

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **STAMFORD PARK INFANT SCHOOL**

Hale, Altrincham

LEA area: Trafford

Unique reference number: 106286

Headteacher: Miss D A Thatcher

Reporting inspector: Mrs C E Waine  
23081

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2001

Inspection number: 190712

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant with nursery

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 7 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Cedar Road  
Hale  
Altrincham  
Cheshire

Postcode: WA15 9JB

Telephone number: 0161 928 4040

Fax number: 0161 928 5365

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R Feasey

Date of previous inspection: December 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>19</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Stamford Park Infant School is situated in a well-established and advantaged residential area. There are 234 pupils on the school roll, aged between three and seven years old. Fifty-seven children attend the reception classes full-time and 49 attend the nursery part-time. The school is of similar size to most primary schools. Pupils are taught in the nursery and seven classes and, mainly in single age groups, although two classes contain children from two different year groups. Only 3.8 percent of pupils qualify for free school meals, which is well below average. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is below average. There are a variety of special needs but most are linked to moderate learning difficulties. A below average percentage of pupils have statements of their needs. A below average proportion of pupils represent ethnic minority backgrounds, mainly Indian. Four pupils who do not have English as their first language are taught by a specialist teacher for part of the week. When pupils enter the school most are attaining at higher levels than is usual for their age. A new headteacher took up her post seven weeks before the inspection, after the prolonged absence of the previous headteacher, during which time the school was the subject of amalgamation proposals.

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

Stamford Park is an effective school, which provides its pupils with a good standard of education. Teaching is good and pupils achieve well, attaining consistently high standards. The governing body and staff have maintained good quality provision during a prolonged time of uncertainty. The new headteacher is demonstrating effective leadership and already initiating beneficial improvements. The school gives good value for money.

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

- Pupils consistently attain very good results in the national tests in reading, writing and mathematics at age seven.
- Teaching is good throughout the school and results in good learning by all its pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is not the first language.
- The school benefits from good leadership and management.
- The provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is very good and promotes very good attitudes and excellent standards of behaviour.
- There is a good partnership with parents.

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

- Standards in science are not as high as in English and mathematics.
- Planning for opportunities for independent learning and creativity across the curriculum.
- The role of curriculum co-ordinators.

*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 December 1996 and, despite recent difficulties, has maintained high standards and made satisfactory improvements. In response to the key issues of that inspection the school:

- now meets all its statutory requirements;
  - has introduced satisfactory assessment procedures that inform curriculum planning for the youngest children and in English and mathematics, although further improvements are needed in science;
  - has raised standards in information and communication technology and art;
  - has made only minor changes to the procedures for checking the quality of the curriculum. The headteacher has allocated new curriculum responsibilities and is providing training to support this work.
- In addition the school has steadily improved standards in English and mathematics; improved resources for ICT; established a library; widened its resources for reading; improved opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and improved the accommodation for children in the foundation stage<sup>1</sup>.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
Reading	A	A	A*	A	Very high A* Well above average A Above average B Average C Below average D Well below average E
Writing	A	A	A	A	
Mathematics	A*	A	A	A	

In the results of national tests in reading, writing and mathematics for seven-year-olds, in 2000, pupils achieved well and attained standards that were well above the national averages and those for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Results in reading were particularly good, being in the top five percent of all schools nationally. In reading and mathematics all pupils attained the level expected and just over half attained the next higher level. Since the last inspection the school has maintained its high standards and continued to improve results in line with the national rate of improvement. Inspection evidence indicates that the school is maintaining its high standards in all three areas and that standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are particularly good. The work set for pupils is challenging and pupils make good progress and achieve well. The school has set challenging targets and has been successful in meeting them over several years. As in most schools girls usually attain at higher levels than boys at age seven in the assessments. The school has recognised this and made appropriate changes to the curriculum, which have already had a significant impact on boys' reading.

<sup>1</sup> The foundation stage is the provision for pupils from nursery to the end of the reception classes.

In teacher assessments in science, in 2000, results were well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Inspection evidence shows that Year 2 pupils are working at the level expected but there is only limited evidence of pupils exceeding this level, which reflects some underachievement by higher attainers. Standards of work in information and communication technology are above average at age seven.

When children enter the nursery at age three they are above average in what they know and can do. They make good progress in the nursery and reception classes. Although all pupils, including those for whom English is not the first language or those who have special educational needs, achieve well, particularly in the acquisition of basic skills and knowledge, they are capable of achieving even more in the areas of independent learning and investigation.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and conscientious learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Exemplary behaviour both in classrooms and in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good and personal development is good overall.
Attendance	Well above the national average, with no unauthorised absence.

Whilst pupils' personal development is good and they are happy to accept responsibility there are not enough planned opportunities for them to accept responsibility for their own learning.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>aged up to 5 years</b>	<b>aged 5-7 years</b>	<b>Aged 7-11 years</b>
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Not applicable

*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.*

In the 27 lessons or parts of lessons observed teaching was always at least satisfactory. It was good in 52 percent of lessons and very good in 26 percent. This standard is reflected in evidence from pupils' work and teaching is judged to be good for children throughout the school.

Teaching is good for the children in the foundation stage and in English and mathematics, particularly in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well in the direct teaching of knowledge and skills across the curriculum. This promotes good learning in these areas. Teachers plan interesting lessons that motivate their pupils to learn. However, they do not always give



pupils enough opportunities to investigate for themselves or express themselves freely in creative work, which restricts learning, particularly for those who are higher attainers. Teaching in information and communication technology is good and teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in other subjects. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and manage their classes very well, creating an effective learning environment.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is largely broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements in full. There is a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good and pupils make good progress, particularly in lessons where they have additional support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Although there is only limited additional support, teachers provide well for these pupils and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is very good, overall, and contributes significantly to pupils' personal development. Pupils gain insights into the beliefs, customs and values of others and a good understanding of their place in the community and the wider world.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils well. Teachers know their children well and are vigilant about health and safety issues. Assessment procedures in science are not yet well developed.

Information and communication technology is incorporated well into the curriculum. The emphasis on basic skills in other subjects is somewhat at the expense of independent learning and creativity. For example, although pupils have good knowledge of letters and their sounds some become very dependent on copying adult models at an early stage, rather than trying for themselves. Governors and staff are right to be concerned about the risks to safety caused by the state of the school roof.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The new headteacher has made an impressive start and is already leading improvements. The roles of the deputy head and curriculum co-ordinators are not fully developed and they lack a clear view of classroom provision in their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effective and meets their statutory requirements well. Governors have worked well with staff to maintain high standards over a difficult period.
The school's evaluation of	The school analyses its performance in national assessments and highlights areas for improvement. It also compares standards against those of similar

its performance	schools to see how effective priorities have been.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are generally used well. Financial resources have been affected by the recent uncertainties and the school has accrued a large surplus of funds. There are firm plans to spend this money appropriately in improvements to the building, staff training, support staffing and resources.

The new headteacher has already identified those areas for improvement noted by the inspection team and is managing change thoughtfully and effectively. Governors have made some improvements to the building and are active in trying to secure essential roof repair work, which is currently delaying a much-needed programme of redecoration. They are careful to gain best value for their money and check the success of their priorities.

## 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>• Their children are happy in school</li> <li>• Teaching is good and promotes good progress</li> <li>• Behaviour is good</li> <li>• The school has high expectations</li> <li>• The school helps their children to become mature and responsible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some would like more information on their children's progress</li> <li>• Some would like the school to work more closely with parents</li> <li>• Some believe that the strong emphasis on basic skills limits independence and the creative aspects of the curriculum</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons</li> </ul>

Less than a quarter of parents responded to the questionnaire and only 24 attended the pre-inspection meeting. Most of these parents were very positive about the school and the inspection team supports these views. In respect of the areas they would like to see improved the team finds that:

1. Three parents' meetings each year and good quality reports provide satisfactory opportunities to gain information. However, it would be beneficial to consult parents to identify specific points of dissatisfaction.
2. Working relationships with parents are good, overall. The new headteacher has already met with parents and instigated some beneficial changes in practice.
3. Inspectors agree that opportunities for independence and creativity are limited by the strong emphasis on basic skills.
4. The school provides an appropriate range of trips and visitors to school to enrich the curriculum but there is little out-of-class provision of clubs. Whilst this is similar to many infant schools, there are some missed opportunities for involving parent volunteers and sharing their expertise.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

**Pupils consistently attain very good results in the national tests in reading, writing and mathematics at age seven.**

- 1      Attainment in English and mathematics is well above average and this is reflected in the results of national tests in reading, writing and mathematics at age seven. Pupils consistently attain results in reading, writing and mathematics that are much higher than those in all schools nationally and in those schools with a similar proportion of pupils qualifying for free school meals. In 2000, results in reading were in the top five percent of all schools. In the tests in reading, writing and mathematics a significant proportion of pupils achieved standards that are higher than those expected for their age. Evidence seen during the inspection confirms these high standards. Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to improve results year by year, at a similar rate to that nationally.
- 2      Girls usually achieve better results than boys, which is similar to the national picture. The school has recognised this and has taken appropriate steps to improve this situation. They have been successful in raising boys' attainment in reading at a much faster rate than girls by providing a wider range of 'boy friendly' books. This work is now being extended into the writing curriculum, where the gap between boys and girls is wider than that found nationally.
- 3      Children enter the nursery in the September after their third birthday and what they know and can do is above average for their age. This is confirmed by the assessments made on entry. The teacher uses this assessment information to set targets and plan work that helps children to make good progress in the nursery. They have good opportunities to develop independence and learn well through first-hand experience. Children continue to make good progress in the reception classes. They are confident and articulate and make a good start to reading. They learn good handwriting skills and have good knowledge of letters and the sounds they make. Mathematical skills develop well and children have opportunities to handle equipment when sorting and counting. However, there is evidence of some unnecessary use of worksheets, when practical work would be more appropriate and provide for better learning. For example, on one page children are asked to colour the set of triangles. As there is only a set of triangles on the page and children do not have to make a decision on which is the correct set, this is reduced to a colouring exercise rather than a mathematical one.
- 4      Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and achieve well. Attainment in speaking and listening is very good and pupils are articulate and confident, using a good range of vocabulary. They explain themselves well and apply good expression in their voices when reading aloud or talking to the class. The high standard of reading means that pupils have the necessary skills to undertake a wide variety of tasks independently. Pupils attain high standards of handwriting and punctuation. At age seven they write in well-punctuated sentences, using neat joined script. Their work is well structured and carefully presented. When pupils are given the opportunity to express themselves creatively they do so with imagination and good use of vocabulary. For example, when Year 2 wrote poetry about the colour blue they produced sensitive work, using descriptive language and some applied repetitive words very effectively.

- 5 In mathematics, pupils learn very good number skills and are quick and accurate in their calculations. The overuse of worksheets and books limits their opportunities for independent investigations into number and their ability to record for themselves. Standards in information and communication technology are above the levels expected at age seven, which is an improvement on the standards reported at the last inspection and pupils apply their skills well in English and mathematics. They use word-processing programs independently, with confidence. They apply capital letters and punctuation when writing and correct mistakes. They enter data into a simple database and print it out in the form of graphs. Pupils also understand how to make a programmable toy move and change direction to follow a simple course. They use a digital camera, such as when recording timed observations of flowers in an experiment in science. Pupils use the Internet to find information and send e-mail, such as letters to Father Christmas and this further extends their reading and writing skills.
- 6 Throughout the school those pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are supported well and make good progress towards their personal targets. Some attain the levels expected at age seven. Those for whom English is not the first language quickly become fluent in English and attain at similar levels to other pupils.
- 7 Pupils throughout the school are proud of their work and this is reflected in the very good standard of handwriting and presentation. Their work is celebrated in many attractive displays that show good standards of work in other subjects. This reflects the standards reported at the previous inspection, with an improvement in art.

**Teaching is good throughout the school and results in good learning by all its pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is not the first language.**

- 8 Teaching is good throughout the school. In the 27 lessons or parts of lessons observed teaching was always at least satisfactory. It was good in 52 percent of those lessons and in 26 percent it was very good. Supporting evidence from pupils' work indicates that this reflects the usual standard of teaching in the school. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, expecting them to work hard and behave well and this promotes good learning. They have a clear focus on helping pupils to attain the nationally expected levels in English and mathematics. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is good, although it sometimes results in a lack of creativity and independence. Teaching is also consistently good for the children in the foundation stage. At the time of the previous inspection it was noted that some teachers lacked knowledge and confidence in the teaching of ICT and art but this has improved, particularly in ICT where teachers are much more confident and incorporate it well into lessons whenever they can. This has improved pupils' learning in these subjects and standards have risen.
- 9 Teaching of the children in the nursery and reception classes is consistently good. Teachers and nursery nurses have a good knowledge of the new curriculum for this age group. They form an effective team and provide a stimulating range of practical activities. Some activities are directed but children are also encouraged to develop independence by choosing for themselves from a carefully selected range. Relationships with children and their parents are good, particularly in the nursery where it is easier for parents to come into the building. Children quickly settle into the school's routines and develop confidence and good attitudes to others and their work. Parents offer good support to the teachers when they help in the classrooms.

- 10 Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is of consistently good quality throughout the school. Teachers plan carefully to promote good achievement for their pupils. All teachers plan well for the teaching of basic skills but opportunities are missed to plan for independent learning. Teachers give lively introductions and involve pupils well by asking questions skilfully. Pupils know exactly what it is that they are expected to learn and what they are expected to do by the end of the lesson. They settle to work quickly, concentrate well, and make good progress. Teachers make good use of assessment information in English and mathematics to concentrate on progressively teaching the skills that pupils need to learn, such as in phonics and punctuation and pupils' learning is good.
- 11 Whilst teachers usually plan interesting lessons, some are more mundane and rely much on repetitive tasks, such as regular comprehension exercises, which do not offer enough challenge to higher attaining pupils. There is overuse of workbooks and photocopied sheets in mathematics, which limits pupils' progress in learning to record their work mathematically. In science, teachers often direct observations and experiments too closely so that pupils do not have enough chance to apply the skills and knowledge that they have learned. This particularly limits learning for those who are higher attainers. Pupils have very good attitudes to their lessons and, even when work is not as interesting as it could, be they work very hard. When they undertake more stimulating activities, such as writing their own poetry, pupils enjoy learning and make good progress.
- 12 Some teachers make very good use of the end of lessons to reinforce the main teaching points of the lesson and assess what pupils have achieved. For example, in a Year 1 lesson the teacher made good use of whiteboards to assess just what the pupils had learned about the word endings sk, st and sp, by setting them puzzles to solve. They enjoyed the activity and concentrated very hard, consolidating what they had learned in the lesson.
- 13 There are very constructive relationships between staff and pupils. Teachers and support staff treat their pupils with respect and manage them quietly and calmly. They promote personal development well by offering pupils classroom tasks to complete but do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
- 14 Teaching for the pupils with special needs is good and particularly so when there is additional support in the classroom to enable pupils to take a full part in lessons. Teachers have good knowledge of what these pupils need to do to improve and plan carefully for this. The pupils for whom English is not the first language are also well taught and teachers ensure that they fully understand what they are to do and give them good support in achieving it.
- 15 Overall, teaching is good and makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievements.

### **The school benefits from good leadership and management.**

- 16 The school has recently appointed a new headteacher, after the previous headteacher's prolonged absence and uncertainty as to its future during consultations about a possible amalgamation with the adjoining junior school. The governing body and staff displayed good teamwork in maintaining good quality provision and high standards over those four terms. Governors showed strong management skills in making the appointment. They consulted widely about the headship qualities needed to secure improvement in the school and made the appointment with a view to developing those areas highlighted.

- 17 The new headteacher is experienced in managing change within a school. She quickly identified those areas of the school where there is room for improvement and has made an impressive start to her work. She has established contacts with parents, governors, the junior school and the local authority through a series of meetings and is improving home-school communication. Although sensibly consulting widely and acting sensitively, the headteacher has already made some important changes. For example, she has appointed new mathematics and foundation stage co-ordinators and organised immediate training for them. She has very clear views about what needs to be done for the school to improve further and is establishing good action plans to achieve these ends.
- 18 The governing body is a highly committed team, with a good level of experience and expertise amongst its members. Governors are well involved in the life of the school and have a clear picture of its strengths and those areas needing development. They plan carefully and allocate finances soundly to the school's priorities, measuring their success by checking standards against those of other schools. Assessment results are carefully analysed to highlight areas that need improvement and the school takes effective action. For example the school highlighted boys' attainment in reading as being much lower than that of girls. New 'boy friendly' resources were purchased and the gap between girls and boys has now narrowed considerably. The work is now being extended into the writing curriculum.
- 19 Governors are careful to achieve best value for their money and are sensible in their spending. They have budgeted carefully for a rolling programme of redecoration but, in view of the poor condition of the school roof and consequent internal damage to the fabric of the building, are sensibly retaining this sum of money until repairs are completed. A large surplus of money accrued during the period of uncertainty but, together with the new headteacher, governors are now implementing spending plans.
- 20 Partly because of headteacher absence and the uncertainty, the school has not fully rectified all of the issues identified by the previous inspection. The role of the co-ordinators in monitoring the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects has changed very little. Although assessment systems are in place to support planning in English and mathematics, they are not fully informing planning in science. The governing body now meets its statutory requirements. The issue relating to art and design and technology was affected by the National Curriculum changes during the introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Improvements have been made to the curriculum for both subjects but, whilst standards in art have risen, the changes made to design and technology have not yet had a full impact on standards at age seven. In information and communication technology, effective action was taken and attainment is now above the level expected at age seven. Overall, in view of the school's circumstances, it has done well in achieving satisfactory improvement.
- 21 Overall, the quality of leadership and management is good and has very good potential to improve further as the new headteacher becomes firmly established and co-ordinator roles are developed.

**The provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is very good and promotes very good attitudes and excellent standards of behaviour.**

- 22 Provision for pupils' personal development is very good overall. Children in the nursery and reception year are well supported by adults and other pupils and quickly settle into school life. Pupils continue to grow in confidence in Years 1 and 2 and develop very good attitudes to school.

They are keen to attend and this is reflected in the very good levels of attendance. There are very good relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff. Pupils respond well to staff and co-operate well together when working in groups, sharing and taking turns. They listen to each other politely and respect others' points of view. Staff know pupils well and treat them with respect, applying the school's range of policies for pupils' welfare and personal development effectively.

- 23 There is a strong moral code that promotes exemplary behaviour and pupils know what is acceptable and unacceptable. High standards are expected and achieved. In the playground, which is small and over-crowded, the same high standard is evident and pupils play well together in difficult circumstances. Parents and pupils have confidence in the school's ability to sort out any problems that arise.
- 24 The school provides satisfactory opportunities for social development, through visits and opportunities for paired or group work. However the range of clubs is very small, currently being limited to a music club and recorders. Further provision is currently being considered.
- 25 Spiritual and cultural development is very good and provides for a good understanding of other ways of life. Pupils gain a good understanding of the faiths and customs of other people. They learn to respect others and to understand their place in the school and wider community. These areas are well supported by the work in art and music, which sometimes focuses on the work of artists and musicians from other ethnic backgrounds.
- 26 Pupils undertake a good variety of tasks that promote their sense of personal responsibility, such as taking registers to the school office. However, they do not have many opportunities to make choices about their work or investigate independently.
- 27 Overall, very good provision supports pupils' personal development well. They are confident, develop very good attitudes to work and behave extremely well. They show respect to all and develop productive relationships with each other and with adults.

#### **There is a good partnership with parents.**

- 28 Parents are very supportive of the school and are happy about the standards of teaching and the progress that their children make. The proportion of parents responding to the inspection questionnaire was low and only about one tenth attended the pre-inspection meeting. Their views were mainly very positive, although a few expressed similar concerns to those reported to the governing body. Overall, they feel that they have good contacts with teachers and are kept informed about what their children are studying. They help their children at home with homework and say that they are given good guidance by teachers. Many help in school, offering valuable support to class teachers. Some are keen to extend this work by sharing their expertise in helping to organise and run after-school clubs. An active parents' association also provides substantial financial support to enrich the school's resources.
- 29 Governors consult parents about the school and listen carefully to what they say. For example, they consulted parents about the qualities they considered were needed in the new headteacher. Some parents expressed concern about a narrowness in the curriculum, with an over heavy emphasis on basic skills that results in a lack of independent learning and creativity. Some also

expressed concerns about home and school communication and co-operation. Governors listened carefully to them and included a commitment to these areas in their job specification. The headteacher has met with parents and has already achieved some improvements in communication, through regular newsletters and new parents' noticeboards. Plans are being drawn up to deal with the other areas of concern.

- 30 Overall, parents and the school form a beneficial partnership that supports pupils well.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Standards in science are not as high as in English and mathematics.**

- 31 Standards in the teacher assessments in science in 2000 were well above the national average, with all pupils attaining the level expected. At this level the school is in the top five percent of all schools. However, the proportion of pupils exceeding that level was just above the national average and was not as high as the levels of higher attainment in English and mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, the school was again in the top five percent at the expected level but just average at the next higher level, whereas in reading, writing and mathematics, higher attainment was well above average. Inspection evidence confirms that most pupils are working at the level expected. However, there is only limited evidence of any pupils working at a higher level, which reflects some underachievement by those who are higher attainers.
- 32 Pupils have sound knowledge of living things, materials and physical processes but there are only occasional examples of work where pupils exceed the level of knowledge expected. For example, when learning about materials pupils know about simple properties, such as smoothness and roughness, and that some are suitable to use for different purposes, such as in the building of homes. However, they do not sufficiently consider the link between the properties and uses of materials.
- 33 Pupils' skills in applying their knowledge in investigating for themselves are average and they are capable of achieving more. Their work is very much guided by teachers and there are some missed opportunities to extend learning. For example, pupils record their observations and experiments scientifically, in tables and charts, but these are often provided by the teachers, rather than pupils being challenged by designing their own.
- 34 Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and plan interesting lessons but these are sometimes over-directed by the teacher and limit pupils' opportunities to explore and investigate for themselves. When given the opportunity to do so pupils are enthusiastic and collaborate well together, sharing resources and taking turns sensibly. They are very interested in finding things out and persevere with their work. Assessment procedures are limited and teachers have insufficient guidance on assessing attainment, such as through the provision of examples of work matched to the different levels of the National Curriculum. There are no whole school records kept to guide teachers in planning work to meet the needs of all pupils and, therefore, pupils work together on the same tasks. This results in some underachievement by higher attaining pupils who are not sufficiently challenged. Lower attaining pupils are well supported by staff and other pupils and make similar progress to the rest of the class.



- 35 The school recognises that because of the recent emphasis on English, mathematics and ICT in the last two years, science has taken something of a backseat and has not developed as quickly as those subjects. It has already been highlighted as an area for development.

### **Opportunities for independent learning and creativity across the curriculum.**

- 36 The curriculum is largely broad and balanced but there is not a consistent whole school approach to planning. The schemes of work are limiting; they have a very heavy emphasis on basic skills and do not provide sufficient guidance to help teachers plan enough opportunities for independent learning or creative expression. For example, because of its high standards the school chose not to fully adopt the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies but to select elements they felt were appropriate. Whilst this is acceptable there is a variation in the way in which teachers provide for teaching in these areas. Some teach full literacy lessons and provide well for independent working sessions within this time, whilst others teach a more traditional English lesson, where pupils all work on the same tasks, receiving different levels of support from staff. For example, in Year 1 literacy lesson, one class worked on phonics at their own level and completed their varied tasks independently, with a sense of urgency because of the timescale allowed. Pupils in another class all worked independently, at a steady pace, on similar comprehension exercises for the majority of the lesson. Whilst pupils in both classes concentrated very hard on their work those working on phonics showed a higher level of motivation and interest in their work and made better progress.
- 37 Children in the reception classes learn good phonic knowledge but, when writing, do not apply their skills independently as much as they could. They have opportunities for independent writing in informal situations, such as in the role-play area, but in their literacy sessions learn to write by copying the teacher's model. Higher attainers try their own sentences but ask teachers to spell out words out for them. They become somewhat dependent on copying and adult help in spelling and this continues as they move into Years 1 and 2, although most pupils are by now attempting their own writing. For example, when Year 2 pupils wrote their own imaginative poetry about the colour blue, they asked adults to write spellings for them in their own wordbooks, rather than trying for themselves or using a dictionary. No dictionaries or thesauri were seen in use in lessons during the inspection. Indeed the school has a limited number of both and this limits pupils in applying their knowledge and developing important skills.
- 38 Pupils are very good readers but even here their independent skills are not fully developed. Reading books are carefully colour coded into different reading levels but books are chosen by teachers. Pupils are not developing the skill of making independent choices about their own learning or using more advanced reading skills, such as reading the book synopsis or searching out a book in the same series or by the same author that they have enjoyed before. They do have opportunities to select library books to take home. Much of the writing is linked to comprehension exercises and retelling of stories and pupils have only limited opportunities to express themselves creatively. Where they do so they show themselves to be imaginative, as in the well-crafted poetry about the colour blue.
- 39 In mathematics, the recording of work relies heavily on worksheets and workbooks. Although the scheme provides for progressive teaching of mathematical skills, it restricts wider investigation and recording opportunities, which would offer better challenge to individuals. Pupils have only limited opportunities to set out their own work mathematically. There is a similar picture in science, with

investigations often over-directed by teachers and only rare opportunities provided for pupils to record work in a scientific format by themselves.

- 40 Whilst standards in art have risen, much of the work is very teacher guided and pupils rarely have the chance to express themselves freely or choose their own resources.

### **The role of curriculum co-ordinators**

- 41 At the time of the last inspection the role of curriculum co-ordinators was highlighted as an area for development by the school. Little progress has been made since that time partly because of the difficulties over the last eighteen months. Co-ordinators are responsible for their subject policy and scheme of work and are aware of standards in their subjects when pupils leave the school. However, they do not check other teachers' planning or the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms, either by direct observation or by examining pupils' work systematically, although this has been a feature in English. Therefore, they do not have a full overview of their subjects and are not fully aware of current strengths and weaknesses. This limits their ability to pinpoint areas for improvement and take effective action.
- 42 The new headteacher has recognised that this is an important area for development and has already begun to improve the situation. She has involved the school's link adviser from the local education authority and together they are developing a systematic approach to checking the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms. She has appointed a new mathematics co-ordinator, who is undertaking numeracy training in preparation for developing and monitoring the mathematics curriculum. A new co-ordinator for the foundation stage has also been appointed and is commencing training alongside another teacher, to improve their knowledge and expertise further. The acting deputy headteacher has undertaken school self-evaluation training and the headteacher has also completed part of this course.

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

- 43 In order to improve further the school should:
- (1) raise standards in science by:
    - a) providing more demanding and open-ended activities which will challenge all pupils to work at levels of which they are capable;
    - b) improving the use of assessment and recording procedures to provide teachers with information to help them plan work to meet the needs of all pupils;
  - ( Paragraphs 31-35)
  - (2) review the systems of planning to ensure greater consistency in provision of opportunities for independent learning and creative expression;
  - (Paragraphs 36–40)

- (3) develop the roles of the curriculum co-ordinators in order that they gain a clearer overview of teaching, learning and standards in their subjects.

(Paragraphs 41-42)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	27
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	26	52	22	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*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	YR-Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	24.5	186
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery	YR-Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	24

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

No of pupils
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Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	3.6
National comparative data	5.2

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1*

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	30	29	59

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	27	30
	Girls	29	29	29
	Total	59	56	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (95)	95 (95)	100 (96)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	30	30
	Girls	29	29	29
	Total	59	59	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (94)	100 (94)	100 (90)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

*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	1
Indian	6
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	176
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*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 – Y2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.4
Average class size	24

**Education support staff: YR – Y2**

Total number of education support staff	2.43
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***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	391987
Total expenditure	374806
Expenditure per pupil	1651

Total aggregate hours worked per week	80
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Balance brought forward from previous year	18211
Balance carried forward to next year	35392

**Qualified teachers and support staff:  
nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.5

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

Number of pupils per FTE adult	12.25
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	234
Number of questionnaires returned	58

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	21	3	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	41	3	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	40	0	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	50	10	2	8
The teaching is good.	61	33	4	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	53	17	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	33	5	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	33	2	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	31	50	16	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	34	46	9	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	41	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	25	40	4	16