

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGH BEECHES PRIMARY SCHOOL

Harpenden

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117342

Headteacher: Mrs P Harris

Reporting inspector: Mr P B McAlpine
21552

Dates of inspection: 30 April to 1 May 2001

Inspection number: 191731

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Hudson
Date of previous inspection:	9 December 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is located in a suburb of Harpenden, about half a mile to the east of the town centre. The area is almost entirely residential and predominately owner-occupied, though there is a small proportion of rented accommodation. The size of the school, 189 boys and girls on roll, is smaller than most. All pupils are full-time and arranged into seven single-aged classes including the reception class. Ninety five per cent of the pupils are of white United Kingdom origin; 5 per cent, which is above average, are from minority ethnic backgrounds including white European, Black African, Bangladeshi and Chinese. The proportion with English as an additional language, one per cent, is broadly average. The first languages are Danish and Italian, with one pupil in the early stages of learning English. There are no pupils from a Traveller background, or refugees, and the school is not receiving any national grants provided for the additional support of specific groups of pupils. Very few pupils are from backgrounds that are disadvantaged socially or economically. The proportion eligible for a free school meal, five per cent, is well below average. Almost all pupils who enter the reception class have experienced some form of pre-school education, mostly in nursery units attached to nearby local schools. Baseline assessment shows that nearly all four-year-olds enter with typical or better attainment for their age. Standards on entry are not significantly different overall from the local authority average when scores from all areas of learning are combined but are above average for language and literacy. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, 18 per cent, is only slightly below the national average. Nearly all of the pupils with special needs are in the early assessment stages; the proportion with a statement, less than one per cent, is well below average. All of the teachers have changed since the previous inspection. The headteacher has been in-post about one year; the deputy headteacher was appointed at the start of the present school year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Test results in the core subjects are high and have been sustained over recent years. Nearly all pupils build upon the knowledge they have on entry by the expected national amounts, or more, each year in reading, mathematics, and science. Achievement in writing is satisfactory but not as good as in the other core subjects. The teaching is good throughout. Leadership and management are effective. The headteacher provides a clear, appropriate, and firm steer to the educational direction of the school and is well supported by her deputy and other staff. The cost of educating each pupil is above the national average but taking account of the high standards, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Test results for eleven-year-olds are very high in reading and science and above average in mathematics.
- The leadership provides clear and strong educational direction.
- The teaching is good.
- The pupils are interested in lessons, work hard, and behave well.
- The provision is very good for moral and social development.
- There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Achievement in writing, especially for low attaining boys.
- The consistency of curricular plans for each academic term.
- Record keeping for pupils with special educational needs.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been good improvement. The school was previously inspected in December 1996. Although successful overall, there was significant underachievement in writing and shortcomings in the teaching, curriculum, and assessment. Since then, the headteacher and all of the teachers have changed. Standards have risen in line with the national trend, with good improvements in science. All of the shortcomings in the teaching at the time of the previous inspection have been remedied and the good quality of the teaching is now a strong feature of the school. The curriculum has improved considerably. Although more work on the medium-term planning needs to be done, the curriculum is now broad, balanced, and meets statutory requirements. The assessment arrangements have been improved to satisfactory levels and are building appropriately into an effective system for tracking the progress of each pupil. The underachievement in writing remains but is to a lesser extent than before.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	A	B	C
Mathematics	A	B	B	C
Science	A	B	A	A

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

The table shows that results in 2000 were above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. Cohort sizes are relatively small and annual variations of up to 18 per cent can occur without the variation being significant. All of the annual variations shown in the table are within that margin. When the annual variations are smoothed out, the long-term trend is in line with the national trend. In 2000, the eleven-year-olds did considerably better in reading than in writing. Compared to their attainment in 1996 at age seven, the achievement of the eleven-year-olds in 2000 was very high in reading whereas it was only just satisfactory in writing. The underachievement in writing is primarily among boys; it dragged down the overall results in English and this is why the comparison with similar schools, which provide a measure of educational value added, shows as average. Achievement in mathematics was better than writing but results were nevertheless within the average range when compared to similar schools. Achievement in science was very good. In the tests overall, girls did best in English but boys did better in mathematics and science. The pupils who took part in the tests have now transferred to secondary education.

The current eleven-year-olds are on course to attain higher overall standards than their counterparts in 2000. More pupils are set to attain or exceed the expected national level than last year in all core subjects, including writing, and more pupils are likely to exceed the expected level. This improvement, not yet confirmed by national tests, reflects the very good quality of the teaching in Year 6. Standards in writing are much higher than they were but are still not as high as reading. The standard of boys' writing is catching up on girls'. There are currently no significant differences in attainment or progress between boys and girls in mathematics. Targets have been set by the governors for more than 90 per cent of eleven year olds attaining the expected national level in English and mathematics in 2001, including 51 per cent attaining a higher level; these targets are challenging but achievable.

The results of national tests in 2000 for seven-year-olds were well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. The standard of current work at age seven is well above average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics. Throughout the school, the teaching appropriately extends the more able pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in relation to the difficulties they face. The few pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language are making satisfactory progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Nearly all pupils like coming to school. They show interest and enthusiasm in lessons, concentrate well, and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Lessons are very orderly. Behaviour in communal areas and on the playground is good. No bullying, racist or sexist behaviour was seen. Parents report a small amount of bullying but teachers deal with it promptly and effectively. There have been no exclusions during the reporting period.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are polite and considerate of others. Good levels of initiative are shown over day-to-day matters such as opening doors for others, volunteering help, and anticipating the needs of others. Relationships are strong and there are high levels of mutual respect and courtesy.
Attendance	Good. The rate of attendance is well above average and there is no unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching is good. All of it is satisfactory or better; 88 per cent is good or better including 23 per cent that is very good. This is a significant improvement compared to the previous inspection and the overall quality is now much better than that of the typical school. There is good teaching in every class. The very good teaching is in Year 6 and Year 4. The improved quality of teaching reflects the strong and appropriate emphasis placed by the headteacher on creating a high performance teaching team. The teaching is good in English and mathematics. The strengths of the teaching include teachers' knowledge and expertise; effective skills of questioning and explanation; and weekly planning that identifies learning objectives clearly. Literacy and numeracy, phonics, and other basic skills are well taught. The needs of all pupils are met. Pupils of average and above average ability are fully stretched intellectually and this is a strong characteristic of the teaching. The needs of pupils who are less able and those with special educational needs are met satisfactorily in the main, particularly in numeracy, but there are instances in writing where the work is too difficult and others when it insufficiently challenges their compositional skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. A broad range of interesting lessons and learning experiences is provided. Medium term planning is closely linked to the National Curriculum programmes of study, which is a good improvement since the previous inspection. The detail of the medium term planning is, however, inconsistent between the classes and it is not always clear whether the objectives for the term will fit into the time available.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The arrangements have improved since the previous inspection and the systems for identifying children with special needs are now clear. Statutory requirements for pupils with statements of need are met. Communication between teachers and class assistants, however, is inconsistent in quality for pupils who do not have a statement and the record keeping for these pupils, although much improved, is still not as rigorous as it should be, especially when needs are first identified.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Very few of the bilingual pupils are in the earliest stage of learning English. The local authority appropriately assesses the needs of the bilingual pupils and extra provision has been made in the past where this was necessary. Currently no extra provision is provided and the needs of bilingual pupils are met to a satisfactory level from within the school's own resources.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The provision for spiritual and cultural develop is satisfactory. The statutory requirements for collective worship are met. The provision for moral and social development is very good. The policy for managing behaviour is well implemented, there are clear expectations, appropriate rewards, and time for reflection and redress is built into the system for handling misdemeanours.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Appropriate systems are in place from child protection although more training is needed for some staff. Very good priority is given to health and safety and for pastoral care. The arrangements for monitoring attainment and academic progress have been improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. Assessment information is used when planning and this aspect is now satisfactory.

Parental views about the school are positive and good links between home and school are reported. In relation to the curriculum, all relevant statutory requirements are met. Extra-curricular provision is strong. A wide range of clubs and sporting activities are offered. The school is achieving success in sports competitions and is developing excellence in this area of the curriculum.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Strong, effective leadership is provided by the headteacher, who is well supported by her deputy. High and appropriate priority is given to raising standards. The vision that senior management and governors have for the school is shared fully by the staff. Teamwork is good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are keen and enthusiastic. Roles and responsibilities within the governing body are clearly established and the work of the governing body is well managed. The governors are well placed to hold the school to account for the standards achieved. Relevant statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good systems are in place to monitor the teaching and check standards. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and action is taken to bring about improvements.
The strategic use of resources	Typical of most schools. Financial planning for the current school year is detailed and appropriate. Projections of available funds and likely spending over the next two years are undertaken and the best value principles are applied when purchases are made.

The staffing is adequate for the number of pupils. Teachers are trained for the ages they teach; one is working towards a qualification as part of a national initiative to recruit and train more teachers. The range of individual expertise among teachers covers most subjects of the curriculum. Good support is provided by the headteacher for all of her staff. A budget surplus of nine per cent has accrued and is earmarked for a specific building project. The accommodation is only just adequate in size. Its open plan design causes noise, especially in the infants. The teachers do their best to coordinate their lessons with each other and the pupils are very well behaved. Even so, there are times when the movements of pupils, the normal hum of activity, and the voices of teachers asking questions and providing explanations in one part of the building can cause disturbance and distraction in another. All those with governance of the school should seek to remedy this unsatisfactory situation.

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 high standards. • The effective teaching. • The leadership and management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision for low attaining pupils. • The effectiveness of midday supervision. • How well the school works with parents.

The inspectors agree with parents that standards are high, that the teaching is effective, and that the leadership and management are good. Inspectors partly agree with parents that the provision for low attaining pupils could be improved. The provision for these pupils is satisfactory overall but there are instances of a few low attaining pupils, mainly boys in writing, who struggle with work that is too hard or have work that is too mundane to extend their skills of independent composition. Inspectors do not agree with parents' concerns about midday supervision. The headteacher and the midday supervisors have worked hard to improve the provision at midday and it is now satisfactory. Regular consultation between the headteacher and supervisors occurs, training has been provided, and the behaviour policy is implemented satisfactorily. The arrangements the school has in place to work with parents are appropriate and typical of most schools; overall, the level of parental satisfaction with the school is more positive than is usually found.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Test results for eleven-year-olds are very high in reading and science and above average in mathematics

1. Test results for the oldest pupils show that standards have been sustained since the last inspection, having improved steadily since 1996 in line with the national trend. The greatest improvement is in science and the least in mathematics. The 2000 results, taking into account the amount of high attainment as well as typical attainment, were above average overall in English and mathematics and well above average in science. More pupils attained or exceeded the expected national level in all core subjects than did so in the typical school. In science, the proportion exceeding the national level was more than double the national average; in mathematics, it was just above the average.

2. All of the eleven-year-olds tested in 2000 attained or exceeded the expected national level in reading including half that exceeded it. Achievement in reading, a measurement of the long term progress pupils make, was very good; 96 per cent of the pupils tested in 2000 made the expected progress over four years and 21 per cent made better than expected progress. At age seven, all but one of the pupils attained the expected national level in reading, including 52 per cent who attained a higher level; the proportions at expected and higher levels were well above the national average. Attainment in 1997 on entry to the reception class was well above the local average in language and literacy. When compared with attainment on entry, all of the pupils tested in 2000 at age seven had made the expected progress in the infants in reading, which shows that achievement overall is good.

3. In mathematics, 88 per cent of the eleven year olds tested in 2000 attained or exceeded the expected national level, a proportion that was well above the national average; 29 per cent exceeded expectations. Compared to their results in 1996 at age seven, 86 per cent of the eleven year olds tested in 2000 had made the expected amount of progress in mathematics over four years but few exceeded the expected amount; this indicates satisfactory achievement. The few who did not make the expected progress were girls who had been among the more able at age seven. In mathematics at age seven in 2000, all but one pupil attained or exceeded the expected national level including a third who exceeded expectations. On both counts, the proportions were above average. Attainment in mathematics on entry to the reception class in 1997 was above the local average. This shows that almost all of the pupils tested in 2000 at age seven had made the expected progress, or more, and that their achievement overall was good.

4. In science in 2000, the eleven-year-olds results were very high, with almost three-quarters of the pupils exceeding expectations. Achievement over the four junior years was satisfactory with 86 per cent making expected progress but few exceeding it. The results of teacher assessments in 2000 at age seven placed 97 per cent of the pupils at expected or better levels, including 28 at higher than expected levels; both proportions were above average. Achievement was good.

5. Similar schools comparisons show that educational value added in the juniors by 2000 was satisfactory in English and mathematics and good in science. In 2000, the eleven-year-old girls did better than boys in English. This is similar to the national picture. Eleven-year-old boys did better than girls in mathematics and in science in 2000 and boys are doing relatively better than girls in these subjects compared to the national picture. In science, variations in attainment between genders at the school are less than the other subjects tested. The school has not provided any analysis of test results by minority ethnic background.

The leadership provides clear and strong educational direction

6. The leadership of the headteacher is ensuring that there is a strong sense of common purpose and that pupils and their achievements are put first. She is enthusiastic and conveys this enthusiasm well to the other teachers. The issues for improvement after the previous inspection have been systematically and successfully tackled and changes have been made to improve the school. Recruitment and retention of teachers is managed well. The induction arrangements for new teachers are good and a high performing team of teachers is being built. The recently appointed deputy headteacher is providing good support for the headteacher and is leading effectively by example through the very good quality of his teaching. Good support is provided by all of the other teachers. Responsibilities are delegated appropriately.

7. The arrangements for monitoring the teaching and curricular effectiveness, developed since the previous inspection, are of good quality. There is a programme of regular classroom visits, checking teachers' planning, and looking at samples of pupils' work. These are helping the headteacher to know the strengths and weaknesses of the

school and identify what action is necessary and which is most important to do first. Recent monitoring has concentrated on improving questioning skills, with an emphasis on improving the range of difficulty of the questions provided so that all pupils can be included in shared work, whatever their level of attainment. The inspection found all teachers are effectively targeting questions to meet the different needs of pupils. The underachievement in writing identified at the previous inspection is being tackled collectively by teachers. The actions to raise writing standards include more time being given to independent writing; improving the quality of the shared and guided writing methods used; curricular target setting for individual pupils; and the introduction of extension and booster classes. Training to support the changes has included raising teachers' understanding of national expectations and making more effective and efficient use of equipment and resources, such as whiteboards. In addition, teachers have had the opportunity to visit beacon schools to observe good practice in teaching literacy. These actions by the headteacher are leading to improvements in standards.

8. The governors are well motivated and manage their business well. All posts are filled and elections for parent governors were recently held. Through a range of committees and delegated responsibilities they keep themselves informed about developments at the school. This enables them to monitor appropriately the actions of the headteacher and her staff and to question the standards achieved when this is necessary. Governors visit the school regularly to see for themselves what is happening and some governors sit in on lessons, which is good practice. The governors' school development plan contains clear aims and places good emphasis on raising standards. The priorities are relevant and have been identified using appropriate evaluation and consultation arrangements. Arrangements for performance management are in place. The headteacher, her staff, and the governing body work closely together and have a shared commitment to improvement; there is a good capacity to succeed.

The teaching is good

9. All of the teaching is satisfactory or better including 65 per cent that is good and a further 23 per cent that is very good and this is the main reason why standards attained by pupils are high. The proportion of good or better teaching, 88 per cent, is considerably larger than the typical picture set out in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools' most recent annual report and a dramatic improvement on the quality found at the time of the previous inspection. All of the teaching in the juniors is good or better, including nearly half that is very good and this is well above average compared to the typical school. There is good teaching in every class. The very good teaching is in Year 6 and Year 4.

10. In very good lessons, the teaching is knowledgeable and stimulating. In a mathematics lesson of this quality in Year 6, the pupils became enthusiastic about finding denominators common to three fractions and converting fractions to decimals. The teacher made imaginative links with measures, where making comparisons between metric, imperial, and non-standard measurements is difficult until the measurements are all converted to the same units. This analogy helped the pupils to understand the need to find a common denominator when comparing and ordering fractions. The high quality of the questioning in such lessons challenges the pupils to think hard and use their existing knowledge to good effect. In the Year 6 mathematics lesson, the pupils were first asked to round decimals to the nearest whole number. By giving each pupil a set of number cards, the teacher could ask the pupils to hold up the card with their answer and so check that every pupil had made the intellectual effort necessary. Asking pupils to say what decimal was added to the first one to make a whole number extended this activity and very effectively increased the intellectual effort. In a very good English lesson in Year 4, the positive relationships and working atmosphere enabled all pupils to participate creatively in discussions on the use of connectives and how they can help order events in complex sentences. All in the class rose to the challenge of finding different connectives, noting how each altered the meaning, and worked with concentration for an extended period of time. By the end of the lesson, all pupils had made very good progress in the time available and had a clear understanding of the role of connectives and how to use a selection of them.

11. All of the teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the way to present and discuss literacy and numeracy and are competent in the teaching of phonics and other basic skills. Short term planning is specific, with clear objectives for pupils in the same class who are at different levels of attainment. The teaching is meeting the needs of average and more able pupils well. In all lessons, the vast majority of pupils extend their knowledge and skills by appropriate amounts and are made to think hard by the work provided. Teachers share objectives for lessons with the pupils at the beginning. This good practice helps all of pupils understand what they are doing and to know how well they are doing by the end.

The pupils are interested in lessons, work hard, and behave well

12. Standards have been sustained well since the previous inspection. The questionnaire shows that a very high proportion of parents agree that their children like school. Discussions with pupils confirm this. Generally, pupils show eagerness to come to school and they involve themselves in activities quickly and constructively. They are very willing to talk about their work and show the products of their labour with pleasure and pride. In lessons, they are interested and willing to grapple with difficult ideas. In a very good literacy lesson in Year 6, the pupils explored the complex idea of formal and informal writing styles with enthusiasm and perseverance. Towards the end of the lesson, they demonstrated great confidence in explaining the differences between the two styles, reflecting enthusiasm for the subject skilfully communicated by the teacher.

13. Pupils are very clear about the way they should behave. Rules and expectations are well understood and accepted. Behaviour in lessons is very good. One of the contributory reasons to the progress achieved is the absence of disruptive behaviour. Pupils are courteous towards each other and respect each other's rights and this means that valuable teaching time is not wasted settling disputes. No boisterous or oppressive behaviour was seen in communal areas, in the dining room, or outside at playtimes. No bullying, racist or sexist behaviour was seen and pupils report none. There have been no exclusions during the reporting period.

14. Parents are very happy with the general behaviour of the pupils. They report that a small amount of bullying has occurred but are reassured by the speedy and effective response of the headteacher and other teachers. Parents have raised concerns about bullying and that occasional instances of aggressive behaviour are not managed properly by midday supervisory staff and took their concerns to the headteacher some time ago. She has acted appropriately to raise the supervisory staff's knowledge of the behaviour policy and clarify senior management's expectations. During the inspection, midday staff worked to a satisfactory standard.

The provision for moral and social development is very good

15. Pupils are effectively taught to distinguish right from wrong. The behaviour policy is appropriate and is well implemented by the teachers and the non-teaching staff. Rules and expectations are regularly communicated and used as a starting point when pupils transgress. A key feature of the policy is the emphasis on reflection and on transgressors understanding the impact of their wrong doing on others. This formal part of the behaviour policy is leading pupils increasingly to understand, as they get older, the principles and values that govern actions and to develop morally. A 'time out' sheet is used, for example, where older pupils have to record what they did wrong, why, and what can be done to make amends. Good reward systems are in place and there is a strong emphasis on praising success. Relationships are very good and teachers, though appropriately assertive, treat children with courtesy, thereby acting as good role models.

16. Pupils are developing an appropriate understanding of what it means to live in a community and they are provided with a range of opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative. A gifted pianist from Year 6, for example, has the responsibility of playing the piano as pupils enter or leave the hall at assembly time. She must show initiative in deciding whether to lengthen or shorten her playing if pupils take more or less time to enter or leave the hall. There are systems for older pupils to help and guide younger pupils and help them settle into school, and formalised systems of 'houses', each with captains and vice-captains. In assemblies, themes such as saying sorry are explored and this helps the pupils to understand the importance of such courtesies when living in a community. A school council has been formed and this is enabling pupils to have a legitimate voice in matters that affect the school community. Membership of the council changes regularly and every child, in theory, has a chance of being elected. One Year 6 pupil, showing wisdom beyond his years, said that this was not always a good system because those who voted were sometimes swayed by the popularity of the candidate and not by the quality of their arguments. Children are able to contribute to the wider community through participation in fund raising and support for various charities. There is a wide range of events that foster community spirit and teamwork, including regular opportunities to participate in team sports.

There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities

17. Educational visits and visitors to school are strong features of both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Visits have been organised to museums, zoos, and art galleries, as well as outdoor education centres and 'behind the scenes' visits to football and rugby grounds and local places of worship. Visitors include a falcon group; a horse-riding event; theatrical groups; poetry workshop; and local artists. Club activities include rounders, football, gymnastics, athletics, netball, cross-country, recorders, French, mathematics, computers, gardening, choir, art, guitar, and chess. There are opportunities for pupils to learn brass, string and woodwind instruments. This is an

extremely full range for a school of this size, enriching the curriculum considerably. Some of the activities are available from Year 1 onwards and this is good practice. Take up of extra-curricular opportunities is high by both boys and girls.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Achievement in writing, especially for low attaining boys

18. There was underachievement in writing at the time of the previous inspection. The priority then was to raise the attainment in writing of all pupils but especially those that were more able. Analysis of test results since that time shows that underachievement among eleven-year-olds has remained, though to a lesser extent than before, and this is dragging down the overall standards in English. The current underachievement in writing is among boys; girls' achievement is satisfactory. In 2000, all of the eleven-year-olds attained the expected national level in reading but only two-thirds did so in writing. More than half the pupils exceeded expectations in reading but only eight per cent did so in writing. Of the one third who did not attain the expected level, nearly all were boys. In reading, all but one pupil made the expected amount of progress between 1996 and 2000 but only 80 per cent did so in writing. Of the 20 per cent who did not make enough progress in writing, all were boys who had just managed to attain the expected national level at age seven but did not manage to repeat their success at age eleven.

19. On taking up her appointment, the headteacher has acted to remedy the shortcomings in writing. The standard of work among the current eleven-year-olds is considerably higher overall than last year and there are good improvements among the more able pupils, though this is not yet confirmed by national tests. In the present Year 6, nearly all those in the lower level of attainment are boys. The main priority is therefore to improve the writing of boys with low attainment.

20. Throughout the juniors, the pupils that are high attaining can sustain their writing at length but this is not always the case with low attaining pupils. High attaining pupils can spell most words accurately and their knowledge of grammar and punctuation are good but this is not so for low attaining pupils. In literacy lessons, while tasks are provided at different levels, the demands on compositional skills for low attaining pupils are not always as high or as well planned as they need to be. In some instances, low attaining pupils work solely at word level, identifying words with particular meanings, for example, while other pupils have to construct sentences or paragraphs independently. On other occasions, they complete the same independent writing task as others but it is too hard and they sometimes do not finish the work. Although the timetable has been modified so that more time for writing is found within that set aside for English, not enough has been done to plan opportunities in other subjects that specify the basic literacy skills to be developed concurrently.

The consistency of curricular plans for each academic term

21. At the time of the previous inspection, the curriculum planning was underdeveloped and inadequately coordinated. Improvement since then has been satisfactory and most of the shortcomings have been remedied. Policies and schemes of work have been written and implemented for all subjects and are supporting curricular continuity and progression in learning. The medium term planning fully reflects the long-term plans, which was a major concern at the last inspection and is now satisfactory in this respect. The teachers use two broad methods of planning in the medium term but some of this planning does not go far enough in matching the quantity of work to be taught during the term or half term to the time and the number of lessons available. This has potential for omissions from the curriculum if time runs out and for inefficiency if too much time is set aside. Some teachers are already planning at the level of detail necessary and improvements elsewhere can be implemented quickly.

Record keeping for pupils with special educational needs

22. The management of special educational needs has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory overall. A new coordinator was appointed just over a year ago and has worked hard since then to update the systems. The arrangements for identifying pupils with special needs are based on appropriate criteria, are rigorous and concentrate on early identification. Statutory requirements for pupils with a statement of special needs are fully met. Individual education plans are satisfactory in quality.

23. Records that were held in classrooms have now been centralised and organised logically by the headteacher and the coordinator. Records for pupils at the second stage of assessment for special needs and all of the higher stages are satisfactorily maintained. Those at the first stage, however, are inadequate for their purpose and do not

comply with the national Code of Practice. The records for pupils at the first stage do not provide a clear statement of the concern and there is a mismatch between some of the teachers' records and the register that has the potential for confusion. Parents are informed at routine consultation evenings of the difficulties and problems faced but the records do not make it clear that the discussion is in a context of placing their child on the special educational needs register at the first assessment stage, and this is unsatisfactory. The records maintained of these discussions are the same as are maintained for all pupils and do not distinguish the views parents have of the specific needs of their child from their general views. Despite the shortcomings in the records, and those for low attaining pupils in writing noted elsewhere, the pupils with special needs are provided for satisfactorily in practice and they are helped to improve.

24. The register of pupils with special educational needs is manually maintained and broadly meets requirements. It is not wholly consistent, however, with records kept elsewhere and this raises doubts about its accuracy, which the inspection found to be apparent rather than real. The nature of the records is such that it is not easy to audit the progress of pupils. Although the teachers have the necessary information in their heads, there would be difficulty with continuity of provision should they be absent or leave.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

25. The school has high standards in reading, mathematics and science; good teaching; a broad and interesting curriculum; and good leadership and management. Boys, particularly, are underachieving in writing; the curricular plans for each academic term are inconsistent in quality; and the records for pupils at the first stage of special needs assessment are inadequate for their purpose. Overall, the strong aspects significantly outweigh the areas for improvement. The headteacher and her staff, with the support of the governing body should:

- **key issue 1:** remedy the underachievement in writing by:
 - identifying rigorously the pupils who are underachieving, analysing their curricular needs in detail, setting appropriate short-term targets for improvement and monitoring their progress frequently;
 - increasing the opportunities pupils have to write independently at a level that is well matched to their prior attainment;
 - improving the medium term planning by identifying as many opportunities as possible for sustained independent writing and by specifying the basic literacy skills to be developed concurrently in the other subjects;
 - setting targets for writing in each year group for the percentage of pupils attaining the expected national level and the percentage attaining above expectations by the end of each school year and reporting regularly to the governing body on progress towards achieving these targets;
(Discussed in paragraphs 18-20)

- **key issue 2:** improve the consistency of the curricular planning for each academic term by:
 - specifying in the curricular planning policy for each subject the time that is set aside for teaching and the number of lessons to be taught;
 - identifying for each subject the main learning objectives for each week or each lesson and checking that the objectives for the term fit into the weeks and lessons available;
(Discussed in paragraph 21)

- **key issue 3:** improve the record keeping for pupils with special educational needs by:
 - maintaining records for pupils at the first assessment stage that contain a clear statement of the concern; the date that parents were informed; their views at the time; and a concise summary of the action to be taken, if any;
 - maintaining the special educational needs register in such a way that the progress of pupils from one stage to the next can be easily charted over time.
(Discussed in paragraphs 22-24)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	17
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	23	65	12	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)	189
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	34

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.0
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	18	11	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	11	10	11
	Total	28	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (88)	93 (97)	97 (97)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	28	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (97)	97 (91)	97 (100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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
	2000	13	11	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	13	13
	Girls	11	8	10
	Total	21	21	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88 (79)	88 (71)	96 (79)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	12	13
	Girls	11	9	10
	Total	22	21	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	92 (79)	88 (71)	96 (79)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	1
White	185
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-Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.6
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR-Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	83

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	367578
Total expenditure	385594
Expenditure per pupil (based on 190 NOR)	2029
Balance brought forward from previous year	49598
Balance carried forward to next year	31582

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	189
Number of questionnaires returned	106

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	34	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	39	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	50	7	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	54	8	1	4
The teaching is good.	58	35	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	48	4	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	23	2	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	32	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	40	45	14	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	61	32	3	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	38	4	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	35	12	2	4

Other issues raised by parents

No other issues were raised by parents.