paradoxically, the pupils are more inclined to work noisily on the relatively infrequent occasions when they are taught in an enclosed classroom or some other quiet space such as the library. Even on these occasions the pupils are generally well focused on the work in hand, and behaviour never goes beyond acceptable boundaries. Even younger pupils can be relied upon to work independently and with minimal supervision when given the chance, for example during group work in literacy sessions or when playing board games at lunch-time.

8 Relationships between the children and with adults are strong. A particular feature is the care shown by older pupils for the younger ones, whom they look after regularly, for example during wet playtimes. Even in the nursery, more settled children help the new arrivals with their coats before they go out to play. 'Special days' when all age-groups mix to share activities contribute to good relationships between pupils in different classes. The pupils enjoy talking to the many visitors to the school, including governors and visitors from the parishes, and there are some good conversational exchanges over lunch. Good relationships have direct outcomes in terms of the quality of learning and the progress achieved. The pupils show constructive attitudes when they co-operate in pairs or larger groups, with a particularly sensible and mature approach on the part of older boys and girls. In a year 5 handwriting session, for example, the pupils helped one another to improve their style by evaluating their neighbour's work constructively. In science, groups work well together on practical activities,

whilst in a mathematics session the pupils concentrated well as they checked the accuracy of measurements together.

### **Teaching is generally good, consistently so in some classes.**

9 More than half the lessons seen during the inspection were judged to be good or better, and virtually all the teaching observed was at least satisfactory, with four sessions judged very good (approximately 17% of the total). The best teaching was seen in the nursery and reception classes and in years 5 and 6. On the basis of a small sample of lessons, there was a relatively wide range of teaching quality at Key Stage 2, with consistently competent teaching at Key Stage 1. In a single unsatisfactory lesson observed, the content was not well matched to the varying levels of pupils' understanding and the pace was limited because individual pupils were allowed to fuss unnecessarily.

10 Teaching of under-fives in the nursery and reception classes is thoroughly planned and usually well matched to the children's maturity and stage of development. There is some very good teaching in this age-group. In the nursery, questioning to establish each child's level of understanding and to extend thinking is a strength. In a short group session, for example, the teacher first showed, then concealed objects to help children visualise number operations in their head. Despite space constraints, and a restricted learning environment, some teaching in the reception classes is also very good. In a science session, for example, the children were shown a range of materials and were then invited to make choices about which could be used for the outside or for the filling of a teddy. With very well chosen resources, the challenging but achievable tasks set were just right for the children concerned and provided a strong stimulus for learning. In this session, as in another successful lesson on number and shape, there was a good focus on vocabulary development. Teachers patiently encouraged children to put their ideas into words, thus helping them to clarify ideas and become aware of what they had learned.

11 Teaching of the older pupils is also a strength, reflected in an increasing rate of progress in years 5 and 6. The pupils are encouraged to work hard and productively, setting themselves high standards. Teachers' subject knowledge in English, mathematics and science is very secure and, with high expectations of the pupils, understanding is developed to a level well beyond what is expected for the age-group. This was seen, for example, in a science lesson which dealt with the relationship between forces and motion. At best, lessons for the older pupils are very carefully prepared and presented, with a brisk pace. Aids such as the overhead projector are effectively used here, as elsewhere in Key Stage 2, and follow-up tasks are often well designed to challenge the pupils. However, information and communication technology is not yet used enough to reinforce or extend learning.

12 Throughout the school, staff have a shared understanding of how to teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Phonic teaching is thorough and the pupils are taught to spell systematically, using 'look, cover, write' techniques by year 1. An effective lesson on cursive handwriting was seen in year 2, with good attention to overall posture and pencil grip. A lesson on two-figure co-ordinates in year 4 included a systematic and well illustrated introduction to the vocabulary required. Planning for literacy and numeracy sessions usually shows how pupils working at different levels are to be catered for, and teaching in these sessions is generally well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. Teachers are aware of the learning needs and targets of those with special educational needs; however, special needs assistants are not always effectively deployed.

13 This generally positive picture is not completely consistent. In particular some lessons seen in science and geography were not well enough matched to the level of understanding of all of the pupils, with some resulting confusion. Unsuitable organisation of topics within the curriculum was a contributory factor here. Overall, however, the quality of teaching is a positive feature which is helping to promote high standards. Teaching has improved since the last inspection.

### **Nursery provision is a further strength of the school.**

14 Nursery provision has improved significantly since the last inspection, and is now a strength. The classroom environment is inviting and well organised, providing the children with a wide range of opportunities for structured play including imaginative role-play, experience with basic materials, creative activities, investigation and construction. There are good opportunities for children to use the

computer, work at the writing table or browse comfortably in the book corner. During the inspection the children played in the water trough with model sea creatures, which they were able to identify as a killer whale, hammer-head shark, and so on, whilst others used the play mat or created models with a construction kit. The role-play area was imaginatively organised as the 'House of the Three Bears', inviting the children to re-enact this favourite story. Throughout, the children were deeply absorbed in their activities, some collaborating well in pairs or small groups, others operating individually, providing a 'running commentary' as they worked.

15 Nursery staff plan together, with the teacher and nursery nurse leading a structured activity in the course of each session. During the inspection, for example, the teacher helped children to create 'rocket pictures' from a range of two-dimensional wooden shapes, which were fixed with nails to a base. Meanwhile the nursery nurse helped the children to roll out dough and cut out 'gingerbread men' to which they added facial features and buttons, whilst others created 'cakes' with carefully counted candles. Both activities supported learning in mathematics, but also gave the children good opportunities to master the skills of using tools such as hammers, cutters and rolling pins. Many of the children have relatively under-developed fine motor skills, and the selected activities provided a good focus for practice and improvement. The children decide when and whether to join in an activity during the first part of each nursery session, but their uptake of activities is carefully monitored and there is intervention to ensure that each individual has a broad range of experiences over time.

16 Nursery sessions are effectively structured to provide a balance between freely chosen structured play activities, adult-supported activities, outdoor play and focused group work. There is a regular snack time, with personal and social learning very effectively developed. A short session of formal group work each day is conducted at a lively pace and often includes enjoyable music, rhymes and songs, thus sustaining the interest and attention of the children. Additional, more formal, inputs in literacy and mathematics are organised for the older children before they transfer to the reception classes. Outdoor play provides opportunities for more than physical activities, and efforts are being made to develop the learning environment outside as well as in. Plans for such further development are well-conceived.

17 The nursery curriculum is effectively planned on the basis of the areas of learning for under-fives, with cross-referencing to national learning targets for the age-group. Children's achievements and level of maturity are carefully assessed and recorded when they start nursery and again on a termly basis. Developing literacy skills are particularly effectively mapped, with individual targets set for each child at regular intervals. Final targets are agreed with the receiving reception teacher. These very effective arrangements for linking assessment with teaching provide a useful model for development in other stages and other areas of the curriculum.

**The school has a Christian ethos and a pleasant family atmosphere. There is good attention to the pupils' spiritual and moral development.**

18 The school is a Church of England foundation which maintains close links with two neighbouring parishes. The parish church of St. Matthew is close to the school, and pupils regularly visit church to celebrate the major Christian festivals and for special occasions such as harvest thanksgiving. The pupils have their own small section of St. Matthew's churchyard to look after. Various members of the clergy visit school regularly and lead collective worship from time to time, and parish members also visit the school from time to time. Many governors have links with one or other of the two parishes involved with the school. The school's close links with the church are an enrichment, helping the pupils to experience school life in the context of a wider community in the neighbourhood and beyond.

19 Acts of collective worship are well organised and of good quality, providing plenty of time for reflection in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. The pupils are responsive and readily engaged, especially enjoying the contribution of visitors. They listen quietly, joining in prayers as appropriate; older pupils know a number of traditional responses and prayers, including the Lord's Prayer, by heart. There is an effective use of music and poetry to help establish a reflective mood in most assemblies, and the pupils sing enthusiastically when an accompanist is available. Collective worship is making a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. The school is now seeking to identify opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum, as part of a diocesan initiative.

20 Themes for collective worship often deal with moral issues appropriately and at the pupils' own level; for example caring for animals and perseverance were amongst the subjects in the assemblies observed. Lessons, too, show the pupils' good level of moral awareness. In a year 1 literacy session, for example, pupils who had listened to the story of *Farmer Duck* described the farmer as 'too ordering' (*sic*) and 'selfish' and could explain what they meant. Older pupils' writing, based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* showed a good ability to empathise with different characters in a dramatic situation.

#### **The school maintains a constructive working relationship with parents.**

21 The headteacher and governors give high priority to informing parents about the life and work of the school. There is a comprehensive and informative handbook, and regular newsletters which keep parents well in touch with forthcoming events. Information about the curriculum is regularly disseminated, so that families know about topic work in advance, whilst workshops are organised to introduce new developments such as the national literacy strategy. Parents have regular opportunities to meet with teachers, both formal and informal, which are appreciated by most. Although a few parents feel that end of year reports are not sufficiently detailed, those seen by the inspection team were well-written and comprehensive, providing perceptive comments about pupils' personal and social development as well as academic progress. Reports meet statutory requirements in full.

22 The school benefits from the active support of many parents, who become involved in a wide range of school activities. Parents and friends of the school help in many practical ways, for example, hearing readers, as well as involving themselves in fund-raising activities and social events. With a clear home-school agreement in place, families almost invariably ensure that children complete their homework. Indeed, a problem sometimes arises when pupils spend too long on their homework and do not stop, as they are advised to do, after half an hour.

#### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

##### **The school is not aiming for high enough standards in some foundation subjects, and standards are poor in information and communication technology (ICT).**

23 Standards are consistently high in English, mathematics and science, but equally high standards are not being achieved right across the curriculum. Although in a short inspection standards are not evaluated subject by subject, art was scrutinised on the basis of displays around the school, some completed topic work was available and lessons were observed in music and geography. In each of these areas, indications are that pupils' achievements, although satisfactory, are not as high as might be expected given the capabilities of these pupils and their very good skills in written and spoken English.

24 In ICT, discussion with pupils in years 5 and 6 indicate standards that are well below average. These pupils have missed out on important areas within the Key Stage 2 programme of study, and it is only in the last few weeks, with the delivery of new computers, that some of this ground is now being made up. The older pupils are reasonably adept at word processing. They have had regular experience of copying up finished work and understand how to change the font and size of text for presentations. Word processing is not often used for first drafts, though, and the awkward positioning of newly acquired keyboards in relation to the computer screens makes it a slow process to create text. The pupils have been introduced recently to a 'super-logo' program, and are beginning to gain experience of control technology, but not monitoring. They have no experience and limited understanding of how ICT can be used to organise and analyse information, however, and have not learned in school how to use computers to combine and present different forms of information. The pupils have had insufficient experience of using CD-ROM to seek information, and have made limited use of ICT to support their learning in various subjects of the curriculum.

25 Standards in ICT at the end of Key Stage 1 are somewhat below expectations for the age-group. Children in the nursery learn basic skills, such as the use of the mouse and keyboard, and can work with simple programs suitable for the under-fives. By year 2 the pupils understand how to use the computer to generate print, and have recently produced captions for a display of their work in design and technology. They know that their work can be stored and printed, but need adult help with these activities. Recent work using 'Roamer', a floor turtle, is of an appropriate standard for seven-

year olds. They do not, however, have experience of using ICT to sort and classify information, and to present findings, for example in graphic form. Computer programs are seldom used to develop the pupils' work in art or music, or to provide routine practice in literacy and numeracy skills.

26 A sound development plan has recently been produced for ICT and a scheme of work has been drafted, following national guidance. The headteacher recently made a successful bid for inclusion in the City of Derby Grid for Learning. However, there has been a frustrating sequence of difficulties and delays, beyond the school's control, in getting the new system up and running. Some of the computer hardware and software needed has been acquired, but the school is still short of essential equipment for implementation of the new scheme of work, for example digital cameras. An extensive programme of training for all staff has been planned. When this has been completed and the scheme of work is being implemented, the next step will be a review of the management and use of ICT throughout the curriculum to increase the breadth and independence of the pupils' learning.

**Management, planning and monitoring of the curriculum are not strong enough to ensure a good balance and steady development in each subject area.**

27 The school has traditionally given high priority to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and this has without doubt helped to produce the high standards of which governors and staff are rightly proud. With the introduction of the literacy and numeracy hours, however, the time given to English and mathematics has become disproportionate, and this is beginning to affect achievement in other areas of the curriculum, especially at Key Stage 2. Although 'special days' for art and other subjects are enjoyed by the pupils and help to strengthen relationships, they are no substitute for steady teaching designed to develop skills and understanding over a period of time. The school has acknowledged in the current school development plan the need to review the balance of the curriculum. The inspection team entirely agrees.

28 Curricular planning is complicated by the uneven size of the yearly intake, which results in a constantly changing pattern of mixed age-groups in many classes. Attempts have been made to address this issue at Key Stage 2, where the major problems arise, by the creation of a two-year rolling programme of topics for science and the humanities. There is some scope for adjusting the programme itself, for example to ensure that difficult concepts involved in the scientific topic of 'the Earth and beyond' are not introduced too early. The main problem, however, is that the skills and understanding being aimed for with each ability and year-group are not adequately defined in the long-term planning, which is concerned almost entirely with content. Hence, in geography lessons, pupils in years 3, 4 and 5 were being taught very much the same material in their topic on rivers, with some work pitched at an inappropriate level. Planning is better in the top two classes, where the teachers tend to identify clear and appropriate learning objectives in their medium-term planning. Even here, there is not enough detail beyond the core curriculum about how different ability groups are to be catered for. Mechanisms for feeding assessment information into the planning process are also not clear enough.

29 Finally, monitoring arrangements to ensure that subject co-ordinators know exactly what is being taught and how at both key stages are not strong enough, except in literacy and numeracy. Although staff share planning and discuss the pupils' work, direct knowledge of the work of colleagues tends to be acquired informally when staff teach in close proximity to one another, and some co-ordinators have little first-hand understanding of work in different key stages. Monitoring arrangements now need to be formalised. Long-term planning and aspects of assessment were identified as shortcomings at the time of the last inspection. There is still has a long way to go, and not enough progress has been made in addressing these issues.

**The needs of children in the reception age group are not met in full, largely because of unsatisfactory accommodation.**

30 There is a stark contrast between the spacious, well planned and inviting learning environment of the nursery and the cramped accommodation currently used by the reception classes. The younger reception children, all of whom were below statutory school age at the time of the inspection, are housed at one end of an open-plan space also occupied by other classes. The carpeted area is small, and the whole area too crowded with furniture to allow the children to move around freely and securely. This restricts opportunities for teaching staff to plan learning through

structured play activities such as large-scale construction or experimentation with sand and water. Imaginative role-play is restricted to a tiny domestic play area, and activities often have to be limited to the use of table-top equipment for logistical reasons. Staff are well aware of this issue, and there is some sharing of nursery space on Friday afternoons, a sensible strategy. Because most of the children are well motivated and have good nursery experience, the progress they make in key areas such as language, literacy and numeracy is hardly influenced by the classroom environment. There is a loss of breadth in their experience, however, which influences the children's creative development and their ability to operate independently.

31 Outdoor space is also less than satisfactory for the reception age-group. There are few planned opportunities for learning through outdoor play, and no separate, secure outdoor area for the reception children. One unacceptable outcome is that the under-fives have to find their own way to their parents at the end of the day. With a building programme underway, staff and governors now have an opportunity to review the available options and to develop plans to improve this important aspect of provision.

32 Oversight and planning of the reception curriculum also deserve consideration. In the nursery well organised systems of planning, assessment and target-setting are based on agreed areas of learning for the under-fives and national goals for the age-group. In reception, even the youngest and least mature children embark on National Curriculum programmes of study from the first, with less effective use of assessment to inform planning. This results in some lack of continuity between provision in the nursery and reception classes. Present arrangements support the progress of the oldest and most mature children by giving them access to National Curriculum programmes at an early stage, but there is a likelihood that some of the least mature children miss out on informal stages of learning through activity and talking which are important to their subsequent development. The introduction of joint target setting involving both nursery and reception staff is a promising development which could lead to more integrated provision at the foundation stage.

### **Governors are not involved actively enough in school development planning.**

33 The governing body is a committed group of people who, between them, have a wide range of professional skills and experience of value to the school. Governors meet regularly and undertake their responsibilities for financial oversight of the school very effectively, doing all they can to ensure that the school makes the best of its limited resources and that good value is obtained. Individual governors are loyal and supportive of the school and some are regular and valued visitors, well known to the staff and pupils.

34 Governors' involvement in planning the medium- and long-term development of the school is a weakness, however. The current plan, which was drawn up by the headteacher in consultation with staff, did not involve governors at a formative stage. Although governors ask questions and make suggestions, they are at present taking no real responsibility for reviewing the performance of the school and determining its long-term direction and priorities. Governors set no timetable for the annual review and updating of the plan. The current plan is short-term and is not supported by action plans setting out time-scales, responsibilities and success criteria. A move in the direction of long-term planning is, however, being made as far as buildings' maintenance is concerned.

35 There is no clear connection between the processes of school development planning and setting the budget: indeed, these two activities at present take place at different times of year. In circumstances when the school has struggled to survive financially and there has been no room to manoeuvre over resources, this is understandable. As the financial position is now beginning to improve slightly, there is more scope for ensuring that priorities for development are backed by resource allocations, and there is a strong argument for bringing these two planning processes into line.



## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

In order to improve standards and the quality of provision further, the headteacher, staff and governors should -

### **(1) Raise standards in information and communication technology by:**

- implementing the recently drawn up policy and scheme of work for ICT;\*
- addressing gaps in the learning of older pupils;\*
- monitoring pupils' experience and improving assessment of individual skills in the subject;
- reviewing furnishings, hardware and software to support the new scheme of work;\*
- incorporating ICT into the scheme of work for each other subject of the curriculum;
- implementing a full programme of staff training, in line with existing plans.\*

*(See paragraphs 23 – 26)*

### **(2) Improve management, planning and monitoring of the curriculum to ensure better balance and steady progress in each subject, by:**

- reducing the time spent on English and mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2, to make more room for other areas of the curriculum;\*
- completing the writing or review of each scheme of work;\*
- improving long-term planning to show how skills and understanding develop year on year;
- ensuring that arrangements to extend the most able pupils and to support lower attainers are included in planning for all subjects, not just English, mathematics and science;
- using the outcomes of assessment more effectively to inform planning;
- monitoring teaching, learning and the standard of finished work more systematically across the curriculum.

*(See paragraphs 27 - 29)*

### **(3) Improve reception provision, by:**

- strengthening links between the nursery and reception classes to ensure continuity in practice;\*
- planning on the basis of the areas of learning for children at the foundation stage, using the early learning goals as a point of reference;\*
- ensuring that children have more opportunity to learn through activity and play, indoors and out;\*
- making every effort to improve the learning environment in the reception classes, with the aspiration that the quality of provision achieved in the nursery should be matched.

*(See paragraphs 30 – 32)*

In addition, the governing body should -

### **(4) Sharpen the focus of school development planning by:**

- involving governors more fully in reviewing the work of the school and establishing priorities;
- aligning development planning with the annual round of financial projections and budget-setting;
- setting out a timetable for updating the development plan each year and regularly reviewing progress towards the current targets;
- ensuring that targets have a clear time-scale and success criteria;
- planning for the long-term rather than one year at a time.

*(See paragraphs 33 - 35)*

*\*Indicates actions already planned, either in writing or informally, by the school.*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	17	38	42	4	0	0

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

### 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)	26	305
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	n/a	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	24

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	3.5
National comparative data	5.4

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**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	21	15	36

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	21	21
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	36	36	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (96)	100 (96)	100 (80)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	21	21
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	36	36	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (92)	100 (98)	100 (100)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	15	19	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	15	15
	Girls	18	19	19
	Total	32	34	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 (97)	100 (88)	100 (94)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	14	15
	Girls	18	18	19
	Total	32	32	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 (97)	100 (91)	100 (100)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	302
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28
Average class size	30.5

**Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

**Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

**Financial information**

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	396,821
Total expenditure	397,211
Expenditure per pupil	1155
Balance brought forward from previous year	18,904
Balance carried forward to next year	18,514

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	308
Number of questionnaires returned	159

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	39	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	36	3	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	43	5	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	48	8	1	9
The teaching is good.	59	35	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	45	13	3	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	25	5	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	31	3	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	43	37	14	4	1
The school is well led and managed.	54	38	3	3	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	35	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	45	11	2	14