

INSPECTION REPORT

**St. Augustine's Roman Catholic
Primary School and Nursery**

Hoddesdon, Herts.

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117438

Headteacher: Mrs. J. Ormondroyd

Reporting inspector: Alan Andrews
OIN: 6436

Dates of inspection: 21/05/01 - 22/05/01

Inspection number: 193584

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery, infant and junior School

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Riversmead
Hoddesdon
Herts.

Postcode: EN1 8DP

Telephone number: 01992 463549

Fax number:

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. A. Forni

Date of previous inspection: 17/03/1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Augustine's is an average sized primary school for boys and girls aged 3-11 years. Its ethos is rooted in the Catholic faith. There are 197 full-time children on roll in seven classes, including a reception class. In addition, 52 children attend part-time in the nursery. Approximately half of the nursery children transfer to another nearby Roman Catholic primary school when they reach the reception stage. Children's attainment on entry to school aged five is typical of that found nationally. Overall, there are a similar number of boys and girls, but boys outnumber girls significantly in Years 5 and 6. The school has 40 children on its special educational needs register. In percentage terms this is below the national average. There are no children with statements of educational need. Just over a quarter of all the children at the school are from ethnic minority groups. The great majority of these are from families of Italian origin. Currently, the school has 16 children at an early stage in learning English. The inspection concentrated on standards in English and mathematics especially in Years 2 and 6, provision for the foundation stage and overall leadership and management. It also considered the school's arrangements to ensure equal opportunities for all children, including those with English as an additional language. The headteacher is retiring shortly and the school is in the process of appointing a replacement.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school that has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. By the end of the junior stage attainment in English and mathematics is very good. A positive climate for learning has been established and children's behaviour and attitudes to work are also very good. This means children have high self-esteem and confidence in their ability to do well. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is often excellent for the older junior children, but there are weaknesses at the reception stage. Governors, headteacher and staff work together well and the overall leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. Parents have a very high regard for the school and its work. However, the school relies heavily on the quality of teaching in Years 2 and 6 for its successful outcomes. Progress in the other year groups is inconsistent. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English and mathematics at the end of the junior stage are very good.
- Children's behaviour and attitudes to work are very good.
- Parents think highly of the school.
- Very good provision for the large number of children from ethnic minorities, including those with English as an additional language.
- Curriculum provision at the junior stage is very good.

What could be improved

- Overall provision for the foundation stage.
- Enhance the role of the coordinators so that they can more effectively monitor and evaluate standards within their subject area.
- Ensure that girls and brighter children make the best progress of which they are capable.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Key issues from the previous inspection and developments since 1997 have been tackled satisfactorily. Health and safety arrangements are now appropriate. The role of governors and senior staff are more clearly defined and a detailed development plan has been agreed. Standards in English and mathematics at the end of both the infant and junior stages have been improved, but overall provision at the foundation stage needs to be better. A senior management team has been established, although changes in staff have hampered its effectiveness. Curriculum provision has been improved, particularly at the junior stage. Subject policies and schemes of work are in place and presented well. Assessment opportunities have been identified and the information gained is used to inform teachers' planning. Design and technology is satisfactory and a computer suite has recently been successfully established. The headteacher monitors and evaluates the teaching and learning, but this aspect of the subject coordinators' role is not developed fully. Almost all statutory requirements are now met and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

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

In 2000, standards in English, mathematics and science were well above the national averages for children aged eleven in all schools. They were also well above average when compared to schools with children from similar backgrounds. In all three subjects, the percentage of children reaching levels of the National Curriculum usually expected in the early stages of secondary school were well above average. Taken over the four years since 1997, the trend in the school's results has been up. This is particularly so in science where it has risen from below the national average to well above the national average. The school's targets for 2001 in English and mathematics are challenging and realistic. It is well placed to achieve these.

In 2000, standards in reading and mathematics for children aged seven were above average, but in writing they were below average. When compared to similar schools, the results for 2000 were the same. Taken over the four years since 1997, the trend in writing results has been down. They have fallen from being in the highest 5% nationally to below the national average. The school is aware of the decline in performance and raising standards in this area of the curriculum is a priority within its development plan. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work shows writing standards have risen in the past year and are now above average in the current Year 2.

At the age of five, standards are satisfactory, but not as high as they should be. This is because of lack of challenge at the reception stage. The curriculum does not follow national guidance and, as a result, children make insufficient gains in their learning.

Whilst attainment for both genders is usually better than in most schools, there is a strong tendency for boys to do better than girls. The school is aware of this because it analyses children's results by gender. The analysis is not yet sophisticated enough to identify the factors which account for the difference and little progress has been made in reducing or eliminating the gap. The school is also aware that more needs to be done to ensure that brighter children are fully challenged throughout the school by the programme of work it offers.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have very good attitudes towards their work. They consistently do their best and are proud of their achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Children behave very well at all times. They are respectful to one another and to others.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good. Children are trusted to take responsibility for their actions and to work independently when appropriate. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Children enjoy school and punctuality is good.

Children are very eager to learn. They settle quickly to work, listen attentively and take part in activities with enthusiasm. They are happy to help one another and are polite and respectful to adults. These features help to create a calm and orderly atmosphere and contribute positively to children's learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

In lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory or better in 89% of lessons. It was excellent in 17%, very good in 5%, good in 39%, satisfactory in 28% and unsatisfactory in 11%. All the excellent and very good teaching was seen in Year 6. Most of the good teaching was seen in Year 2. Teaching of English and mathematics was of a very high quality in Year 6 and was consistently good in Year 2. Children use their literacy and numeracy skills effectively across the curriculum and make good progress in their learning. Homework is used well to support work in lessons. Excellent teaching of the older children stems from imaginative tasks and very high expectations of what the children can achieve, including those with special educational needs. Work challenges children to think hard and to do their best. Teaching of the older infants shares most of these characteristics, but is often the same for all children, which holds back the progress of the brighter ones. Some unsatisfactory teaching of literacy was seen at the junior stage because not enough progress was made in the time available. Teaching of the reception children is unsatisfactory overall, because planning and associated activities do not follow consistently the national guidance for the foundation stage introduced in September 2000. Teaching in the nursery is satisfactory with strengths in relationships.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is not yet an up to date and carefully structured curriculum plan for the foundation stage. The infant and junior curriculum is rich and varied, especially for junior children. It is enhanced by foreign language teaching and educational visits.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Children's self-esteem is maintained and they are fully integrated into the life of the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Children are enabled to achieve fluency in English and to take a full role in the school community.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for children's moral development is very good. Provision for their personal, spiritual, social and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The care and interest taken in each child makes them feel valued and secure so that they can learn well.

Very good provision ensures the health, safety, care and protection of the children who learn to live as effective members of the school community. The curriculum for infant and junior children encourages them to be adventurous in their learning and have confidence to express their views. The installation of a new computer suite is raising significantly the status of information and communication technology throughout the school. A good number of out of school activities promote children's sporting, musical and drama skills.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are satisfactory. Everyone has a common purpose to do the very best for the children. The school has gone through a difficult period with staffing and this has created uncertainties in forward planning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily. They are well informed and have a view of the school's strengths and areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher monitors the school's performance and appropriate priorities are identified for development.
The strategic use of resources	Staffing and resources are deployed well. Staff make the best use of accommodation.

Day to day management and administration of the school is good. It enables everyone to get on with their tasks. Difficulties with staffing, including the resignation of the deputy headteacher and the long-term absence of a senior teacher has made it harder for the school to develop the role of the subject coordinators and to plan for the future. The forthcoming retirement of the headteacher will add to this. In managing the school's budget, governors are aware of the principles of getting the best value for money and apply them well.

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 standards of achievement. • Children like coming to school. • The high standards of behaviour. • The school expects the children to work hard. • The way the school deals sensitively and promptly with queries or problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer changes in staffing. • Information about how their child is getting on. • More activities outside lessons.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. They find that the school has dealt satisfactorily with the difficulties of staffing, especially as recruitment is not easy. They judge that parents receive satisfactory information about how their child is getting on and that activities outside lessons are good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards in English and mathematics are very good at the end of the junior stage.

1. Scrutiny of work and observation of lessons show that standards in English and mathematics at the end of the infant and junior stages have been raised since the previous inspection. This improvement has been achieved during a time of difficulty in recruiting staff.
2. Current standards in English and mathematics are good at the end of the infant stage and very good at the end of the junior stage. These standards were reflected in the national tests in 2000 for children aged seven and eleven with the exception of writing at the end of the infant stage which was below average. At age seven, results in reading and mathematics were better than in many schools nationally and when compared to schools with children from similar backgrounds. Results in writing were much lower, but inspection evidence shows standards in this area of the curriculum have been raised in the past years and are now good. At age eleven, the 2000 national test results in English and mathematics were very much better than in most schools and all similar schools. This very good performance in English has been maintained since 1997. During the same period, the performance in mathematics has risen from average to well above average. This means the school has increased its standards in mathematics faster than most other schools. At the end of both the infant and junior stages, boys achieve better results than girls.
3. These good and very good standards in English and mathematics stem from:
 - consistent good teaching in Year 2;
 - excellent teaching in Year 6;
 - the children's very good attitudes;
 - substantial amounts of work covered in lessons;
 - many opportunities for children to apply their literacy and numeracy skills to real life situations;
 - homework that builds very well on work that is done in class;
 - overcoming many of the criticisms in the previous report.
4. Children at the end of the infant stage speak confidently and communicate meaning clearly. They listen attentively, respond correctly to directions and answer questions well. Many are able to offer opinions and express preferences. An example of this was seen when the Year 2 children were considering the author Beatrix Potter and a story about "Peter Rabbit". They sensibly explained their likes and dislikes to a visitor. Year 6 children express ideas fluently often using their own experiences and knowledge skilfully to illustrate particular points. For example, in a discussion about always writing the truth, they decided that advertisements sometimes omit negative information. Their use of vocabulary is very good. For example, in presentations to the rest of the class about how drugs can help overcome illness, children correctly used words such as 'energy', 'glucose', 'donors', 'inhaler' and 'glands'.

5. Children enjoy books and read regularly at home and school. Home school reading diaries are used well as a means of dialogue between parent, child and teacher. By the age of seven, most children read confidently and with good understanding of the text. They know the difference between fiction and non-fiction and are able to describe characters and plots in stories they have read. At age eleven, many children read fluently and with very good expression. Scrutiny of work shows they have read a wide range of literature. They know how to use the school library for reference and many have very good research skills to find information.
6. Children's writing skills are good at the end of the infant stage. Many use simple grammar and punctuation correctly to present their imaginative and factual writing. Ideas are developed in sequence and often extended successfully. Their writing often shows good imagination. For example, in describing a garden pond monster a child began, "On a summer's day I went outside and I saw a big, slimy monster in a pond it looked like a snake but it had legs." Junior children build well on their literacy skills. At the age of eleven, many have a very good knowledge of grammatical structure. They write stories, poems, letters and reviews, for example, and use writing very well in all subjects. Appropriate attention is given to the planning of written work and the results often show very good imagination and the ability to communicate ideas clearly. Handwriting skills are often of a high order and work is usually very neatly presented.
7. In mathematics, children at the end of the infant stage can add and subtract numbers with two digits, sometimes up to 100. They know about fractions, such as half, quarter and three quarters and use these to tell the time. They know how to calculate change from £1 and how to draw and interpret graphs. Many children are successfully able to solve simple problems, such as how long it takes an aeroplane to fly between two countries. The children carry out more practical work than at the time of the last inspection. One graph the children constructed and interpreted was based on the analysis of the contents of a box of 'licorice allsorts'. The children then identified which sweet they liked the best.
8. Year 6 children have substantial knowledge about the four rules in mathematics and how to apply them. The school now gives more attention to investigations, which help children to apply their knowledge of a range of mathematical strategies. For example, during the inspection, Year 6 children were challenged to work out the cost of tiling a bathroom of given size, as if they were submitting an estimate to a customer. They had to work out how many tiles they needed if one in five tiles was another colour. In addition, they had to take into account the space taken up by a wash basin, toilet, window and door. These items were measured at home and the calculations used in their work in school. Also, they had to cost up the time it would take to carry out the task of tiling the room. This work draws on children's secure knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, area, perimeter, square numbers, time and money. The scrutiny of work shows the children know much about percentages, long multiplication, angles, nets of shapes and fractions.

9. In the mathematics lessons observed, the mental 'warm up' sessions indicate children are improving their ability to work out problems in their heads quickly. Appropriate emphasis is given to the proper use of mathematical vocabulary and children respond very well to this. Teachers also ensure that children understand clearly the mathematical 'rule' they are working on. For example, children write in their books, 'When we do subtraction sums the largest number always goes first'. At the junior stage, the 'rule' is written in a different colour pen and then the children practise it. This helps reinforce their learning and provides a quick way to revise what has been learned before.
10. As at the time of the last inspection, teaching is much stronger at the end of the key stages. The excellent teaching in Year 6 is characterised by:
- tasks which capture children's interest so that they listen intently and learn new information. The tasks challenge children's intellectual and creative efforts;
 - high expectations in terms of the work children could do and their behaviour, so that there is a very positive industrious working atmosphere;
 - well structured lessons with a crisp beginning and a variety of activities that builds up children's knowledge as the lesson progresses;
 - a good balance of direct teaching, including probing questions, very clear explanations and demonstration to clarify teaching points;
 - tasks very well matched to children's abilities;
 - opportunities for children to practise and apply what they know;
 - allowing children time to work things out and make contributions to the lesson so that others can learn from them;
 - very good subject knowledge;
 - effective provision of resources;
 - identifying errors and using them as further teaching points.
11. In Year 2, teaching shares many of these characteristics. However, the work is often the same for all children and this holds back the progress of brighter children. The school relies heavily on teaching in Years 2 and 6 for its successful outcomes. Teaching in other year groups is inconsistent in its quality.
12. In overcoming criticisms in the previous report, the school has implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies successfully. The strategies have provided teachers with very effective schemes of work and increased their confidence in teaching literacy and numeracy. It has also helped teachers to give sufficient time to these areas of the curriculum on a daily basis. Computers remain underused in these subjects, but the school has recently installed a computer suite to resolve the situation.
13. From the scrutiny of work and observation of lessons, children show very good attitudes towards English and mathematics and this contributes significantly to their progress and standards achieved.

14. Children are attentive, concentrate hard and persevere with challenging work. They are enthusiastic to contribute to class lessons sharing their confidence in English and mathematics with others. Children are willing to explain their ideas and methods of working and this helps other children to understand what needs to be done. They take responsibility for organising their work neatly so that it is presented well. This does much to enable them to work with accuracy. Children behave very well and help each other when they can, showing respect for others whether answers are correct or not. Children learn from their mistakes in lessons. Marking could give children more information or targets to move forward in their learning.

Attitudes to work and behaviour of children are very good.

15. Children's attitudes to learning are very good and this has a positive effect on their progress. They really enjoy coming to school and are proud of their achievements. They frequently undertake detailed work at home to support activities at school. For example, older junior children used the Internet to research information about asthma and diabetes in order to make presentations to the rest of their class. The results were very impressive and the response of the other children showed maturity and a willingness to learn. During lessons children show considerable interest in the tasks set and are motivated well, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Children listen carefully to their teacher and to each other. They respond enthusiastically during discussions and work hard on written and practical tasks. An example of this was seen in a Year 2 science lesson in which children were discovering how materials often change when heated. They concentrated well, consistently did their best and were pleased with their efforts. Another example was observed in a Year 6 mental arithmetic lesson in which children were challenged to think about rules governing place value and the use of zero when multiplying decimal fractions. They worked quickly, confidently and with a sense of purpose. The very good attitudes, which are seen in all year groups, help to raise standards of achievement throughout the school.
16. Children's behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school. They can be trusted to behave sensibly even when not directly supervised by an adult. This contributes well to successful learning in lessons and to the calm and orderly atmosphere around the school. Children follow instructions without fuss and begin the morning and afternoon sessions in an orderly manner, responding promptly to the bell. They behave very well at playtime and lunchtime and move around the school sensibly, showing proper respect for buildings and equipment. Children are polite, friendly and eager to chat about themselves and their interests. For example, during lunch with them some of the junior children spoke sensibly about their favourite subjects and were confident enough to put forward their own likes and dislikes.
17. Children are able to work together productively in groups, sharing ideas and resources sensibly. Older children look after the younger ones and are mindful of their feelings. No bullying was seen during the inspection and children are able to work in an atmosphere free from oppressive behaviour. The school celebrates the positive attitudes and behaviour of individual children at assemblies and this encourages even greater effort. Nearly all parents are pleased with the emphasis placed on this part of school life. They feel that problems are dealt with promptly and sensitively.

Parents think highly of the school.

18. There is a high level of parental satisfaction and parents feel this is a successful school. The partnership with parents is good and a welcoming atmosphere has been established. Parents are pleased with the standards of work and praise the opportunities provided for children to develop in a mature and responsible way. They are also pleased that children enjoy school and that lessons start punctually. Parents who attended the meeting prior to the inspection and most of those who replied to the questionnaire, feel that the headteacher and staff show a high level of dedication and support to the children in their care and to the good ethos of the school. Parents like the support given to children with English as an additional language and feel this enables them to make good progress. They are also pleased with the sensitive efforts the school makes to support children with physical disabilities. Parents of children with special educational needs are consulted at an early stage of any concerns and are kept informed of progress. Children's self-esteem is maintained and they take a full and active part in school life. Some parents would like more out of school activities for all the children, but inspectors found the provision good.
19. Parents feel that children are successfully encouraged to work hard and to behave well at all times. They feel confident in approaching the school if they have any concerns, knowing that they will be listened to and that problems will be dealt with promptly, sensitively and discreetly. They feel that teaching is generally good, although there are understandable concerns about the high number of changes of teacher that some children have experienced. Inspectors found that the school has dealt satisfactorily with difficulties of staffing caused by sickness and resignations, especially as recruitment is not easy.
20. The school communicates regularly with parents through helpful letters which give details of dates and forthcoming activities. These provide a useful link between the school and home. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are written and presented well, although they do not meet statutory requirements fully because attendance rates are not given in percentage terms. Some parents would like more information about how their child is getting on, but there are three open evenings a year and the good access to class teachers means that issues can be raised with them at the beginning or end of the day. The teacher of one class was not available at a recent open evening and the school is aware of the disappointment that parents felt about this. However, the children's work was available for parents to see. In addition parents could make an appointment to see the teacher at another time. The school's written reports to parents about their child's progress are informative and help them to know how work could be improved.
21. Parents' contributions to the life and work of the school are very good. They support events and activities enthusiastically. A number of parents undertake voluntary work by helping in classes and school visits and are pleased to do so. The support that parents give to children for work undertaken at home makes an important contribution to their learning. There is an active Friends' Association that is very generous in its financial support of the school. It has been successful in providing funding for additional learning resources that benefit the education of all children.

Curriculum provision at the junior stage is very good.

22. At the time of the last inspection, both the infant and junior curriculum required significant improvement. Good progress has been made in this area, especially in the juniors where it is now particularly strong. All the areas of weakness noted in the key issues of the previous report have been put right and are enabling children to make good progress in learning as they move through the school. There are now policies and schemes of work in all subjects linked to the National Curriculum programmes of study. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects and appropriate time is given to them in most classes. There is a clear programme of work to be covered from Year 1 to Year 6 that prevents children repeating work they have done before. It enables teachers to cover substantial amounts of work at the correct level for the age of the children. The scrutiny of work indicates that the quality of teaching and learning in design and technology has improved. Children designed and made chairs and slippers to a high standard. Teachers are more confident in their subject knowledge and teaching practices in a broad range of subjects. They have developed a system in their short-term planning which identifies opportunities to check children's progress. Teachers in Years 2 to 6, use these effectively to plan the next stage in children's learning.
23. The curriculum is now a broad and vibrant one, especially in Years 2 and 6, where teachers place strong emphasis on a balance of written, oral, practical and first-hand experiences. The curriculum covers all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented effectively in Years 2 to 6 and are helping to raise standards. Children from Year 1 to Year 6 learn Italian. In Year 5 children learn Latin. In addition Year 6 children learn French. A personal, social and health education programme includes sex education and provision for children to understand the safe use or abuse of substances. A good number of out of school activities promote children's sporting, musical and drama skills. In particular, there is a thriving violin group and a choir that takes part in presentations in the town centre. Children take part in inter-school and inter-house competitions, as well as playground events such as skipping and hoola hoop contests. There are also early morning clubs where children can extend their learning. One Italian child wrote a story of high quality following attendance at the early morning club. The installation of a new computer suite is raising, significantly, the status of the subject throughout the school.
24. Criticisms that children's enquiry skills were not developed fully in the last report have been overcome. Children are encouraged to be adventurous in their learning and have confidence to express their views. In Year 6, especially, children worked on projects about their families. These involved children carrying out research, writing up and presenting their findings in an interesting and individual way. Some children carried out detailed research, used information and communication technology effectively and took real pride in their final presentations. During a Year 6 lesson, children spoke very confidently about the way in which they cope with asthma and diabetes. In science, children have good opportunities to carry out experiments to find out about forces. In Year 2, children used toys to find out what makes objects go faster or slower. Year 6 children explored what happened when a balloon was pushed under water and wrote up their findings in the form of a scientific report. These tasks clearly motivated the children to do well and make decisions about their work.

25. At the time of the last inspection, provision for children's moral development was very good and firmly founded on the strong Catholic ethos of the school. This continues to be the case. Children have a strong sense of right and wrong and good understanding of fairness. Spiritual development was good, but there were fewer opportunities for children to raise questions or reflect on their views of poems, art or music. This situation has improved. Children recently chose their favourite poems, wrote them out and evaluated them, commenting on rhymes, rhythms and mood the poems conveyed. They chose a variety of poems from the modern, 'Gran can you rap?' to 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', by William Wordsworth. One child wrote, 'I like this poem because it explained what life is like. I think it is about a man walking which is quite nice. The poem makes me feel relaxed inside.'
26. Children continue to enjoy many social opportunities linked to the community, visits and liaison with other schools. There are more opportunities now in the curriculum for children to work together and solve problems, especially in science. Children have greater understanding of their own culture through history and geography. Research projects centred on Hoddesdon have raised children's local historical and geographical knowledge substantially. Art work in Year 2 shows good attention to the work of artists such as Paul Klee and L. S. Lowry. Year 6 children used a variety of media such as, pencils, crayons and pastels, for their high quality observational drawings of blossom.

Provision for children from ethnic minorities and those learning English as an additional language.

27. Just over a quarter of the children at the school are from ethnic minority groups. About sixteen of these children are still at an early stage in learning English. The school's provision for all of these children is very good and is rightly commended by parents.
28. The great majority of children from minority groups are from families of Italian origin. Many of these families are long established in the Hoddesdon area, although some new children join the school frequently, directly from Italy. Parents from the Italian community play a full and important part in school life, including supporting school events, joining the school staff and the governing body. Italian, or an Italian dialect, is the home language of many of the children. The school is committed to helping its children achieve fluency in English and taking a full role in the school community. It receives additional grant aid to support its work with children from ethnic minority groups and uses this wisely. Two additional part-time teachers give support when necessary to help children learning English as an additional language. Two bilingual classroom assistants also help them. There are also other Italian speakers among the adults working in school. This means that the school has a good level of adult skill available whenever it needs it and that there is no evidence of communication difficulties with the children or their families. The school has the facility to translate written material for parents whenever necessary.

29. Rightly, the support for children learning English as an additional language consists mainly in helping them to take a full part in class lessons in all subjects. As they learn about the different subjects and work together with others in small groups, so their control and fluency in English improves. The school monitors the progress they make very systematically. The children settle into school well and make friends quickly. The support given to new children in the nursery is particularly good. Ethnic minority children's achievements are similar to those of others in the school and to those found in schools nationally, although they are under-represented at the higher levels of attainment. The staff have worked closely with other agencies to try to resolve this issue and a range of new strategies has been adopted to help develop aspects of language competence which will help children in reading and writing more complex forms of English.
30. With the active support of the Italian consulate, the school provides Italian lessons for children from Year 1 until they leave. A strength of the provision is that these lessons are for all the children, irrespective of their ethnic origin. They help build a sense of community in the school, contributing importantly to racial harmony. They extend and enrich the cultural experience of all the children. The lessons represent an excellent use of the small amount of teaching time they take up each week.
31. The school has many ways of celebrating the distinctiveness of its multicultural community and the skills of its bilingual children. Notices, including the school's mission statement, are displayed in dual languages. There are books available in other languages to help early reading. Adults from ethnic minorities in the area visit school regularly, for example when children are studying the history and geography of their immediate locality. Older children have researched and written impressive autobiographies, with fascinating details and pictures of their ancestors whether in Italy or in England.
32. The care the school takes to meet the needs of its ethnic minority children is exemplified in one class where non-English speaking children have recently been admitted. A classroom assistant is often available to sit beside the children to help them to understand a lesson. The teacher's displays of work on the classroom walls carry dual language captions in order that the children benefit fully from reading them. As a result of this provision they make steady progress in learning a new language and become confident and settled in school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Overall provision for the foundation stage.

33. The school's foundation stage consists of the nursery, for children aged three to almost five and the reception class for children aged from almost five until they move into Year 1. Problems with staff recruitment mean that an unqualified teacher, who is an experienced nursery nurse undergoing teacher training, currently teaches in the nursery.
34. Provision for children in the foundation stage has made too little progress since the last inspection. At that time, teaching was satisfactory overall and often good in the nursery. Planning did not meet the national programme for children under five that was in place at that time. There was very little liaison between the nursery and reception teacher and reception teacher and Year 1 teacher to ensure the consistent development of children's knowledge, skills and understanding. The situation now is that teaching is satisfactory in the nursery and unsatisfactory in the reception class. Planning does not follow consistently the national guidance for the foundation stage introduced in September 2000.
35. The programme of work developed following the previous inspection is no longer relevant, yet it is used to plan work. Teachers do not have an up to date, detailed, carefully structured curriculum plan which illustrates how children are to achieve each of the new 'stepping stones' towards the early learning goals from the nursery to the end of the reception year. Teachers have yet to agree a curriculum that includes:
- different starting points from which children develop their learning, building on what they can already do;
 - relevant and appropriate content that matches the different levels of young children's needs;
 - planned and purposeful activity that provides opportunities for teaching¹ and learning, both indoors and outdoors across the foundation stage;
 - the involvement of children in problem solving activities or those that they plan or initiate for themselves;
 - challenges that inspire bright children;
 - links into the early stages of the National Curriculum.
36. Overall, teaching in the nursery is satisfactory and it has a number of strengths. There are well-thought out, purposeful activities with appropriate interventions by adults who engage children in the learning process. For example, the children were delighted to arrive in the nursery to find a range of magnifying glasses and interesting things, such as shells and a pineapple, to look at. After a while they began to explore other items in the room and were amazed to find out how a carpet was made. This task, not only enabled them to explore the world around them, but also extended their vocabulary and taught them much about how to use a magnifying glass properly.

¹ 'Principles for Early Years education' in the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* 2000 published by QCA DFE

37. In another activity, children played a game with bears that involved counting correctly in sequence up to six. The children enhanced their social skills, taking it in turns, as well as their mathematics skills. Children found out about different colours by dipping absorbent paper into red, blue, green and yellow paints. The colours ran and made other colours, which they discussed with the adult. In other tasks, such as shopping, building a home for a bear and constructing motor vehicles, children played independently for some time.
38. Speaking and listening skills are promoted well when children talk about the adventures of 'Susie Seal' or 'Wilbur Walrus'. These are soft toys that the children, in rotation, take home over night. In the morning or afternoon, they describe what they have been doing through these animals. Parents contribute to this by writing a diary so that the teacher can extend children's speaking skills by asking thought provoking questions which require sentence answers. However, although the activities are appropriate, over time, the intended learning in each of the areas of experience and how it contributes to children's progress through the 'stepping stones' and the early learning goals is not made clear enough in the teacher's planning. Opportunities for children to initiate tasks or move freely between activities are limited.
39. Nursery staff carry out detailed observations to check children's progress and use the information from this to plan new activities for them. The activities in the morning are designed to meet the needs of the older children, while those in the afternoon are varied for the younger ones. Children are encouraged to write and draw freely as well as write their name. The outside area and hall are used appropriately to assist children's physical development.
40. In the nursery, the teacher and nursery nurses plan and work well together. Their knowledge of the needs of children of this age means children are cared for well. The atmosphere is very welcoming. Relationships are very good. Parents are right to leave their children in the nursery confident that they will be happy and secure in its routines. Strong emphasis is placed on developing children's social skills so that they play together well. Children are taught how to be friends and say 'sorry' if they upset other children. Expectations of what children can do are good and this enables children to become independent and grow in confidence. The teacher's enthusiasm shines through so that learning is fun.
41. Teaching in the reception class is unsatisfactory because knowledge of the new foundation stage curriculum is limited. Except in numeracy, planning pays too little attention to the areas of experience². As a result, children do not receive the broad curriculum which those in the nursery experience. Lesson plans and their implementation show a lack of understanding of the purpose of the activities and intended learning. As at the time of the last inspection, tasks are not clearly explained to the children and are too easy and repetitive. The teaching methods, such as, to allow children to explore 'playdough' for an extended length of time, or complete low quality worksheets, do not challenge or engage the children. Some lose interest quickly and fall out with each other over the use of equipment. Too little account is taken of what children can do already. Classroom displays and work scrutiny show that children are given few opportunities to express their own ideas through art and design and technology. This means children do not make enough gains in learning and their progress is unsatisfactory.

² emotional, personal and social development, communications language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development

Enhance the role of the coordinators so that they can more effectively monitor and evaluate standards within their subject area.

42. The previous inspection found that the role of subject coordinators was not sufficiently clear. It judged that coordinators did not receive enough support, advice or guidance to carry out their responsibility properly for the development, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and teaching in their subject. A key issue in the inspection report was to improve this area of the school's work. Whilst some progress has been made in this regard, much still remains to be done. The school is aware of this, but has been hampered by difficulties with staffing, including the departure of the deputy headteacher and long term absence of a senior member of staff. A number of teachers are relatively new to their particular curriculum responsibilities, including the coordinator for English and special educational needs. An internal appointment has been made to the deputy headship, but currently there are no coordinators for science, physical education and the foundation stage. The governors and headteacher are right not to rush into the permanent allocation of such responsibilities because the headteacher is to retire shortly and the school is in the process of finding a suitable replacement.
43. A new senior management team has been formed recently and meets weekly. The school development plan looks ahead for one year only, but, within that limited time scale, sets out appropriate priorities, in-service training and financial implications. It is linked satisfactorily to the ongoing raising of standards. Progress on the plan is reported regularly to the governing body.
44. A programme for coordinators to evaluate their subject area has proved problematic and made further demands on the headteacher because of staffing difficulties. The headteacher monitors teaching, planning of lessons and children's work. Oral and written feedback is given following the observation of lessons. The coordinator for English has monitored some lessons and also given feedback. However, the role of coordinators in monitoring and evaluating their curriculum area is not sufficiently developed to enable them to play a leading part in raising standards. They do not always see themselves as part of a management team. They are not directly involved in the analysis of test results and do not have the opportunity to formally observe lessons. This means that it is sometimes difficult for them to review the work in their subject across the school and to set targets for improvement.

Ensure that girls and more able children make the best progress of which they are capable.

45. Using the published results of national tests and assessments, it is possible to compare how well girls and boys achieve compared with the national picture. While attainment for both genders is better than in most schools, there is a strong tendency for boys to do better than girls. Results from these comparisons in 2000 indicate that boys' attainment was ahead of girls' in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they reached the age of seven. While there has been a little variation from year to year, this has been the picture for several years. It is also the case when children reach the age of eleven, although the difference is not so marked.

46. Staff are aware of this issue because they carefully analyse children's results by gender each year. This analysis is not yet sophisticated enough to identify factors, such as teaching and learning styles which might account for this difference. As a result little progress has so far been made towards reducing or eliminating the gap.
47. The school realises that more needs to be done to ensure that its able, talented and gifted children are fully challenged by its programme. Staff are investigating local authority initiatives to see whether these might help them to improve their provision. While teachers have met to discuss making sure lessons are always planned to meet the needs of children of differing abilities, this does not happen often enough from reception to Year 5. When this is the case, and work is the same for all children in the class, children who learn quickly are held back. There is not yet an agreed list identifying the able, talented and gifted children, so the school cannot effectively monitor their progress and plan improvements in provision for them.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. In order to build on the standards already being achieved and develop further the quality of education being provided, the headteacher, governors and staff should:
- (1) improve the overall provision for the foundation stage;
Paragraphs: 33 - 41;
 - (2) enhance the role of the coordinators so that they can more effectively monitor and evaluate standards within their subject area;
Paragraphs: 42 - 44;
 - (3) ensure that girls and brighter children make the best progress of which they are capable.
Paragraphs: 45 - 47.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	7

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
17%	5%	39%	28%	11%	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)	26	197
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	17

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	38

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	61

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.3
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	14	12	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	13	14
	Girls	11	8	12
	Total	25	21	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (96)	81 (86)	100 (93)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	14
	Girls	9	12	9
	Total	23	26	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (96)	100 (100)	88 (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	21	12	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	20	21
	Girls	12	11	11
	Total	31	31	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 (79)	94 (88)	97 (94)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	17	17
	Girls	10	11	10
	Total	28	28	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (97)	85 (76)	82 (97)
	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	0
Black – other	2
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	158
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)	9.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	32.8
Average class size	27.4

Education support staff: YR -Y8

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	105

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	31

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	40

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10.1
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	502,939
Total expenditure	480,362
Expenditure per pupil	2,184
Balance brought forward from previous year	22,401
Balance carried forward to next year	44,978

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	229
Number of questionnaires returned	100

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	31	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	34	2	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	35	1	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	49	13	2	4
The teaching is good.	65	27	5	2	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	46	13	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	28	1	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	30	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	45	41	9	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	55	35	5	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	30	1	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	25	25	14	14