

INSPECTION REPORT

ENGLISH MARTYRS RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Tilehurst, Reading

LEA area: Reading

Unique reference number: 110004

Acting Headteacher: Miss Linda Heneghan

Reporting inspector: Hugh Protherough
8339

Dates of inspection: 5th – 6th April 2000

Inspection number: 189354

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Anne Taplin
Date of previous inspection:	9 th -12 th September 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This large Catholic Primary School serves the parish of English Martyrs and has 342 pupils on roll. The Year 3 cohort contains a significant gender imbalance because there are almost twice as many boys than girls. The parish is socially diverse and the pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. Approximately one in ten of the pupils is entitled to free school meals. Since the last inspection the number of Irish families has decreased, however, there remain about 15 per cent of children from other ethnic groups. The majority of these are white European, although a few are of Chinese, Pakistani and African heritage. Almost all of these pupils speak English as their first language. The majority of the school's intake is mainly Catholic, but families of other faiths are admitted in line with the governors' admission policy.

The pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average and reflects the full range of ability. About one fifth of the pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs and currently two pupils have statements of special educational needs.

The deputy headteacher has been acting headteacher for the past term following the promotion of the previous headteacher to a post in another school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a successful and effective school because it takes pupils from a wide range of backgrounds, builds their confidence and self-esteem and through good quality teaching enables them to reach standards in English and mathematics that are above the national average by the end of Key Stage 2. There is a strong and effective leadership provided by the acting headteacher, her senior staff and the governing body that continues to drive forward improvements in a number of important areas. The school offers good value for money.

What the school does well

- Most of the pupils swiftly acquire the basic skills of literacy and numeracy so that by the age of eleven standards in English and mathematics are above the national average.
- The teachers are successful because they plan their lessons thoroughly. They capture the interest and enthusiasm of the pupils and push learning along at a brisk pace.
- The leadership is strong, compassionate and clear-sighted. It ensures that its management of the school addresses any weaknesses and secures improvement.
- The provision for the pupils' personal development is very strong. They are encouraged to accept responsibility and to reflect upon the consequences of their actions from an early age.

What could be improved

- The use and application of information technology across the entire curriculum.
- The style of handwriting taught by the school is over elaborate and holds back the writing development of pupils within Key Stage 1.

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 September 1996. Since then there have been a number of significant improvements. Standards in English and mathematics have risen and are now above average at the end of Key Stage 2. The reason for this is that the quality of teaching is far more consistent across the school than that described in the last inspection. The acting headteacher and other senior staff know this because they check

the teachers' planning and the quality of their work in lessons. A further improvement is the way that the school uses the information gathered from national tests and other assessments to keep track of individual pupils and to set itself realistic, but challenging targets. The teachers know their pupils very well and use this knowledge effectively when deciding what, and how to teach.

Improvement to the school's provision for teaching information and communications technology has been constrained by several changes to the subject's leadership. A new, well-qualified subject co-ordinator, good levels of investment in resources and a comprehensive programme of staff training, means that the school is well placed to sustain the recent improvements in provision observed during the inspection.

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	B	C	A	A
mathematics	C	C	B	C
science	B	A	C	C

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

The results of the 1999 tests for eleven-year-olds show that standards in English were well above average in comparison with both results nationally and those achieved by pupils in similar schools. Standards in mathematics were above the national average and in line with those achieved by pupils in similar schools. The results achieved in science were broadly average in comparison with both the national picture and those of similar schools.

The overall trend of improvement in the school's results for the past three years matches the national picture. Inspection findings confirm that standards are secure. This year, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in English, mathematics and science is above average. The reason why standards in English appear lower is because there is a significant minority of pupils with special educational needs with learning and behavioural difficulties who are unlikely to reach the expected level. This makes it difficult for the school to match the very good results achieved last year. The effective introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has led to improvement in pupils' mental agility when carrying out calculations. The quality of work seen in books indicates that more than four fifths of pupils are working at the expected level. The school was disappointed by last year's results in science. The small quantity of work seen during the inspection was of good quality.

Last year's results at the end of Key Stage 1 were poor and reflected a significantly large proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The leadership has responded positively by creating smaller classes for this cohort of pupils and allocating additional resources. There is now good evidence of considerable improvement in the standards being achieved in Year 3. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are better this year and the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average. However, a weakness remains because very few pupils manage to exceed the expected level in writing. This is partly explained by the over elaborate handwriting style taught throughout the school.

The standard of pupils' work in information technology needs improving throughout the school. Until recently there have been too few opportunities for pupils to acquire, practise and apply these important skills to all aspects of their learning.

The school makes effective use of the information it gathers from tests and assessments of the pupils. It is currently revising its published targets for English and mathematics to reflect recent improvement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Almost all the pupils are diligent and take pride in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The school is an orderly, polite community and the vast majority of pupils behave very well. A tiny minority of pupils in Year 6 has emotional and behavioural difficulties and occasionally their behaviour is very poor.
Personal development and relationships	The overwhelming majority of pupils are eager to assume responsibility and take an active role within the school community. The reason they do this is because they enjoy very good relationships with their teachers, who treat them with sensitivity and respect.
Attendance	Above average.

The pupils' attitudes and values and are strong and positive factor in the above average standards they achieve. They are keen to learn and proud of their school and its achievements. The school community is working determinedly to improve the attitudes and behaviour of a very few disaffected pupils.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching is much better than at the time of the last inspection because it is more consistent throughout the school. During the inspection 19 per cent of lessons were very good, 62 per cent good and 19 per cent satisfactory.

There is particular strength in the thorough way that the skills of literacy and numeracy are taught. The teachers have good subject knowledge and are well prepared to teach these basic skills. They plan their lessons in detail and set precise objectives so that it is clear what the pupils are going to learn. As a result the pace of work is frequently brisk. This keeps the children interested and supports the generally very positive relationships between the teachers and their pupils. The school strives to meet the needs of all pupils by adopting flexible approaches to grouping pupils for their lessons. For instance, the support for those with special educational needs is good because the individual education plans contain thorough analysis of what each child needs to do to improve. This is delivered effectively by a combination of work in class and support in small withdrawal groups.

The teachers have benefited from recent training in information technology and their confidence in teaching this subject is growing.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	With the exception of information technology, the school offers a broad curriculum. A good range of educational visits and extracurricular activities supports this.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Systems for the identification and support of these pupils are good. As a result most make good progress towards the precise targets set within their individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's strong provision for personal and social education is reflected in the mature outlook of many of its pupils. The regular opportunities for prayer and reflection within the class support the pupils' growing ability to reflect on life's important questions.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's procedures for child protection and health and safety are very good.

The school has successfully introduced the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. However, the school's curriculum for information technology is not yet firmly established. As a result, the pupils' work does not yet show full coverage of statutory requirements.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The acting headteacher and her senior managers are moving the school forward with the full support of the staff team. They know how they want the school to improve and have a good appreciation of how this might be achieved. They have already experienced success.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body works assiduously on behalf of the school. Governors have a good oversight of the school's curriculum and the resources at their disposal. Their training and preparation for the appointment of a new headteacher has been very thorough.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is a very good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of school based upon an acute evaluation of a range of evidence.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Money is spent according to the priorities of school development plan. Good checks are made to see that what is spent is improving standards.

The leadership responded swiftly to the poor results achieved by pupils in last year's Key Stage 1 tests. A well considered plan targeted important resources into Year 3 and re-organised teaching. As a result standards are improving. This type of action, supported by thorough evaluation is a good example of the way that the

governors are using the principles of best value to make appropriate provision for the pupils and improve standards further.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's Catholic ethos and gospel values permeate all of its work. • Their children enjoy coming to school because they feel secure and are motivated by the exciting teaching. • Standards are high and most children quickly become literate and numerate. • The school values individuals and provides very good support for lower attaining pupils as well as trying to stretch the brighter ones. • Teachers are friendly and make themselves easily accessible to discuss any problems. • They get plenty of information about the life of the school, what is taught and how well their children are doing. • The acting headteacher and her staff have ensured that the school continues to move forward positively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches to setting homework are not yet consistent across the school. • The range of after school activities.

The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed by the great majority of parents. Whilst acknowledging that the majority of after school clubs is aimed at pupils within Key Stage 2, they feel that the school offers a good range of extracurricular activities. The after school care club offers a valuable service. In many lessons the inspectors saw homework being set in line with the school's policy. On one occasion a spelling test showed that every pupil had successfully learnt the week's spellings that had been set as homework the previous week.

PART B COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Most pupils swiftly acquire the basic skills of literacy and numeracy so that by the age of eleven standards in English and mathematics are above the national average.

1. The results of the 1999 tests for eleven-year-olds show that standards in English were well above average in comparison with both results nationally and those achieved by pupils in similar schools. Standards in mathematics were above the national average and in line with those achieved by pupils in similar schools. Analysis of the results of the past four years show that on average, pupils leaving the school are about a term and a half ahead of the expected level in English and roughly a term ahead in mathematics. The school's continuing improvement in the Key Stage 2 tests matches the national trend and there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.
2. Inspection findings confirm that standards are secure. This year, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in English and mathematics is above average. The reason why standards in English are slightly lower is because this year there are more pupils with special educational needs who are unlikely to reach the expected level. This makes it difficult for the school to match the very good results achieved last year.
3. Last year's results at the end of Key Stage 1 were poor and reflected a significantly large proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are better this year and the proportion of pupils achieving the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average.
4. A major strength is the way that by the age of eleven pupils acquire a high level of competence as speakers and listeners. The pupils are encouraged to offer opinions, explain their work and discuss within groups from an early age. Many perform regularly in settings such as worship or school productions. A good example of the high standard of debate was observed during a Year 6 English lesson when pupils had to solve a 'murder mystery'. Each pupil had their own set of evidence cards, but it was only possible to find a solution by sharing information within the group. The children worked together with great maturity. They read fluently and showed very good mental recall of each other's 'evidence'. They applied logic carefully and used inferential skills convincingly to explain the motives of different characters.
5. By the age of eleven most pupils are reading widely because book titles and the names of authors are shared with enthusiasm throughout the school. The Harry Potter stories of J.K.Rowling have been read by many, but pupils are also encouraged by their teachers to read classics such as 'Alice in Wonderland,' 'A Hundred and One Dalmatians' and 'Wind in the Willows'. Analysis of the pupils' written work shows that they are developing a good awareness of the characteristics of different types of story, whilst at the same time their response to characters and setting is often lively and imaginative. By the time they leave school most pupils are beginning to use their knowledge of language to deliberate effect. For instance, one pupil, when asked to increase his use of adjectives decided to use alliteration as well when writing about Cruella Deville "...her sleek, silky hair, carefully parted." At the end of Key Stage 2 the pupils' are writing convincingly across a wide range of styles and for many different purposes.
6. The basis for wide reading is firmly established during Key Stage 1 where the children quickly recognise the pleasure to be gained from books and literature. Their literacy lessons help them establish a good grasp of the basics of reading, including a thorough understanding of the sounds of letters. Most pupils swiftly appreciate that print conveys meaning and that writing is a useful way of

recording their own thoughts and ideas. However, their progress towards joined handwriting is sometimes slower than it should be because the school's chosen style adds loops and flourishes that make it difficult for the children to acquire fluency. As a result few pupils manage to exceed the expected level by the age of seven. This is explored in more detail in the section "What could be improved."

7. The effective introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has led to improvement in pupils' mental agility when carrying out calculations. A particular strength is the way that the teachers try to make mathematics interesting and relevant. For instance, in the Reception class the children are already gaining confidence in handling small amounts of money as they practice to going to the class shop to buy a birthday present for a friend. By the age of seven most manage to work out the change they should receive from fifty pence by 'adding on' from the amount that they have spent. They carry out calculations with numbers up to a hundred, know the names of common two and three-dimensional shapes and extract information from simple graphs and tables.
8. At the end of Key Stage 2, the quality of work seen in lessons and in the pupils' books indicates that the proportion of pupils working at the expected level is above average. Their mental agility is good so that at the start of numeracy lessons they respond rapidly and accurately to the teachers' requests to double or halve large numbers. They explain their methods and make sensible predictions about what might be a reasonable answer. Most understand how inverse operations can help them check the accuracy of their answers. The great majority of pupils is competent in manipulating numbers up to two decimal places and applies these skills in variety of contexts. For instance recent work on temperature has involved decimal notation as well as consideration of negative numbers.
9. The pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy make a significant contribution to their ability to research and investigate in many other subjects such as science, geography and history. The great majority leaves school well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The teachers are successful because they plan their lessons thoroughly. They capture the interest and enthusiasm of the pupils and push learning along at a brisk pace.

10. The quality of teaching is much better than at the time of the last inspection because it is more consistent throughout the school. During the inspection all of the lessons seen were satisfactory or better. In two thirds of the lessons the teaching was good, of which almost a fifth was very good.
11. There is particular strength in the thorough way that the skills of literacy and numeracy are taught. The teachers have good subject knowledge and are well prepared to teach these basic skills. For instance in a very good Year 6 mathematics lesson the teacher introduced the concept of squaring numbers and square roots extremely effectively. She made sure that she used correct mathematical language, but at the same time helped the pupils to understand what she was talking about by careful explanations and skilful and well-chosen questions. A particular strength was the way that she encouraged the pupils to predict their answers.
12. A Year 3 literacy lesson provided the pupils with an interesting introduction to taking notes. The teacher made effective use of a large format information book that she read with the class. The pupils then had to identify the key words that would remind them of the main points of the text. Once again, the teacher's thorough questioning led to interesting discussion and rapid learning. The subsequent group activities built on this good start and provided appropriately challenging work. For instance, one group grappled hard with a series of anonymous notes before deciding who had written them and why.

13. Throughout the school the teachers plan their lessons in detail and set precise objectives so that it is clear what the pupils are going to learn. As a result the pace of work in lessons is often brisk. This keeps the children interested and supports the generally very positive relationships between the teachers and their pupils. In many of the lessons observed there was humour, affection, and a clear sense of purpose reflected in the brisk, business like approach to work. This is a direct reflection of the school's strong Christian ethos and its commitment to personal and social education. As a result of these positive relationships and the mutual respect between adults and the overwhelming majority of pupils, the teachers frequently make learning exciting. For instance, in Year 5 design and technology the pupils are designing and making their own clocks. The teacher expects a professional approach and demands high quality work. As a result the pupils work very hard and take pride in their work. Their plans are of good quality and show evidence of useful research. They use tools and materials skilfully and safely, successfully constructing their final products and carrying out rigorous evaluation.
14. The school strives to meet the needs of all pupils by adopting flexible approaches to grouping pupils for their lessons. In English and mathematics the pupils are put into sets on the basis of their prior attainment. This helps the teachers to match the content of the lesson more closely to the abilities of the group. Similarly, the support for those pupils with special educational needs is good because the individual education plans contain thorough analysis of what each child needs to do to improve. This is delivered effectively by a combination of work in class and support in small withdrawal groups.
15. The teaching of information technology is beginning to improve because the teachers have benefited from recent training and their confidence in teaching this subject is growing. The two lessons observed during the inspection were well considered, showing a secure knowledge of what needed to be taught. Both lessons made effective use of the school's improved resources and enabled the pupils to make good gains in the development of important skills.

The leadership is strong, compassionate and clear-sighted. It ensures that its management of the school addresses any weaknesses and secures improvement.

16. The school's positive ethos is a reflection of the strong and purposeful management that has led the school for many years. The acting headteacher and her temporary senior management team have risen to the challenge offered by the departure of the previous headteacher to a new post. They are continuing to push forward the programme of school improvement set out in the school development plan whilst continuing to develop their own skills and approaches as leaders and managers.
17. The major strength is that the acting headteacher, senior management, subject co-ordinators and governing body all hold a clear view of the current state of the school. They have a good appreciation of the standards achieved and the quality of education provided by the teachers based on the collection of first hand evidence and its subsequent thorough review. These findings are then incorporated carefully within the school development plan. For instance, there was increasing concern about the progress of the pupils in last year's Year 2 that was confirmed by their very poor test results. The response of the leadership was rapid and very effective. This year the resources were found to create two separate Year 3 classes for these children. Additional classroom assistants were deployed and the teaching of English and mathematics arranged in groups based upon the pupils' prior attainment. A heavy emphasis is placed upon improving pupils' attitudes to work and school, so that there is the regular use of rewards and incentives. This is effective in helping all pupils, but especially those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. A programme of regular tests and assessments provides the teachers and the leadership with compelling evidence of good progress. At this stage of the year it is clear that the school's response to the needs of this cohort of pupils is paying dividends. All of the evidence points to considerable gains in the pupils' competence in reading, writing and numeracy skills. The classrooms are generally happy, well ordered and

purposeful. Those pupils with specific special educational needs are effectively supported and generally working hard towards the targets identified in their individual education plans.

18. This is a very good example of how strong leadership ensures that resources are targeted at those areas where improvement is required and checks to make sure that the desired outcomes are achieved. The leadership makes similarly well informed judgements about the allocation of its resources in many other areas. The need to improve the range of equipment for the teaching of information technology has led to steady investment in this area over several years. Money has also been spent on training so that teachers are now far more willing to use this equipment in their lessons. Throughout this process great care has been taken to ensure that good quality purchases are made at a competitive price. The principles of best value are being carefully applied.
19. The school's Catholic ethos and its commitment to gospel values is evident throughout each day. The pupils of all ages, abilities and ethnic backgrounds are valued equally and their successes celebrated. The teachers strive to ensure that all pupils receive equal access to the school's curriculum, but sometimes this is difficult to achieve. For instance, in Year 6 there are one or two pupils who sometimes appear to take delight in behaving appallingly. They can be rude, confrontational and are capable of disrupting the work of other children. Nevertheless, the teachers are patient, polite and compassionate in the way that they work very hard in order to include these pupils as part of the school community. The leadership makes extremely effective use of the expertise of a behaviour support unit. Their assistance has helped teachers develop a good range of strategies for dealing with these occasional outbursts.
20. The governing body provides very good support for the work of the school. They fulfil their responsibilities in full and give generously of their time to ensure that they are properly trained for the many important decisions that they have to make. An excellent example of this is the way that the entire governing body has prepared together for the appointment of a new headteacher. Their selection process is rigorous and the range of tasks and processes identified for prospective candidates demanding. The governors are strongly placed to make an informed choice for this key role.

The provision for pupils' personal development is very strong. The children are encouraged to accept responsibility and to reflect upon the consequences of their actions from an early age.

21. The school encourages all pupils to accept responsibility for their work and actions and to reflect deeply on their relationships with parents, teachers and each other. From an early age the children are expected to assume responsibility for simple tasks within the classroom and around the school. By the age of eleven, many are capable of a significant contribution to school life. For instance, some of the Year 6 pupils will accompany new visitors to the school on a guided tour. They answer questions thoughtfully and talk openly of their experiences of school.
22. Over the past year a new co-ordinator for personal and social education has introduced a comprehensive curriculum framework that provides thorough guidance for the teaching of this aspect of the school's curriculum. This has been effective because each class now provides regular opportunities for the children to talk about important aspects of their lives together. For instance, in Year 3 the teacher read a story about starting school and the pupils then spoke about how different characters in the story might have felt at key moments. Many also took the opportunity to recall their own early experiences of school. By the age of eleven, most pupils are able to articulate clearly why certain types of behaviour such as teasing and name-calling are potentially damaging. They understand the importance of sustaining their own self-esteem and how to try to avoid conflict with those that taunt them.

23. A further strength of the school's provision in this area lies outside the formal curriculum. The Rainbow Club provides support for pupils experiencing particular and extreme difficulties in their lives such as bereavement or other personal loss. This group works with the acting headteacher after school and is another good example of the continuing commitment to care.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The use and application of information technology across the entire curriculum.

24. The effectiveness of the school's response to the issue of information technology identified within the last report has been constrained by a number of factors. Most significantly, the levels of teacher confidence and competence in the subject were extremely low and there have been three different co-ordinators within a four-year period. The leadership has made steady and substantial improvement to the number of computers and other resources over the past few years and since September the appointment of a new co-ordinator has led to a quickening in the pace of improvement. However, it is clear that the pupils' current levels of skill lag some way behind the expectations of the National Curriculum programmes of study. The analysis of the pupils' work carried out during the inspection reveals that few teachers have been confident in identifying opportunities for the children to make effective use of the power of information technologies across the other subjects of the National Curriculum. For instance, when asked about whether they ever used word processing in English, pupils in Years 5 and 6 said that they typed-up good work from their exercise books rather than compose their writing on screen and use features such as 'cut and paste' to edit it. Two pupils in Year 5 observed typing a row of numerals were uncertain about how they could move the cursor to start a new row of figures. The skills being taught in the two information technology lessons observed during the inspection though appropriate were at a level lower than might be expected for the ages of the pupils involved.
25. However, the school's rate of improvement in this subject is accelerating because the leadership's careful planning has identified the correct priorities. Each classroom now has its own computer and the recently created computer suite offers regular opportunities for the direct teaching of skills and techniques to larger groups of pupils. There has been considerable investment in staff training so that all teachers are beginning to identify more frequent opportunities in their planning for pupils to use information technology. The school will shortly benefit from further training as it joins the National Grid for Learning and internet access will be available from May. The subject co-ordinator is suitably qualified, enthusiastic and with the assistance of his small working party provides effective help and guidance for his colleagues.
26. There is evidence in some classrooms that pupils are beginning to use computers to organise and present simple sets of data. Most pupils in Year 4 are reasonably confident in naming and saving their work onto a floppy disk. A Year 5 lesson showed pupils making effective use of the Roamerworld program as they got to grips with concept of entering repeat commands to a computer in order to control the movement of the cursor. These are promising signs. However, the next challenge is to ensure that the school's curriculum helps pupils to build their skills and knowledge in a systematic way. The teachers are drawing sensibly from national guidance on what to teach, but an analysis of their medium-term plans shows different classes identifying similar sorts of learning even though the pupils are two years apart in age. The co-ordinator's plan to develop a checklist of key skills that will help teachers to keep a record of the progress made by each child in the subject is an appropriate development. Nevertheless, the teachers need first to reach clearer agreement about what is to be taught and when, so that as the pupils pass through the school they become fully equipped with the information technology skills essential for life in the twenty first century. **This is a key issue for action.**

The style of handwriting taught by the school is over elaborate and holds back the writing development of pupils within Key Stage 1.

27. Analysis of the national test results at the end of Key Stage 1 for the past four years shows that the standard of the pupils' writing falls well behind their generally good results in reading and mathematics. Last year's results were particularly poor in all areas, but this was because of a significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs and the fact that a larger number of pupils than usual had only one or two terms in school in their Reception year. Apart from this the results of previous years all indicate that reading standards are generally well above average, but that those in writing are below average. For instance, putting the results of the last four years together shows that on average pupils are about three-quarters of a term behind where they should be.
28. Inspection findings indicate that the pupils' achievements at the end of Key Stage 1 are currently much better than last year. The proportion of pupils working at the expected level is close to the national average in both reading and writing. However, these figures mask the continuation of the gap between standards in reading and writing. Whereas more than a quarter of the pupils are reading at a higher level, hardly any are managing to achieve this in writing because they find it difficult to acquire a fluent style of joined up handwriting.
29. At the start of the year most pupils are still tending to print their letters. The majority quickly becomes proficient so that as their formation of letters gains in accuracy, and the size and shape becomes more regular. The difficulties start as the pupils begin to join up their writing. Although the school's chosen scheme is based upon the development of a joined script it is complicated by the addition of loops for most ascenders and descenders. This is a type of print rarely encountered by the pupils in books and magazines, although most teachers are conscientious in attempting to use this style in their labelling within classrooms. A few pupils master the style quite quickly, but in the majority of books and folders it is evident that the move towards joined script is often slow and the volume of their work does not increase at the rate suggested by their imaginative choices of language. Observation of the pupils' writing in lessons shows that many, in the early stages of joined script, write laboriously and can be confused by the accumulation of loops and twirls.
30. The analysis of pupils' books shows that in many aspects of their written work steady progress has been made over the course of the current year. The pupils are writing for a good range of purposes and their stories, poems and accounts of family life are often lively and interesting to read.
31. Conversations with teachers and governors reveal that discussions about handwriting have been taking place for some time and that a review of the current scheme is scheduled in the next year. **This is a key issue for action that requires consideration at the earliest opportunity.**

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

32. In order to improve still further the quality of education and the standards achieved by the pupils at the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
 - a. Build on the recent improvements in the teaching of information technology by ensuring that;
 - a clear curriculum framework supports teachers' planning throughout the school.
 - teachers identify opportunities for using information technology across all subjects of the National Curriculum.
 - b. Improve the school's approach to teaching handwriting so that the pupils in Key Stage 1 acquire more swiftly a fluent, joined script.

The school is aware of both these issues which are included within the school development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	26
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	19	62	19	0	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	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	342
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	38

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	70

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
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	32	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	21	24
	Girls	13	14	16
	Total	31	35	40
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	62	70	80
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	22	28	26
	Girls	14	16	16
	Total	36	44	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	72	88	84
	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	31	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	25	23	25
	Girls	27	24	26
	Total	52	47	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	87	78	85
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	20	24	24
	Girls	25	24	26
	Total	45	48	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	75	80	85
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	5
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	281
Any other minority ethnic group	10

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

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.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.4
Average class size	28.5

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	159

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
	£
Total income	489345
Total expenditure	488369
Expenditure per pupil	1412
Balance brought forward from previous year	24528
Balance carried forward to next year	25504

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	342
Number of questionnaires returned	56

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	36	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	39	4	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	46	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	55	16	2	2
The teaching is good.	55	41	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	45	11	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	38	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	38	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	43	43	13	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	66	29	4	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	43	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	50	16	4	5