

INSPECTION REPORT

THE SYLVESTER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Huyton, Liverpool

LEA area: Knowsley

Unique reference number: 104419

Acting Headteacher: Mrs J Fairclough

Reporting inspector: Mrs O M Cooper
10859

Dates of inspection: 15-16 January 2001

Inspection number: 192602

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 and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: St John's Road
Huyton
Liverpool
Merseyside

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr G Brown

Date of previous inspection: 3-7 March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Sylvester School is a large, community infant and junior school catering for boys and girls between 3 and 11 years of age from the relatively deprived area of Huyton in Liverpool. There are 412 full time pupils on roll and a further 50 children who attend the nursery part-time. Most pupils reside in the locality of the school, a few choosing to travel from further afield through parental choice. Seven pupils are from minority ethnic groups, three are of Chinese origin, one black Caribbean and three of other origin, all having English as an additional language. Chinese, Arabic or Bulgarian is their first language. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs (21 per cent) is broadly in line with the national average and the majority of these pupils have learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with statements of their special educational needs is below the national average. Compared to similar schools nationally, the percentage of pupils entitled to receive free school meals is above average. There is a wide range of ability amongst pupils on entry to the reception classes, with overall attainment being below average for their age, especially in language and personal and social skills. The headteacher retired last summer and the deputy headteacher was promoted to the headship of another school. The new headteacher is due to take up the post after Easter.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. What the teachers do well far outweighs the areas for improvement; they effectively build on the below average standards on entry, increasing them to well above average overall by the age of eleven. The key factors contributing to the progress made by pupils is the very good quality of teaching, the pupils' excellent attitudes to their work and the effective leadership and management at a time when the school does not have a permanent headteacher or deputy. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The test results in mathematics and science are well above the national average for eleven-year olds and have been sustained at this level since the previous inspection.
- Compared to their attainment on entry, the achievement of the pupils by the age of eleven, a measure of the educational value added, is good in English and very good in mathematics and science.
- The quality of teaching is very good and teachers have high expectations of their pupils.
- The pupils have excellent attitudes to school and their behaviour is very good.
- The leadership and management of the school by the acting headteacher, senior management team and curriculum leaders are good.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make a good start to their education.

What could be improved

- Pupils' skills in writing for different purposes are hindering their progress and attainment in English by the age of eleven.
- The procedures for tracking the progress of individuals and groups of pupils from year to year are in the early stages of development.
- The role of the governing body in fulfilling its statutory obligations.

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 March 1997 when it was similarly found to be a very good school. Since then the standards overall at age eleven have been maintained at well above average levels. The quality of teaching has improved through the effective monitoring policy and the influence of each of the curriculum co-ordinators. The school continues to have Investors in People status, the Charter Mark and the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark.

In response to the key issues identified in the previous inspection report, the school has successfully renewed learning resources and equipment as planned at both key stages, increased the resources for teaching information and communication technology and two new classrooms have been built to start on improving the accommodation. The new computers in the suite have significantly enriched the learning opportunities for all pupils. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection and there is the capacity for further improvement. The school continues to exert pressure on the Local Education Authority in its efforts to make further improvements to the accommodation.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	B	C	C	A
Mathematics	A	A*	A	A*
Science	A*	A*	A*	A*

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

Results among the eleven-year olds have risen broadly in line with the national trend and this has enabled the position relative to other schools, including schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, to be sustained in mathematics and science over the last four years. In fact, the results in science have remained in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. In comparison with similar schools the results in mathematics and science were also in the top 5 per cent in 2000. The achievements of the pupils in mathematics and science are very good. Achievement in English is good but because of the satisfactory rather than quick progress in developing pupils' writing skills, standards in English have not been sustained above the national average and could be higher. Nevertheless, the teachers are managing to raise the below average standards on entry to the reception classes to well above average, when all core subjects are taken together, by the age of eleven. The school has recognised this shortcoming in pupils' writing skills and has taken steps to remedy the situation. Learning mentors have been assigned to Year 6 pupils to help prepare them for the national tests in English and this is having a positive impact. The eleven-year old boys are doing better in English than boys nationally and generally do as well as girls which is different to the national picture. The steps taken to remedy underachievement amongst boys in this school have been successful.

Standards at the age of seven have been well above the national average in mathematics and at least average in reading and writing over the last four years, although in 2000 there were notable improvements in the results. In reading, the results were well above the national average, in writing they were above the national average and in mathematics they were very high and in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. In comparison with similar schools, the results were in the top 5 per cent in reading and mathematics and well above the average in writing. Inspection findings confirm the latest test results. At the end of the Foundation Stage (end of the year in Reception classes), inspection findings show standards are broadly average in all areas of learning except for mathematical and physical development where they are above the level expected for pupils' ages.

The standard of current work in literacy and numeracy among eleven-year olds pupils is consistent with the most recent test results. The work shows that the pace of learning is very good for virtually all pupils, including those with special educational needs. All of the pupils with English as an additional language speak English fluently and their current work is similar in standard to their peers. The statutory targets for the eleven-year olds in English and mathematics were exceeded in 2000. The targets for 2001 are not challenging and need revising upwards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent, pupils are happy, eager to learn and well motivated by the teaching. They have pride in their school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons. They move about the school in an orderly manner. At lunchtimes pupils play happily together with no oppressive behaviour. No bullying, racist or sexist behaviour was seen and none reported by pupils. There have been no exclusions for unacceptable behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships between pupils and all adults and between pupils themselves are very good. Pupils are most polite and there is a strong sense of a community spirit.
Attendance	Satisfactory, very close to the national average, no unauthorised absence.

Authorised absence is slightly higher than found nationally due to families taking holidays in term time, although this is discouraged by the school. Punctuality is a problem for a small number of families and the learning mentor works with the families concerned to remedy the situation and to check that there are no signs of pupils becoming unhappy at school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very 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 very good; all of it is satisfactory or better, with 84 per cent good or better, including 37 per cent that is very good and 3 per cent which is excellent. There is very good teaching in each of the key stages, and all teaching seen in the Foundation Stage was very good. Although there were fewer very good lessons seen in classes with pupils aged 5 to 7 years, the scrutiny of work indicated that teaching is also very good over time. The overall quality of the teaching has improved since the previous inspection due to the good monitoring procedures. The teaching of numeracy is a particular strength and 90 per cent of the lessons are good, including 50 per cent that are very good. The teaching of literacy is good in 72 per cent of lessons, including 36 per cent that are very good. The very good lessons were seen where the framework for teaching the National Literacy Strategy was closely followed. In satisfactory lessons, the shortcomings were related to the organisation and management of the pupils. The learning needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs or who have English as an additional language, are met effectively.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in all years. The pupils have a wide range of experiences and opportunities covering all National Curriculum subjects, religious education and personal, social and health education. Statutory requirements are met. Most lessons are interesting and build on what pupils already know and can do.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. All class teachers are given time to support the pupils with special needs in their class. This arrangement is effective in helping these pupils to make good progress towards their targets. Weekly lesson plans include the specific tasks for these pupils. The quality of support from classroom assistants is also good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Three pupils in the Reception classes receive additional external support. The other pupils are competent in speaking English and are, therefore, supported by their class teachers or classroom support assistants. Often it is a case of checking that they understand the specific subject vocabulary being used. They are supported effectively in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Spiritual development is satisfactorily provided for and pupils gain sound insights into values and beliefs. Pupils' moral and social development is very well provided for; pupils are effectively taught right from wrong. Community values are strongly promoted and the levels of respect among pupils are high. A good range of opportunities is provided for pupils to learn about Western and Eastern cultures and traditions.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place and followed and there is a satisfactory regard for health and safety. A small number of minor concerns were reported during the inspection. Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment are satisfactory but the systems for tracking the progress of pupils are underdeveloped.

The effectiveness of the strategy for teaching numeracy is very good, but there is a lack of coherence in the strategy for teaching literacy. The school chose to follow its own programme of work in English and not to implement the National Literacy Strategy. With hindsight the school now realises this was not the best course of action. Some teachers are fully implementing the teaching framework for the National Literacy Strategy, others are not and this is leading to an inconsistent approach. There are good before and after school care facilities, the play leaders planning activities in consultation with the teachers. The staff know pupils well and effectively support and guide pupils both academically and personally.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The acting headteacher and senior management team members are continuing to sustain standards and provide educational direction. All curriculum leaders play an active part in influencing and sustaining or raising standards in their areas of responsibility.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Unsatisfactory. Several governors are very new to their role and are still acquiring the knowledge to make informed decisions on how to fulfil their management responsibilities. Currently the governors are not meeting all their statutory obligations, although this has been recognised and steps are being taken to remedy the situation.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There are procedures to check regularly the quality of teaching and the pupils' work. The planning is checked and targets for improvement set for each teacher. Common error analysis of pupils' performance in national tests has identified weaknesses in the curriculum or teaching and action taken to overcome the problems.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The staff, learning resources, accommodation and finance available are used in the best interests of the pupils.

The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily, for example when purchasing expensive items of equipment or buying back into the Local Authority's services.

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 teaching is good. • Their children make good progress. • Behaviour in the school is good. • Children are expected to work hard. • Children like coming to school. 	

The inspectors strongly agree with all the parents' positive views. There were no aspects where a significant number of parents expressed concern.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The test results in mathematics and science are well above the national average for eleven-year olds and have been sustained at this level since the previous inspection.

1. In the national tests for eleven-year old pupils in 2000, approximately 90 per cent of the pupils either attained or exceeded the level expected nationally in mathematics and science and this proportion is well above that found in most schools. The percentage of pupils exceeding the expected level was almost double the national average in mathematics and more than double the national average in science. The overall performance of pupils is very high in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds.
2. The trend of improvement over time is broadly in line with the national trend. The proportions of pupils that are attaining the expected level, or higher, in mathematics and science have increased substantially since 1996, the year that the results included in the previous report were published. Since that time the proportion of pupils exceeding the nationally expected level has increased by 20 percentage points in mathematics and almost 50 percentage points in science. The effectiveness of the teaching and the school's ethos, which is conducive to learning, enable the school to sustain high standards in these subjects compared to other schools throughout this period.

Compared to their attainment on entry, the achievement of the pupils by the age of eleven, a measure of the educational value added, is good in English and very good in mathematics and science.

3. The majority of pupils come from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds compared with the national picture and this is reflected in the significant proportion of pupils who enter the Nursery with levels of knowledge and skills below those expected for their age, particularly language and social skills. When compared with schools that have pupils from similar backgrounds, the results at age eleven are well above the average in English, are very high and in the top 5 per cent in mathematics and science. This suggests that the educational value added by the school is good in English and very good in mathematics and science. The comparison of national test results in English for the same pupils at age seven and eleven show that a small percentage of pupils who left the school in July 2000 made more than the expected level of progress over the four years, with most making the expected progress. There had been some mobility of pupils within this year group and so the data was not available for all pupils. The school did not administer national tests in mathematics for seven-year olds in 1996 and so no statistical information is available. The test results for seven-year olds in 1997 have been analysed by inspectors alongside the predicted levels for the current Year 6 pupils. For those pupils who have spent seven years in the school, the large majority is predicted to make the expected progress and gain at least two National Curriculum levels over the four year period in Key Stage 2, indicating that the extent of value added is similar to previous years. A small number have left the current Year 6 and others have joined the year group and so a direct comparison is not possible.

4. The assessment of pupils soon after entering the Reception classes shows that a small minority (about 10 per cent) of pupils exceed the expected level of attainment, about 55 per cent attain the expected level of development for their age. The pace to learning is very good in the Nursery, Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2. As a result of the very good progress, by the age of seven pupils are achieving well above average standards. Taking the 1998 to 2000 results together, the figures show, for example, that compared to the typical child nationally, the average pupil in this school was over half a term ahead in reading, almost half a term ahead in writing and almost two terms ahead in mathematics. The pace of learning continues to be very good in mathematics and science and by the age of eleven the figures show the average pupil in this school is moving towards three terms ahead in mathematics, and four terms in science. There is only a slight improvement in English, although very good progress continues in developing speaking and listening and reading skills, pupils' progress in the development of their independent writing skills is slower and this hinders their overall progress in English which is judged to be satisfactory.
5. Boys in the school are doing particularly well compared with boys nationally and this is one reason why standards overall are well above the national average. The underachievement of boys in reading was identified by the school two years ago, and steps taken to make lessons and reading material more interesting have been successful. In English, the results since 1996 show that the boys have caught up with the girls' standards to the extent that there is no difference in the results at age eleven. In mathematics and science, the boys have overtaken the girls and to a greater extent than found nationally. This confirms that pupils are building on their prior attainment as a result of the very good teaching in all aspects except for writing.

The quality of teaching is very good and teachers have high expectations of their pupils.

6. The well above average standards attained by the pupils at the age of eleven, reflect the very good overall quality of the teaching at each key stage. The quality is never less than satisfactory and 84 per cent of lessons are at least good, including 37 per cent that are very good and 3 per cent that are excellent. The satisfactory lessons are in Year 1,2, 3 and 4 classes. The teaching is consistently very good in the Nursery and Reception classes and by the end of the Foundation Stage the large majority of pupils attain the national targets for their age. The teaching in these classes is encouraging pupils to become independent learners and to take some responsibility for their learning by making decisions about which tasks they choose to do. The organisation of the day includes time set aside for snacks when all pupils sit down with an adult. This has been planned to promote the personal and social development and communication skills, which were identified as areas where their skills on entry to the Nursery were not as well developed for their age, as they should have been.
7. Whilst the teaching seen in lessons for pupils in the five to seven age groups was good overall, the scrutiny of work in pupils' books and on display indicated that it is in fact very good. There is very good teaching in Years 2, 4, 5 and 6. The teaching in numeracy is good in 90 per cent of lessons with 50 per cent being very good. The teachers are confident in teaching whole classes, groups or individual pupils. The brisk pace and teachers' high expectations of pupils' efforts are the key features. The teachers are competent in teaching literacy skills, especially phonics and grammar, but there is no whole school approach to teaching literacy and this hinders the pace of learning for pupils, most evident in Years 4 and 5. The best literacy lessons seen were based securely on the framework for teaching the Literacy Strategy with the recommended time allocated to each aspect of the literacy hour. The teaching meets the needs of all pupils most of the time, with individual tasks for those with special

educational needs where necessary and emphasis on checking that pupils with English as an additional language understand the subject specific vocabulary being used.

8. There is little variation in the pace of learning across the key stages, with the exception of developing the pupils' skills in writing for different purposes. The scrutiny of pupils' workbooks shows the pace of learning is quicker up to Year 3 than in Years 4, 5. It is improving in Year 6, although writing is not promoted sufficiently through other subjects. This is reflected in the national test results in 2000, where there was improvement in results for seven-year olds, but for eleven-year olds results remained the same. The pace of learning is very good for five to seven year old pupils and sufficient for nearly all of them to reach or exceed the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the age of seven. The very good pace of learning continues in mathematics for seven to eleven-year old pupils, but slows down in English for the reason already given. The teachers' high expectations of pupils' effort and behaviour are the key factor in the pupils' pace of learning.
9. A key strength in the teaching is the way in which pupils are made aware of the purpose of each lesson and often, different parts of the literacy and numeracy lessons. As a result they are able to say if they feel they have achieved the aim of the lesson or if they need further teaching or practice. Pupils throughout the school are confident they will receive additional help if requested and this encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning. All of the teachers give very clear explanations and have good questioning skills. Marking of pupils' work is very good with targets set and every piece of work in English and mathematics having a written comment informing pupils how well they had done. Most of the teachers are good at involving all pupils in discussions or introductory sessions to numeracy lessons, valuing the responses of all pupils and taking the opportunity to reinforce key learning points whenever possible. Group work is managed well by all teachers and they are aware of which pupils are putting in the work or effort and adjust the groups to meet the needs of individuals. This enables all pupils to learn at a good pace. The teachers' ability to organise and manage pupils is generally good. The satisfactory lessons seen were mostly where this was less effective, either due to inappropriate allocations of time during the lesson, or not focusing on teaching one specific group of pupils for a period of time which led to patrolling not teaching.
10. In an excellent lesson in mathematics in Year 5, pupils improved their understanding and accuracy in multiplication. The introductory session involved counting backwards and forwards in different multiples and from different starting points, improving pupils' recall of multiplication facts. The main activity focused on the problems that had arisen in the previous lesson and led to better understanding of multiplying three digit numbers by two digit numbers. The overhead projector was used effectively so all pupils were involved and interested. There was good use of a number line to promote discussion, for example, what strategy would you use to move from 2 to 20. The teacher used correct terminology when explaining how to multiply a number by 10. By the end of the lesson pupils were able to calculate 123 multiplied by 15, using their understanding of multiplying by 10, halving the answer and adding the two numbers together. In Year 6, pupils were able to say what you need to add to 70 to make 11 squared, this shows how pupils were able to build on their prior knowledge.
11. In a very good literacy lesson in Year 2, pupils made good progress in developing their prediction skills. They joined in reading the text and, from close observation of the pictures, predicted what might happen next, giving sensible reasons for their prediction. The organisation and management of the pupils were key strengths. The written tasks were at three different levels of complexity to meet the needs of all

pupils. The classroom assistant was deployed well, helping those with special educational needs in their reading of the story. The teacher focused on a group who needed support to develop their writing skills and the remainder worked independently. All pupils had made good progress by the end of the lesson.

The pupils have excellent attitudes to school and their behaviour is very good.

12. The responses to the parents' questionnaires show 97 per cent of parents think that their child likes school. The pupils' responses in lessons and in discussion with inspectors confirm this view. In all lessons, the pupils worked hard and were eager to succeed. In discussions with inspectors, their pride in the school was very evident. Pupils have mature attitudes to work and are confident in saying they do not fully understand or need further practice in aspects of their work in response to the questions from class teachers. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson when pupils were asked if they understood how to solve money problems using the strategy they were most confident in, two pupils said they felt they needed further practice to improve the accuracy of their work. The pupils are certain that this will be followed up in future lessons.
13. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Teachers have high expectations at all times and consistently praise pupils for good behaviour. The very good behaviour results from the effective use of time. For example on entry to the classroom each day, pupils have work to complete prior to registration. The rapid changeover from one lesson to another and clear explanations of what pupils are expected to achieve establishes a good work ethic. Behaviour when moving about the school is equally good. Pupils wait quietly and patiently to collect their meals, the noise level is such that conversations can take place comfortably and there are few spillages given the cramped conditions. In the playground they play happily together, with no oppressive behaviour seen. In assemblies behaviour is exemplary. Parents are confident that bullying is not tolerated in the school and any incidents effectively dealt with. No bullying or racist behaviour was seen and none reported by pupils. There have been no exclusions for unacceptable behaviour in recent years.
14. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are very good. Throughout the year groups, pupils are most courteous and show mutual respect. Pupils have opportunities to work in groups, or with a partner, and these opportunities help in developing personal and social skills. The teachers act as good role models, which also helps pupils' personal development. Pupils in Year 6 co-operated well during a science investigation into sounds made by different instruments, testing their hypotheses on different instruments and coming to a logical conclusion. Pupils show a willingness to take on responsibility, for example collecting litter from the school grounds, or acting as class monitors. They take the initiative in opening doors for visitors and teachers and in initiating conversation. For example, Year 6 pupils asked an inspector's views on fox hunting during a conversation at lunchtime. Parents present at the pre-inspection meeting spoke highly of how the teachers and support staff know the pupils well and value each one as an individual.

This contributes to the strong sense of a school community, where all are willing to help each other. Attendance is satisfactory and there is no unauthorised absence. Authorised absence is slightly above the national average due to parents taking family holidays in term time.

The leadership and management of the school by the acting headteacher, senior management team and curriculum leaders are good.

15. An unusual, but effective management structure is in place. There are three senior teachers who have responsibility for pupils, premises and staff development. These three are effectively covering the role of a deputy headteacher at present. Credit must be given to the work of the acting headteacher in providing the educational direction to the school to sustain and improve standards. Her role as 'pupil manager' means she knows the pupils well and can discuss the organisation of year groups based on the needs of the pupils.
16. The roles of the curriculum co-ordinators are well developed and all positively influence standards in their subjects. Schemes of work in all subjects are detailed and provide good support for teachers. The co-ordinators monitor teachers' planning documents each term and provide written feedback to individual teachers, including targets for improvement. Lessons are observed and pupils' workbooks scrutinised on a regular basis with written comments using an agreed format that is again discussed with the teacher concerned. This culture of professional dialogue, openness and support leads to development in the teaching, evident in the improvement since the previous inspection.
17. A strength of the leadership is evident in the cohesive staff team and the flexibility in approach to school organisation, with different systems in use in different year groups. For example, the setting arrangements in mathematics in Year 2 differ from those in Year 6 where a group of more able pupils are taught separately, whereas in Year 2 a group of less able pupils are taught separately. Both work well and the pupils are making good progress. The fact that the school has been re-awarded the Investors in People status for the third time is evidence of how well the staff work together and are involved in the decision making.
18. The school development plan is a good document for school improvement, with each action plan identifying the potential barriers to success and how to overcome them. Similarly common error analysis of national test papers has identified gaps in the curriculum and weaknesses in teaching. For example, it was through this process that the school realised its approach to teaching literacy was not preparing pupils well enough for the national tests at 11 years of age. Analysis of reading test results identified shortcomings in boys' attainment and this has been successfully overcome, evident in the latest results.
19. The school makes good strategic use of all its resources. Teachers and support assistants are deployed in the way that gives maximum benefit to the pupils. For example, the funding for pupils with special educational needs is used to release teachers to work with the pupils in their classes each week. This is effective in maintaining continuity in their learning and helps these pupils to make good progress towards their targets. A significant number of these pupils reach the level expected for their age by the age of seven and eleven. The learning mentor, who is working in the school under the Excellence in Cities initiative, is supporting families where punctuality is a problem, or where there are early signs of children becoming disaffected with school. He also supports groups of pupils identified as being high attainers. His deployment is planned to maintain the very good pace of learning for all

pupils. The school is largely successful in meeting its main aim of enabling all pupils to achieve their full potential.

Children in the nursery and reception classes make a good start to their education.

20. Children made a good start to their education at the time of the previous inspection and this has been maintained and improved further. The school has responded well to the implementation of the Foundation Stage curriculum, after receiving training, and the quality of teaching has improved. On entry to the nursery at 4 years of age, the children's level of development is below that expected for their age, particularly in language and social skills. Emphasis is placed on developing these skills in the nursery. By the time the pupils enter the reception classes their personal, social and emotional development is at the expected level for their age. Similarly their mathematical, creative and physical development as well as their knowledge and understanding of the world show improvement and are close to, but below, the expected level. The pupils' communication, language and literacy skills continue to be the weaker aspect. By the end of the year in the Reception classes, the large majority of pupils attains, or exceeds the expected level for their age in all areas of learning as the very good rate of learning is sustained throughout. Attainment in mathematical and physical development exceeds the expected level for children's ages as most pupils acquire the knowledge and skills expected for their age, with a small number exceed this level.
21. There is a good balance between the opportunities for pupils to choose what they do and become independent learners, and adult led activities, which lead to the acquisition of specific knowledge or the development of skills. Each session in the nursery includes interesting activities integrating all of the areas of learning. The information from assessments of the pupils' knowledge and skills is used effectively to plan activities that meet their needs and enable them to make good progress. All the adults working in the nursery and Reception classes form a very cohesive team and their knowledge of the requirements for these young pupils is very good. The planning has improved since the previous inspection, with a consistency in the content and the good quality; linking the plans closely to the learning goals for the different age groups. Time is provided for each class teacher to work with pupils who have special educational needs and three children in the Reception year receive support in learning English. The needs of individual pupils are well catered for.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Pupils' skills in writing are hindering their progress and achievement in English by the age of eleven.

22. Standards in English at the age of eleven, which are broadly in line with the national average, could be higher. The decision not to implement the National Literacy Strategy at the same time as most schools nationally and the subsequent decline in standards has led to a lack of coherence in teaching literacy skills and the pupils in Years 4 and 5 are not confident in writing for different purposes. In Year 6, the pupils' skills are improving with evidence of good quality poetry, persuasive writing and play scripts. However, their ability to write detailed accounts of events in other subjects such as history is weaker. In general, the development of pupils' writing skills through tasks in other subjects is insufficiently emphasised in Years 4, 5 and 6. Pupils do not increase sufficiently the amount they write nor improve the content of what they write, particularly in Years 4 and 5.

23. Full advantage was not taken of the training for teaching the National Literacy Strategy provided for all schools and the framework for teaching is not being used consistently. The school thought its own detailed scheme of work would meet the pupils' needs and sustain the above average standards, so the National Literacy Strategy was not implemented. When the pupils' performance in national tests declined a year later, as the school scheme put much emphasis on the completion of formal exercises to improve spelling and punctuation, some teachers attempted to bring parts of the Literacy Strategy into their existing programme. This has led to an inconsistency in approach and no whole school agreement on whether to implement fully the National Literacy Strategy. This decision needs to be made urgently as some teachers are following the framework for teaching the Literacy Strategy and some are continuing to use the school's scheme of work and make the work intended to be completed in half an hour last for the full literacy hour. This approach results in satisfactory teaching as the pace slows for part of the lesson and pupils do not make as much progress as they should. The fact that there are two co-ordinators for English, both in Year 1 classes, makes it more difficult for them to support teachers in Key Stage 2 classes. The roles of the co-ordinators, one responsible for reading and one for writing, do not support a whole school coherent approach to teaching literacy skills.
24. The development of writing skills in the Reception classes is good and pupils begin to attempt to write independently. This continues in Years 1 and 2, where the scrutiny of work shows pupils' writing skills are also developed effectively through other subjects, for example in history, religious education and science. The Year 2 class teachers are implementing fully the National Literacy Strategy and the pupils' pace of learning is better than in Year 1 where there is still a tendency to follow the school's scheme of work. The development of writing skills continues, both in English and other subjects in Year 3 classes but there is a notable reduction in the writing in all subjects in Years 4 and 5, and in other subjects in Year 6. There was little evidence of teachers modelling writing or guiding pupils with their writing in order to improve the content and interest for the reader. The introduction of learning mentors, where all teachers act as mentors to a small number of pupils in Year 6, is having a positive impact on the quality of their writing. For example in a piece of persuasive writing about foxhunting, a pupil wrote, "They were not put on earth for humans' joy of killing them". The Year 6 pupils produce a piece of writing, which they then discuss with their mentor and targets for improvement are set. Whilst this is working well and pupils feel they are benefiting from having someone to help them, it will take longer for the full impact to become evident in the results.

The procedures for tracking the progress of individuals and groups of pupils from year to year are in the early stages of development.

25. The school does not track the progress of individual pupils from year to year to ensure both individuals and groups of pupils are making sufficient progress in their learning. They cannot identify where and when individuals or groups of pupils begin to fall behind so that they can be targeted for additional support to help them to catch up. No targets are set for each class based on pupils' prior attainment and which teachers work towards with their pupils. The school has recognised the need to collate the information on individual pupils.

The role of the governing body in fulfilling its statutory obligations.

26. There have been significant changes to the members of the governing body this academic year. The long standing Chair of Governors retired from the governing body at the same time as the former headteacher left the school. Four new parent governors have been appointed and the Chairman is new to the role. These governors are still acquiring the knowledge to ensure they carry out their responsibilities fully and effectively. Some shortcomings have already been identified by the current governors, for example, that the governing body is not fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in relation to the formation of disciplinary and appeals committees, and there are no agreed procedures for decision making. Due to several governors leaving at the end of their term of office, there is no nominated governor for literacy, numeracy or special educational needs and the register of pecuniary interests needs updating. The Chair of Governors has already written to governors and a meeting arranged to remedy the shortcomings.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

27. The acting headteacher and her staff are meeting the academic and personal needs of virtually all pupils very well. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and standards, except for writing have been sustained and improved since that time. To improve standards in writing, maintain the well above average standards at eleven and meet statutory requirements, the acting headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) improve pupils' skills in writing by the age of eleven by:
 - a) establishing an agreed whole school policy for literacy;
 - b) implementing a coherent approach to teaching writing skills throughout the school;
 - c) placing more emphasis on helping pupils to improve the content of their writing;
 - d) planning opportunities for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 to produce longer pieces of writing, not only in English but in other subjects.

Discussed in paragraph 22, 23 and 24.

This is a priority in the school development plan.

- (2) track the progress of individual and groups of pupils to ensure all are making sufficient progress from year to year by:
 - a) implementing procedures to collate the test data for individual pupils to show the progress in literacy and numeracy skills from year to year;
 - b) using the information to identify individuals or groups of pupils who are falling behind and need additional support to catch up.

Discussed in paragraph 25.

- (3) fulfil all the governors' statutory obligations by:
 - a) establishing statutory committees;
 - b) agreeing decision making procedures.

Discussed in paragraph 26.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

32

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

9

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	37	44	16	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

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25	412
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	135

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	85

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7
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	27	27	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	24	27
	Girls	24	24	26
	Total	49	48	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (81)	89 (89)	98 (99)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	27	27
	Girls	24	25	25
	Total	49	52	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (81)	96 (95)	96 (98)
	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	34	26	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	29	31	32
	Girls	22	23	24
	Total	51	54	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (74)	90 (93)	93 (98)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	26	31	32
	Girls	22	22	24
	Total	48	53	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (79)	88 (93)	93 (88)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	344
Any other minority ethnic group	3

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)	16
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.8:1
Average class size	29.4

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	178

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25:1

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25

Number of pupils per FTE adult	12.5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	781,378
Total expenditure	746,295
Expenditure per pupil	1,697
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,972
Balance carried forward to next year	72,055

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	430
Number of questionnaires returned	146

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	33	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	36	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	36	3	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	38	12	1	5
The teaching is good.	73	25	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	38	12	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	27	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	27	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	45	38	14	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	68	23	3	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	29	2	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	38	9	3	9

Other issues raised by parents

There were no other issues raised by parents.