

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. IPPOLYTS C.E (AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Hitchin

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117440

Headteacher: Mrs M. Nelson

Reporting inspector: Geoff Jones
11816

Dates of inspection: 26th – 27th June 2000

Inspection number:

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Frances Williams

Date of previous inspection: 17th April 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Ippolyts is a Church of England voluntary aided primary school with 150 pupils on roll aged from 4 to 11 years. The school is smaller than most primary schools nationally and has five classes, each with a two-year age range. One pupil has English as an additional language. Six per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and this is below the national average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is 21 per cent which is broadly in line with the national average. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. The school serves two villages of mixed housing overall. In these areas there is mainly privately owned housing but a significant proportion is local authority owned. Pupils' levels of attainment when they are first admitted to the school at the age of four are close to the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is highly effective. Standards in English, mathematics and science are all in the top five per cent of schools nationally at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are similar, with reading and writing well above the national average, mathematics above average, and science very high. The high standards are underpinned by challenging but realistic targets set for each pupil. The school aims for each child to improve by an average of two-thirds of a National Curriculum level each year - rather than the half a level advance expected in most schools -and this results in many pupils being over two years ahead of the national average by the end of Year 6. Pupils who have special educational needs are very well supported in their learning and make good progress. The special educational needs co-ordinator and support teacher oversee very effectively the work of these pupils. The quality of teaching is very good overall. The school is very well led by the head teacher who provides a clear direction for its work. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching and learning is very high;
- Standards in English, mathematics and science are very good;
- The leadership provided by the head teacher is very effective and provides a clear direction for the work of the school;
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships are very good;
- The shared commitment of the staff and the capacity to succeed are very good;
- Arrangements to promote pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are highly effective.

What could be improved

- The systems for setting and marking homework and communicating with parents are not consistently effective across classes;
- Co-ordinators do not review the extent to which pupils have acquired the expected knowledge, skills and understanding in subjects other than in English, mathematics and science;
- Pupils do not have enough knowledge and understanding of the range of cultures commonly found in Great Britain.

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 April 1996. Pupils' overall level of attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 has been improved from satisfactory to very high. Work in information technology has been improved since 1996 and pupils now have developed skills in the elements of controlling and modelling. The quality of teaching has been improved from sound overall to very good overall. This has resulted from regular monitoring of teaching by the head teacher. One of the key issues raised in the last inspection report was concerned with the promotion of the traditions and cultures of the wider community. As yet, the school has not addressed this issue. Overall, however, the school has made very good improvements to its work, particularly in teaching and learning.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in the National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	C	A*	A*	A*
Mathematics	C	A	A*	A
Science	C	A	A*	A

Key	
Very high	A*
Well above average	A
above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

The school's results in the annual national tests show that it is in the highest 5 per cent nationally for English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2. The results show an upward trend and demonstrate how successful the school has been at continuing to improve its standards. Compared with schools that serve pupils of a similar background the results are still well above average for mathematics and science and very high for English. These results are closely mirrored by the end of Key Stage 1 results when pupils' results are well above the national average for reading and writing, above the national average for mathematics and very high for science. The school has met and exceeded the last year's Local Education Authority's targets for national test results. Pupils take great care with their work and strive hard to do their best in all areas of the curriculum. Information technology is used effectively to support pupils' learning in other subjects. For example, it is used to help pupils classify items in science lessons and for drafting pieces of written work so they can be easily amended.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes towards school. They enjoy learning and work hard during lessons. They concentrate well and try hard to produce neat and accurate work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons, in the playground and whilst eating lunch is very good. Pupils are polite and well mannered. Boys and girls play sensibly together and older pupils frequently help younger ones.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils relate very well to each other and to adults in the school. Appropriate awards are given to pupils who show thoughtfulness and kindness and this has helped to promote empathy amongst the pupils. Older pupils have very good opportunities to carry out tasks to promote their sense of responsibility. All pupils are encouraged to co-operate and work sensibly in groups.
Attendance	Attendance is good. Pupils arrive punctually at school and lessons begin on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	Very 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.

Exactly half of all the lessons observed were very good and just over another 40 per cent were good. The remaining lesson observed during the inspection was satisfactory. In most lessons teachers have high expectations of the pupils' achievements, ensure that pupils' learning is consolidated and use learning resources very effectively to help pupils to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding. There are no common weaknesses in the teaching, only a few isolated factors which could be improved. For example, in one lesson the pace was slow owing to inappropriate organisation and pupils spent some time in a queue rather than being actively involved in learning. Literacy is taught very well and pupils' skills in reading and writing are developed effectively. Pupils' attainments in handling numbers are very good and this is enhanced by well-planned mental mathematics sessions. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well in their learning and make good progress. Teachers liaise very well with classroom assistants to ensure that they are fully informed about the aims of the activities planned. The classroom assistants work hard and provide very good support for the pupils' learning. The needs of higher attaining pupils are met well and the work planned for them is appropriate for their level. Pupils make very good progress overall due to the quality of teaching. Pupils' learning is constantly consolidated so they can build easily on their existing knowledge, skills and understanding.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The range and quality are very good. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are very good. There is a very effective balance to the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are good quality. Very good quality teaching is provided for pupils when they are withdrawn from the class for support in small groups.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. The school's Christian ethos provides a very good base for pupils to develop spiritually; very good moral teaching pervades most lessons and arrangements for pupils to develop socially are wide ranging and effective. Whilst pupils' knowledge and understanding of their own cultural heritage are developed well, they gain too little appreciation of the ways of life of the different ethnic groups represented in the United Kingdom.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Child protection arrangements are good and all members of staff are aware of the requirements. First-aid provision is good; class teachers are informed of lunch-time accidents. Portable electrical appliances are not checked sufficiently regularly.

All areas of the curriculum meet statutory requirements. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities for pupils and there are varied activities planned for lessons to take account of the differing needs of pupils. The school premises are kept very clean by a hard working cleaner-in-charge.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher provides very good leadership and gives a clear direction for the work of the school. As yet, co-ordinators are not all involved sufficiently in developing their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors support the school very well. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties but governors' involvement in shaping the direction of the school is not yet fully developed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The head teacher monitors literacy and numeracy lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching. Pupils' answers in the annual national tests are analysed to identify common weaker areas in their understanding. As yet, subject co-ordinators other than those responsible for English, mathematics and science do not carry out an annual audit of the pupils' knowledge skills and understanding of the curriculum.
The strategic use of resources	The budget is managed well. The element of the budget used for special educational needs is used wisely and the standards fund is used effectively to improve the work of the school. Learning resources are used very well to enhance pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.

The school's aims and values are reflected very effectively in its work. Pupils are valued, there is an atmosphere of caring throughout the school and pupils make very good progress in their learning. The action taken by the school to meet its targets is very good and the school development plan is of good quality with appropriate priorities for improvement. The school applies the principles of best value well. It compares its performance with other similar schools. Parents are consulted about how the school meets their requirements.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils' behaviour in school is good. • The quality of teaching is good. • The school helps children to become mature and responsible. • The school is well led and managed. • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of an interesting range of activities outside lessons. • Better information about how their child is getting on at school. • Provision of the right amount of homework.

The inspection team agrees with all the parents' positive views. It feels that the range of extra-curricular activities provided is appropriate for the size of the school. The school provides sporting activities as well as a very popular young engineers club for Year 6 pupils. The team feels the provision of homework is inconsistent across the school in terms of each teacher's application of the homework policy. However, when teachers keep to the policy it supports pupils' progress well. Annual written reports on pupils' progress provide useful information about how pupils are getting on

at school but they could contain more details about pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Information technology and design and technology should be reported upon separately and not as a composite area of the curriculum.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The quality of teaching and learning is very good

1. The quality of teaching is very good overall and has a number of highly effective qualities. Of the 14 lessons observed, seven were very good, six were good and one was satisfactory.

2. Teachers have high expectations of what the pupils in their classes can achieve. For example, in an interesting literacy lesson, older pupils were expected to be able to analyse the similarities and differences between the styles of two authors. They identified the complexity of the sentences, the use of similes and metaphors and the frequency of descriptions. Pupils used the information and ideas when planning their own stories to maximum effect. This encouraged high quality writing that contained a range of sentence structures and vocabulary to create desired effects. Younger pupils were expected to be able to identify a variety of aquatic animals during a science lesson. Pupils collected a range of small animals from the school pond and were provided with the means to identify the different examples collected. They responded very positively and successfully identified the animals using careful drawings for comparison purposes. They were expected to use technical vocabulary and did so naturally and with confidence.

3. Teachers use learning resources effectively to promote pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. For instance, in a very good quality lesson for four pupils with special educational needs, the support teacher used selected cards that matched the needs of each of the pupils to teach them the correct spellings of a range of similar sounding [homophonic] words. During the science lesson already mentioned pupils were provided with a wide range of equipment to enable them to obtain the best possible variety of experiences from identifying and collecting specimens from the school pond. They used plastic tanks, magnifying glasses, small plastic dishes, magnifying tripods and nets to enable close examination of the animals.

4. Teachers ensure that pupils' knowledge and understanding are consolidated in a number of different ways. Most lessons end with a review of the learning that has taken place during the lesson in order to provide pupils with an opportunity to reinforce their understanding of a new idea. The knowledge and understanding that have been acquired by pupils in one lesson are often applied through links to a lesson in another subject. For example, following a science lesson on the growth of seeds a Key Stage 1 teacher prepared an English lesson based on a non-fiction text focused on 'The Broad Bean.' Pupils learned about reading texts for information and how to identify the key points. This activity enabled them to improve their reading skills as well as revising their knowledge about how plants grow. On other occasions teachers use information technology lessons to learn new computer skills whilst reinforcing the learning in other subjects. For example, they use information technology to sort objects into a 'Carroll' diagram showing how a number of different items could be classified into four categories. This helped them to learn how to move objects across the computer screen as well as learning an approach to sorting objects in mathematics. In addition, pupils began to learn the rudiments of classification of living things in science.

5. As a result of the high expectations that teachers have of the pupils in their class, including those with special educational needs, very good progress is made. Likewise, the good and effective use of learning resources enables pupils to develop a firm understanding of new ideas so that these can be used as a framework to underpin new associated learning. The imaginative use of lesson planning to reinforce learning in one area of the curriculum and to introduce new skills and knowledge

in another helps pupils to consolidate their understanding and to give them the confidence to make good progress throughout the curriculum.

Standards in English, mathematics and science are very high

6. When pupils are first admitted to the school as four-year-olds, their standards of attainment are close to the national average. By the time pupils are five they have already made good progress. They have developed a knowledge of rhyming words. For example, they can name a good range of words with the medial 'oa' such as coat, goat, boat and float. The children have developed very well socially and are co-operative with adults and each other as well as being very well behaved. This results from the teacher's very clear expectations and the excellent team work that operates between her and the very good quality nursery nurse.

7. The school's results in the 1999 annual national tests are well above the national average for seven-year-olds in reading and writing and above the national average for mathematics. The proportions of pupils achieving higher levels were also well above the national average in reading and mathematics and above the average for writing. Teacher assessments of standards in science show that at the end of Key Stage 1 the pupils' levels of attainment are very high in comparison with the national norm. A comparison of the school's results for seven-year-olds with those of similar schools shows that these were well above average in reading and mathematics and above average for writing. This demonstrates very good progress in pupils' learning by the time pupils have reached the age of seven years.

8. The national test results for the school's eleven-year-olds in English, mathematics and science were all very high compared with the national average in 1999. Over 60 per cent of the pupils achieved a level in English, mathematics and science that was at least two years ahead of the average level for this age group. This shows that the pupils have continued to make very good progress in Key Stage 2. In addition, when the school's results are compared with those of schools serving pupils of a similar background they are very high for English and well above the average for mathematics and science.

9. Present standards of attainment at the ends of both key stages judged by observing lessons, examining pupils' work and talking to them to gauge their understanding, indicate that the overall levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science are all well above average. The pupils' speaking and listening skills develop very well because they are encouraged to participate in class discussions and to extend their vocabulary. The majority of Years 2 and 6 pupils read at above the nationally expected level for their respective age groups. The older pupils read with much expression showing that they understand the content very well. They demonstrate successfully that they have absorbed the main points of a story or factual text by being able to summarise them when asked. All pupils cover a wide range of activities to develop their writing skills and, as a result, they develop their standards of spelling, grammar and punctuation to a high standard. Pupils in all year groups have very good opportunities to tackle regularly a variety of different forms of writing such as stories, descriptions, letters, instructions, poetry and other styles.

10. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have very good skills in adding and subtracting numbers up to 20. They multiply and divide by five and two as well as understanding the difference between odd and even numbers. They have a good understanding of the place value of digits in numbers and count forwards and backwards in tens. Year 6 pupils are able to calculate rapidly, for example, the addition of two three-digit numbers in their head. Pupils have a very good knowledge of decimal numbers and can add, subtract, multiply and divide these. They calculate percentages of quantities correctly and measure angles accurately using a protractor. They have a very good understanding of averages, including the calculations of means, medians and modes.

11. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of science are very good at the end of both key stages. By the age of seven pupils know that plants require light and water for growth and that seeds

produced by flowering plants grow into new plants. They know that living things are classified according to differences and similarities and that sounds are made in many different ways. Pupils are able to sort materials according to their simple properties, and build batteries, bulbs and wires into simple circuits. Year 6 pupils have a good knowledge of the process of photosynthesis and transpiration in plants as well as the life processes of humans. They know that some changes in materials, particularly those caused by heating, are irreversible. They understand that friction slows objects and that the Earth's gravity causes weight.

The leadership provided by the head teacher is very effective and provides a clear direction for the work of the school

12. The head teacher provides very effective leadership and gives a very clear direction for the work of the school. She motivates the staff well and this results in good teamwork, a shared commitment to continue to improve standards and a very good capacity to succeed. Her appreciation of the strengths of the school and where it might improve further is good. She arranges for the pupils' answers in the annual national tests to be analysed by subject co-ordinators to identify areas in need of improvement. She uses these as a focus for some of the priorities to be included in the school improvement plan and for developing the curriculum. The school improvement plan has been carefully guided by the head teacher and contains very well considered priorities for developing the work of the school further.

13. Improvements in the school's standards of work have resulted from focussing on specific, relevant areas of the curriculum over a period of time. For example, the teachers have been concentrating on improving aspects of the pupils' writing. School-based in-service training has been arranged so that the whole staff had an opportunity to sharpen their classroom practice and raise standards further. The English co-ordinator has carried out an audit of pupils' work and learning materials. This resulted in the provision of more materials to support Key Stage 1 pupils in their acquisition of phonic skills and a greater emphasis on encouraging older Key Stage 2 pupils to use more complex sentences in their writing. This has resulted in improvements to pupils' standards of spelling and the content of their writing shows high levels of attainment.

14. In addition to the above, pupils' levels of attainments have been raised by setting targets for each pupil to achieve during the coming school year. The targets set are dependent upon individual pupils' levels of knowledge and understanding and are realistic yet challenging. The school considers that most pupils throughout the school are capable of improving their attainments by two-thirds of a level each year - rather than the half level expected in most schools. This is a very challenging target for them and many pupils succeed. To enable the targets to be realised teachers consider carefully their classroom teaching strategies to bring about greater progress. The process of target setting for pupils has resulted in improvements in the school's results in the annual national tests. Over the last three years the overall results have risen from being close to the national average to very high. When compared with the overall average levels of attainment of the children when they are admitted to the Reception class this represents very good progress.

15. The head teacher monitors regularly the quality of teaching in literacy and numeracy. She monitors each teacher and provides written and verbal feedback on the strengths and areas for development in the teaching. This has helped to improve the overall quality of lessons from good at the time of the previous inspection to very good at the present time.

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships are very good

16. Pupils are keen to come to school and are interested in their lessons. They concentrate on their work very successfully and work hard during lessons. This results from the class teachers' very good management of the pupils' behaviour and the very good relationships that are very evident in the classrooms. Parents feel that one of the strengths of the school is the very good behaviour of the pupils and the inspection team agrees strongly with this view. During the inspection period there was

no hint of oppressive behaviour such as bullying. Pupils are well-mannered and considerate and are polite to teachers, classroom assistants, mid-day supervisors and each other. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds integrate extremely well. Teachers and assistants play a key role in fostering a positive atmosphere. The same standard of behaviour is evident at playtimes, in the dining hall, when pupils go to assembly or when they are trusted to work independently outside the classroom.

17. Good relationships between staff and pupils are fostered successfully through an atmosphere of mutual respect. This provides the background against which the aims the school sets itself may be realised. This promotes an harmonious atmosphere in the school where the feeling of caring for each other's feelings is very prevalent. In the school playground older pupils play happily with younger pupils and this promotes self-confidence for both sets of pupils.

18. Opportunities for pupils to demonstrate initiative and take personal responsibility are also very good. Pupils undertake a range of roles, such as monitors and librarians, and carry out important administrative tasks during collective acts of worship and fulfil them effectively. Older pupils are assigned to specific younger pupils who are new to the school. The Year 6 pupils take the responsibility of looking after Reception children very seriously during break-times and often the relationships continue for much longer than the Reception child's first year at school. Older pupils have the opportunity to participate in a residential visit and take part in a variety of outdoor pursuits. They do so enthusiastically and pupils report that the experience is very worthwhile and enjoyable. They learn to become more independent and develop their social skills as a result.

The shared commitment of the staff and the capacity to succeed are very good

19. Members of staff work very hard for the benefit of the pupils. They meet together regularly to discuss ways of improving both the overall school provision and what goes on in their own classrooms. All teachers participate in deciding what is included in the school improvement plan by sharing their own perceptions of what needs to be improved as well as discussing the results of objective evidence, such as an analysis of the pupils' answers in the various annual national tests.

20. The head teacher, class teachers, special educational needs support teacher and classroom assistants all work closely as a team. They share information, compare thoughts on pupils' progress and discuss possible strategies for improvement. This assists greatly in ensuring that overall standards rise. Their commitment to improvement is very good and their capacity to implement it is high.

Arrangements to promote pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are highly effective.

21. The school provides very good opportunities for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Arrangements for their cultural development are satisfactory overall.

22. The school's aims are set within the context of a caring, Christian community. This is strongly reflected in the ethos of the school. Pupils' self-esteem, for example, is nurtured carefully so that they develop a good sense of self-respect. The school prepares carefully for its valued spiritual moments, such as collective acts of worship. Pupils are given regular opportunities to pray and to reflect on the themes. Music is used well on such occasions to create an appropriate mood for the coming thought provoking experiences. Senior staff handle well themes such as 'talking to God' and how this needs to be done quietly in an atmosphere of stillness. In one example, the well-known traditional story of 'Pandora's Box' was linked to getting rid of bad things in pupils' own lives by placing them in the box that was used as an artefact to illustrate the story. Such occasions provide good opportunities for pupils to relate the ideas to the happenings in their own lives and to make the experience personal to themselves. In addition, the school provides planned experiences for pupils to experience awe and wonder and to gain spiritually. For instance, in a very good Year 2/3 science lesson pupils were given the opportunity to observe the wide variety of life forms in the school pond. Whilst examining the

range of small animals they had collected, there was a genuine feeling of suppressed excitement and wonder about what they could see.

23. The very good development of the pupils' moral values is underpinned very successfully by a good quality behaviour policy. This focuses very sensibly on the positive aspects of the good behaviour the school expects from pupils. It sets out clearly the school's values and the rewards for examples of good behaviour. This reinforces good behaviour and draws the attention of other pupils to examples of what is regarded as worthy. Class teachers reward pupils for good work and good behaviour through the awarding of stars and stickers. There is also a good formal scheme for rewarding achievement, effort and kindness by giving badges to pupils publicly during collective acts of worship. Prepared sheets bearing the names of the award winners are displayed in the hall for one week and pupils are proud to be recognised for their actions. These awards are very effective in encouraging behaviour which is sympathetic to the needs of others. Teachers provide very good role models for pupils to follow. They value highly all the pupils' spoken and written contributions during lessons and assemblies and are polite in their dealings with them at all times. This models the behaviour which they expect pupils to follow and the children react very positively. Collective acts of worship frequently focus on moral themes and these are effective in promoting good behaviour and a good sense of what is right. In addition, lessons often include moral aspects of behaviour. For example, in the lesson involving the collection of pond animals, the teacher focused very clearly on the welfare of the animals as the correct course of action to follow. Pupils were instructed to provide pond plants so that the animals would feel more comfortable and that the animals would have to be returned to the pond the following day so they would come to no harm.

24. Pupils' social development is very good. There are varied opportunities for pupils to work and co-operate with each other whilst working in pairs or small groups. They participate in team games to develop their appreciation of working together towards a common goal. Pupils' are very aware of the code of conduct displayed in classrooms that covers aspects of their social behaviour such as being friendly with others, helping other people, leaving work areas tidy and putting things away. The school assigns older pupils to look after individual Reception class children so that feelings of insecurity and uncertainty will be overcome through the help and friendliness that can be provided. The older pupils approach this in a very mature manner and provide very effective assistance to younger pupils. There is a real feeling of pupils and staff being part of a community in the school, especially during collective acts of worship. This promotes a feeling of belonging to a large family where the adults are genuinely concerned about the well-being of the pupils. Opportunities for older pupils to attend residential school visits are provided annually. This fosters appropriate social development and gives opportunities to develop greater independence away from pupils' home environment.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The systems for setting and marking homework and communicating with parents are not consistently effective across classes.

25. The school's policies for homework and for communicating with parents are not always followed and there is no system for checking the consistency and regularity with which teachers comply with these arrangements. Several parents feel that the setting of homework in their children's classes is not satisfactory. A few parents feel that some homework is not marked regularly and that, in consequence, children's efforts are not always recognised. These parents feel that homework is not helping their children as much as it might to make progress in their learning. The inspectors found that the homework policy is not consistently applied in all classes and there is no monitoring of it. However, when teachers keep to the school homework policy, it supports pupils' progress well.

26. In some classes the home-school diaries are used very effectively as a good method of communicating between the teacher and parent but in others the system has broken down and is not used effectively. There has been no review of the usefulness of this arrangement.

Co-ordinators do not review the extent to which pupils have acquired the expected knowledge, skills and understanding in their subjects other than in English, mathematics and science.

27. Other than for English, mathematics and science there are no annual reviews of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. There is an analysis of pupils' answers in the annual national tests to identify areas in the English and mathematics curricula where Key Stage 1 pupils' knowledge and understanding is weaker. A similar exercise is also carried out to pin point such areas in the English, mathematics and science curricula in Key Stage 2. The information arising from results of the analysis is used as part of the process for identifying priorities for the school improvement plan. As yet, however, no information is collected to identify weaker areas in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in other areas of the curriculum. Subject co-ordinators do not examine samples of pupils' work to make judgements on the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning. Nor do they interview samples of children who are higher attaining, average attaining or lower attaining pupils to discover the extent of their understanding in the subject for which they are responsible.

28. Priorities for inclusion in the school improvement plan are decided collectively by teachers according to their own personal feelings about what needs to be accomplished during the year in order to move the school forward. Important information concerning pupils' attainments in subjects other than English, mathematics and science is not used to bring to bear on decisions about the priorities for the school's development in the future. Such decisions are important and are needed to improve pupils' levels of attainment and progress in each of the National Curriculum subjects and religious education.

Pupils do not have enough knowledge and understanding of the range of cultures commonly found in Great Britain.

29. Although arrangements for the pupils' cultural development are satisfactory overall, they are less effective in raising awareness of other cultures than in promoting understanding of pupils' own cultural heritage.

30. Teachers arrange educational visits to appropriate places to develop a knowledge and understanding of this country's cultural heritage. Pupils visit Hitchin museum, a farm in Cambridgeshire, the Fitzwilliam museum, Colne Valley Railway and a 'Millennium Poetry' day in Hitchin. These experiences support effectively the pupils' development of knowledge of the national culture. Pupils are very aware of the work of a number of well-known artists. They are introduced to the paintings and related painting techniques during art lessons and become familiar with the distinctive styles of a range of artists. They listen to a variety of examples of music during music lessons and also during collective acts of worship. These experiences are enriching and educative for the pupils. Most of the art and music that they encounter in the school is of European origin and opportunities are not always taken to introduce pupils to a range of artistic expression from other cultures.

31. Although the lack of provision for pupils' knowledge and understanding of the cultural diversity in this country was an issue contained in the previous report it has, as yet, not been addressed. Although the school makes use of a range of texts focusing on multi-cultural themes, the diverse nature of the cultures of the United Kingdom is not reflected enough in the school's curriculum for pupils to become acquainted with the ways of life of the cultures represented. Pupils show little understanding of faiths other than Christianity. Although there has been a workshop arranged for the pupils on Sikhism, this is not sufficient to enable them to develop an understanding of this faith.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to raise standards even further and ensure good progress for all pupils the head teacher, staff and governors should:

- base action plans on an evaluation of the school's performance by co-ordinators through:
 - interviewing samples of pupils to identify weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding; (27)
 - monitoring pupils' work to identify areas where coverage of aspects of the curriculum has been insufficient; (27)

- ensure a consistent approach across classes in:
 - the implementation of the school's homework policy; (25)
 - the communication of information to parents about pupils; (26)

- place a greater emphasis on multi-cultural education so that pupils become aware of the different ways of life of the various ethnic groups represented in the United Kingdom. (31)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

- introduce a system to ensure that electrical appliances are checked for safety on an annual basis.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	14
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	50	42	8			

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

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	150
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	36

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	7	17	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	7	7
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	23	23	23
Percentage of pupils At NC level 2 or above	School	96 (95)	96 (95)	96 (86)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	7	7
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	23	23	23
Percentage of pupils At NC level 2 or above	School	96 (95)	96 (95)	96 (57)
	National	82 (80)	86 (79)	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	7	6	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	6	7
	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	13	12	13
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	100 (100)	92 (83)	100 (94)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	6	6
	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	12	12	12
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	92 (89)	92 (83)	92 (94)
	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	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	142
Any other minority ethnic group	4

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)	6.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.6
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	55

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	1	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	1999
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	£
Total income	261827
Total expenditure	265565
Expenditure per pupil	1771
Balance brought forward from previous year	21152

Balance carried forward to next year	17414
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Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	150
Number of questionnaires returned	67

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	23	6	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	57	33	7	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	42	3		2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	54	12	1	
The teaching is good.	51	45	4		
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	51	36	12	1	
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	22	3	4	
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	33	3		4
The school works closely with parents.	43	46	9		1
The school is well led and managed.	55	39	3		3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	44			2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	26	15	11	8