

INSPECTION REPORT

ST ALBERT'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Stockbridge Village, Knowsley

LEA area: Knowsley

Unique reference number: 104467

Headteacher: Kevin Mahoney

Reporting inspector: Steve Bywater
18463

Dates of inspection: 11th and 12th March 2002

Inspection number: 194579

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: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

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Knowsley
Merseyside

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Miss Sheila Lavin

Date of previous inspection: May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	15
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	17
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	18

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Albert's is a Voluntary Aided Catholic school. The school is situated in Knowsley, close to the Knowsley/Liverpool boundary. The majority of pupils who attend the school live within the housing estate of Stockbridge Village, although some also attend from the nearby Croxteth Park housing estate. The school serves a mixture of trust, council and privately owned properties. Unemployment in the area is high and many children live in a community that faces considerable issues associated with areas of deprivation. This is reflected in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals (56 per cent), which is well above the national average. There are 289 pupils (144 boys and 145 girls) on roll aged between 3 and 11 years. The school is larger than other primary schools and a little larger than it was at the time of the previous inspection. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average, noticeably in children's speech and language. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority groups and all of these pupils speak English as their first language. There are 54 pupils on the school's special needs register; the percentage is similar to that found in most schools. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have learning difficulties, but some have emotional and behavioural difficulties. One pupil has a Statement of Special Educational Need. Children enter the nursery class after their third birthday and they move to the reception classes in the September of the academic year in which they are five.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with some very good features. Standards in English, mathematics and science are impressive when compared to schools in similar circumstances. This has been recognised by the presentation of a School Achievement Award and the Basic Skills Award. The overall quality of teaching is good, although it varies between unsatisfactory and excellent. The school benefits from high quality leadership and management. There are strengths in the clear vision of the headteacher who is supported by a dedicated team of teachers and an effective governing body. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good and pupils make good progress. In the most recent national tests, standards at the end of Year 6 were well above average in English and science and very high in mathematics when compared with similar schools.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is very good and, as a result, pupils have a very good attitude to learning and a strong sense of citizenship. A wide range of visits and activities enhances the curriculum and supports pupils' personal development.
- Relationships within school are very good and pupils behave well.
- The headteacher, with the support of staff, governors, parents and pupils, creates a very good ethos and promotes high standards. Parents think very highly of the school.
- The school analyses pupils' achievements very well and uses the information wisely.

What could be improved

- The standards in writing, especially handwriting, spelling and writing across the curriculum.
- The opportunities for pupils throughout the school to show more independence in their learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has developed well since the last inspection in May 1997. It has formalised the planning of pupils' work so pupils progress well and develop their knowledge and understanding in a systematic way. Assessment and marking procedures have developed well and the staff make good use of the analyses and the results of a variety of tests to inform their future planning better. The levels of attainment in writing and spelling at the end of Years 2 and 6 have risen but still have some way to go. Overall standards in English, mathematics and science have risen, teaching has improved and high quality leadership remains a strength. The school has enhanced the role of co-ordinators appropriately to include a monitoring and evaluation responsibility.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	E	D	A
Mathematics	C	C	B	A*
Science	E	D	C	A

Key	
very high (top 5 per cent of schools)	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The table shows that in the 2001 national tests for 11-year-olds pupils' performance in English was below the national average, in mathematics it was above the national average and in science it was in line with other schools nationally. In comparison with similar schools, standards were very high in mathematics (top 5 per cent of schools in similar circumstances) and well above average in English and science. Results over the past four years have been in line with the national trend.

The full range of inspection evidence confirms that children enter the school with low levels of attainment but make good progress in the nursery and reception classes. By the end of Year 2, pupils are working at levels that are in line with the levels expected in English and mathematics, although their attainment could be higher. This is mainly because higher attaining children in this class do not always get work that challenges them enough. Standards in English and mathematics are high enough because pupils receive good teaching in a number of classes. Pupils benefit significantly from the teachers 'setting' them into groups of similar ability and ensuring that pupils with special educational needs receive intensive support in small groups. Additional lessons after school are helping to consolidate and extend pupils' learning and raise standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and breaktimes is good. Pupils are sensible, courteous and polite and they respect their teachers and one another.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are very good. Personal development is good, though opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning are too few.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Despite the school working hard to improve attendance, rates are well below the national average.

The school's achievement of an Eco-Schools Award and consideration of issues such as healthy eating and care of the environment have helped to develop pupils' positive attitudes and a sense of citizenship.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	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.

Of the 17 lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory in four lessons, good in eight lessons, very good in three lessons and excellent in one lesson. One lesson was unsatisfactory.

The quality of teaching of children in the nursery and reception classes is good. Teachers assess how well children cope with their tasks and plan challenging and interesting activities. However, in the Foundation Stage and in all classes in the school, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to select and initiate their own activities and this limits their independent learning.

Teaching in the juniors overall is more lively and exciting than in the infants and is particularly impressive in Year 3. Throughout the school, teachers have very good relationships with pupils and most manage them well. In Year 2, there are occasions when the expectations of pupils' behaviour and work are too low and firmer control is necessary. Teachers work well together and prepare an interesting environment with a wide range of resources and make good use of educational visits and visitors. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is good. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they are expected to learn in the lessons. As a result, pupils are clearly focused and concentrate well. The good organisation of splitting pupils into smaller teaching groups in some literacy and numeracy lessons means that teachers have a narrower range of abilities and can target work more effectively to pupils' needs. This is especially important and seen to very good effect where pupils with special educational needs receive tightly targeted support and make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is well planned and effectively matched to the needs and interests of pupils. A good range of extra-curricular activities enhances it and a considerable number of educational visits motivate, excite and encourage pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs have their needs met well by the very effective special educational needs teacher and support assistants. There is early identification of special educational need and the school regularly updates its good quality individual education plans with clear targets and precise time scales.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	All pupils speak English as their first language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Staff provide very good role models and through carefully planned activities the school encourages pupils to show consideration to others. It makes very good provision for pupils' cultural development through their work in art, history and religious education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school cares deeply for the well being of all pupils and includes them fully in all aspects of school life. The rigorous analysis of tests and assessments is used accurately to prepare projected targets for the school and for individuals.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides clear educational direction and expects a high commitment by all staff. This leads to a strong sense of teamwork. The staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and are fully active in them.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body efficiently meets its statutory requirements and helps to shape the direction of the school through its involvement in development planning. They support the school very well and have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluation of performance is very good. There is a rigorous analysis of standards, frequent checking of the progress towards meeting targets in the school development plan and regular observations of teaching. The school identifies any weaknesses early and responds immediately to deal with them.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There is a clear link between development planning and finance. Clearly understood principles of best value are at the heart of financial planning. The school provides good value for money.

The school is led well and a strong partnership between staff, governors and parents has created a shared sense of common purpose. The school uses its funding wisely. In view of the standards achieved, it compares very well with schools in similar circumstances and does better than many schools in more socially advantaged areas.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school and make good progress. • The teaching is good and the school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. • The school works closely with parents and they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. • The school is well led and managed. • The school is helping their children become mature and responsible. 	<p>There were no serious concerns raised by parents, although 13 per cent would like to see improvements in the amount of homework and the range and provision of extra-curricular activities.</p>

Fourteen parents attended a meeting held with the registered inspector prior to the inspection and 150 parents and carers (52 per cent) returned questionnaires. The inspection team agrees that parents are right to hold positive views. The school has good leadership and management. Parents receive good information about the life and work of the school. Pupils have very positive attitudes and values and their behaviour is good. The teaching is good and most pupils make good progress throughout the school. The inspection team judges that the school's provision for homework is sound and it supports the children's learning in class. Extra-curricular activities are similar to those found nationally with a suitable range of sporting and other clubs.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Teaching is good and pupils make good progress. In the most recent national tests, standards at the end of Year 6 were well above average in English and science and very high in mathematics when compared with similar schools.

1. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is well below the levels normally expected for their age in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and in their personal development. Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and results are average overall by the end of their time in reception. Progress for most pupils is steady in the infant classes and by the end of Year 2; most pupils achieve the levels expected but too few achieve higher levels. There are occasions when pupils do not receive sufficient challenge. The school has identified reading and spelling as areas of concern and has targeted these as areas for development.
2. The school has placed a strong emphasis on improving standards in English, mathematics and science since the last inspection. This has been successful and standards have continued to improve at the end of Year 6 when compared with schools in similar circumstances. For example, in the national tests in 2001 for 11 year olds in English, 83 per cent of the pupils achieved the nationally expected level, a significant improvement on the standards achieved in 2000 (59 per cent). This was well above average when compared with similar schools. In mathematics, standards rose again in 2001 with 83 per cent of pupils achieving the expected level and 34 per cent achieving the higher Level 5. This was an excellent achievement and in comparison to similar schools was a very high score and in the top 5 per cent of schools. Of particular praise is the fact that the school entered four gifted and talented mathematicians for the extension paper. Although unsuccessful, it is refreshing to see all pupils being challenged at a higher level. Science standards increased very significantly from 2000 and in 2001 every Year 6 pupil achieved at least the Level 4 expected of them. This was well above average when compared with similar schools. The improvement in standards has justifiably been recognised in a School Achievement Award in 2002.
3. It is a tribute to the hard work of all the staff that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, pupils with special educational needs and pupils who enter school with low levels of attainment make such good progress. The school ensures that all pupils are fully included. It overcomes barriers to learning as far as is possible. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when they are withdrawn by the special educational needs teacher to work on tightly focused activities that are specially designed for them. Pupils who are gifted and talented make good progress because teachers recognise their talents and provide especially challenging work for them. Pupils do well because the school organises the pupils into different teaching groups (sets) for English and mathematics. A large number of non-teaching staff help to support the teachers with smaller groups that contain a narrower range of abilities. As a result, teachers match work more precisely to pupils' individual needs. For example, pupils in upper sets are challenged and stretched to work at levels higher than typical 11 year olds, while pupils who do not attain so highly are taught in smaller groups where they are given more opportunities for individual attention by the teacher to support their learning.
4. Overall, the teaching is good. Out of 17 lessons, teaching was satisfactory in four lessons, good in eight lessons, very good in three lessons and excellent in one lesson. One lesson was unsatisfactory. Based on the evidence in this inspection, the high quality of teaching recognised in the previous inspection has improved.

5. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. It could improve further if teachers ensure that children in the reception classes (and also in other classes throughout school) can choose and initiate activities for themselves rather than being guided a little too much. The teachers in the nursery and reception classes are well prepared and organised and deploy other staff effectively. Teachers have very good relationships with the children and manage them well. They use a range of stimulating resources that they know will appeal to and enthuse children and the tasks that staff prepare are clearly and carefully planned to cover all six areas of learning. Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing children's communication, language and literacy and they promote an enjoyment of books and reading through telling stories. Children listen attentively to their teachers and enjoy talking about the books they have heard. Teachers are skilled in their questioning of children to take their learning forward. This was seen to good effect in a lesson to promote knowledge and understanding of the world; how things move. Teachers and other staff provided a wide range of equipment and activities for children to develop their knowledge and understanding of 'pushing' and 'pulling'.
6. All teachers in the infant and junior classes have benefited from training in subjects, which have included English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. The teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy skills is good. This has been recognised through the Basic Skills Award, which is a nationally recognised award for a school. It provides an effective and inclusive framework for the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. A good feature in many lessons is the whole-class teaching, which includes good explanations and questioning to promote pupils' thinking. This was particularly impressive in an excellent literacy lesson in Year 3 as pupils developed their writing in a chronological order. In a very good lesson in a reception/Year 1 class, the teacher ensured that the youngest children could find out any 'difficult' words by 'sounding them out' and looking at the picture clues in the books to help them. Teachers have implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies very well. In well-structured numeracy lessons, the teachers ensure that pupils are clearly focused and interactive as they concentrate on finding methods and strategies to solve problems. In a brisk mental mathematics session in Year 6, pupils show high levels of interest and are encouraged to achieve at speed.
7. High quality displays around the school and in well organised classrooms reflect the diverse and rich curriculum. Teachers work hard to create an environment which excites, informs, educates and motivates. There are items for pupils to look at, answer questions about and things to touch, examine and observe. Most teachers set challenging targets for all pupils. In the best lessons, planning is thorough and teachers share the objectives from the outset of work so that pupils are focused. They work conscientiously to provide interesting starting points. For example, they use visits to motivate and engage pupils in their learning. Materials are to hand and follow-up tasks are organised to meet pupils' needs. Teachers use the final sessions of the lessons effectively to reinforce the learning objectives and evaluate pupils' progress.
8. However, in Year 2, the teaching sometimes lacks challenge, especially for higher attainers. Some pupils in this class are lively, they are not handled well and they disrupt the learning of others. There are times when the teacher does not control the class firmly enough and progress slows.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is very good and, as a result, pupils have a very good attitude to learning and a strong sense of citizenship. A wide range of visits and activities enhances the curriculum and support pupils' personal development.

9. There has been a substantial, though very appropriate, concentration on the teaching of English and mathematics in all the classes, but the school ensures that it teaches all

subjects and the curriculum meets the statutory requirements. A major strength of the school is the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This in turn promotes the very positive attitudes, behaviour and a strong sense of citizenship.

10. Teachers give sound emphasis to pupils' personal, social and health education. These areas are addressed through other subjects, such as in Year 5 science, when pupils become aware of the need for a healthy diet and regular exercise to maintain a healthy lifestyle. However, at present, sex education and drugs awareness, though covered, are not promoted actively as part of a structured programme. Pupils become good citizens by supporting local and national Catholic charities; for example, they support Catholic Aid For Overseas Development. They learn to respect each other's points of view through regular discussions about issues, which concern them, such as what makes a good friend and how to reduce pollution. Pupils develop an awareness of the need for rules based on safety, protection and fairness. Teachers use praise well to enhance pupils' self-esteem and encourage them to do their best.
11. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Regular monitoring of their work ensures that pupils are making the progress towards the targets set for them. Regular reviews of their progress helps to ensure that most work is suited to their needs, especially in English and mathematics. Outside agencies are involved, as required, to help meet their specific targets.
12. The school benefits from a community that makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils make numerous visits to local places of interest and carry out environmental studies in the immediate area. The school has already received the Eco Bronze Award and is now well on the way to achieving the Gold Award. Community visitors include representatives from the Mersey Travelwise, Merseyside Police and the dental health service. Various artists and the authors Alan Gibbons and David Webb visited school. The school maintains a very close link with St Albert's Church and Father Fintan is a popular and frequent visitor to school. A number of pupils enjoy the extra-curricular activities. These include homework club, dance, football, cookery and cross-country.
13. A very positive development results from the input from the Education Action Zone, which is helping the school to overcome barriers to learning. It has provided resources including staff and an interactive whiteboard for information and communication technology. The major influences are currently the teacher who works with 'Booster Classes' in order to raise standards. The school eagerly awaits the arrival of a learning mentor to support the school in dealing with inclusion issues of improving attendance, behaviour, the provision for the gifted and talented pupils and transition to the secondary schools. There is a clear feeling of this partnership recognising a 'can do' culture where problems can be overcome and best practice can be shared to benefit pupils in the area.
14. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. The school builds on an ethos that everyone is valued within the school community and everyone has something to contribute to the school community. In religious education lessons, pupils learn and experience important values in human life, especially where the teacher is skilled in promoting thought and reflection. Children in the reception classes were filled with wonder following a visit to the Blue Planet Aquarium where they touched a ray and fed the fish.
15. The school has a strong and distinctive Christian ethos. Every Friday morning during Lent, up to a hundred pupils, along with parents, governors and all staff, have arrived willingly at school to share a mass at 08:30. During assemblies the school encourages pupils to think about others and to reflect on their own thoughts. The high quality of some of the displays of pupils' work adds value, so contributing to the respect for human effort.

16. The provision for moral development is good. An effective behaviour policy and rewards system promote and encourage very good behaviour. Most staff provide good role models and have high expectations of good behaviour in lessons, although this is not always the case in Year 2. A very useful development is the 'Circle of friends' which is an effective instrument to help manage the behaviour of pupils who are emotionally troubled. This is supervised well by a visiting member of the local education authority behaviour support team and enables a group of pupils to share and solve their problems through sensitive discussions.
17. The provision for social development is very good. In lessons, teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to work co-operatively and collaboratively. This was much in evidence during the inspection in a Year 6 science lesson. Pupils in Year 6 have the chance to go on a residential course to North Wales. The school has just introduced a school council to share ideas about improving the school. All pupils are encouraged to take responsibility within the classroom. Older pupils volunteer for duties at lunchtime, for example as office helpers. Some assist with playground duties or clear up the school grounds. Pupils are well aware of factors that damage the school environment, for example, when considering the issues of noise, pollution and litter.
18. The provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Some of the children's artwork is excellent and much of it is displayed very well around the school. Pupils' awareness of their own cultural traditions is very good and they have a good appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures. In religious education lessons, pupils demonstrate a secure awareness of other faiths and cultures and in assemblies they learn about customs, festivals and celebrations, such as the Chinese New Year. Pupils' awareness of ancient cultures is developed through the school's history work on Ancient Greece, for example. The quality of some models, for example the head of Medusa, is stunning. Of significant note, there is very high quality work about North American Indians and African Culture. This also promotes spiritual understanding. For example, the artwork in the style of North American Indians includes the making of moccasins, a totem pole, a wigwam and prints on cloth hangings. African masks and Nigerian Appliqué designs enhance pupils' wider and multi-cultural development. In western art, pupils observe, paint and create three-dimensional work in the style of famous artists such as Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Renoir. There are also opportunities for pupils to experience the artwork of other cultures. Cultural experiences include pupils listening to a range of music from different times and cultures in assemblies and in lessons. The library offers a wealth of information about authors' lives (Roald Dahl and J K Rowling amongst others) as well as information on their works to inspire and motivate pupils.

Relationships within school are very good and pupils behave well.

19. Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves are very good and based on mutual respect. A good rapport exists between pupils and adults and pupils are very courteous and well mannered towards their teachers and to visitors. During the inspection, pupils willingly supplied assistance when asked and in pleasant conversations with groups of pupils in Year 2 and Year 6, pupils told inspectors of their enjoyment of school. They readily acknowledge one another's achievements and show respect for different points of view. Teachers have sensitive and caring relationships with their pupils and work hard to raise pupils' self-esteem and pride in their achievements. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and use praise and encouragement regularly to enthuse and motivate them. This enables them to ensure that all pupils are fully included in all activities. Pupils enjoy participating in the after-school clubs. Through these activities, pupils have the opportunity to work as a team and to mix with pupils from other classes. As a result, these activities play a positive role in developing pupils' social skills.

20. There was a little anti-social behaviour in Year 2 during the inspection, but this was exceptional. Parents are justifiably proud and pleased about the behaviour of pupils. They are confident that the school deals quickly and fairly with any rare incidents of unpleasantness. The inspection evidence generally confirms this view, but the Year 2 class needs better management. In all classes, even on the rare occasions when pupils become restless, there are very good procedures to support and take the pressures from teachers, which allow them to get on with the rest of the class.

The headteacher, with the support of staff, governors, parents and pupils, creates a very good ethos and promotes high standards. Parents think very highly of the school.

21. The leadership and management of the school were judged to be of high quality at the time of the previous inspection and this standard has been maintained. The headteacher is a very effective leader who has a clear vision for the future of the school. An effective team of staff with management responsibilities ably supports the headteacher. There is a strongly shared commitment throughout school to providing a caring place for pupils to become active learners. The development of teachers' expertise and ability to take responsibility is an important aspect of this learning together and this aspect of leadership has improved since the last inspection. This school is currently in the final stages of assessment for the 'Investors in People' award.
22. Subject co-ordinators and all other staff have a good understanding of their role and how to develop their responsibilities. Subject leaders monitor effectively teachers' planning, observe other teachers' lessons and scrutinise samples of pupils' work. These actions, together with the detailed target setting for staff, classes and pupils and the monitoring undertaken by the headteacher, subject leaders and local education authority advisory staff provide teachers with an in-depth knowledge of the quality of teaching and the standards achieved by pupils. It enables the school constantly to build on its strengths and address any weaknesses.
23. A very good school improvement plan establishes the priorities for development. These are firmly based on fulfilling the school's aims, raising standards through improving teaching and developing the management skills of staff. Priorities are set out well so that it is clear who is responsible for relevant actions and how the success of each target will be judged. The school has firmly established self-evaluation as part of its practice. This gives momentum in bringing in the desired changes such as the development of writing where results are not as high as other subjects. The headteacher, governors and staff are eager to improve further; the drive to move the school forward is very evident.
24. The governing body meets its major statutory duties well through a very effective committee structure and individuals who oversee key aspects of the school, such as literacy, numeracy and special educational needs. Governors have a very good grasp of the strengths of the school and know which areas need improvement. Governors are very well informed by staff about the life of the school and the standards and quality of education pupils receive. They act as critical friends and are committed to the school and the welfare of all within it. They share the values of the headteacher and staff and work individually and collectively to the benefit of the school. Governors visit school regularly and have first hand experience of how the school runs.
25. The headteacher applies a very businesslike approach to all financial management aspects of the school. There is a very good understanding of the principles of best value and they are applied vigorously in performance self-evaluation and when making any major decisions. Resources in school are very good. Although the school has a slightly higher carry over figure than normal, the governing body fully understands that this surplus is necessary for improvements to the school grounds and maintaining low class sizes in order to raise standards further.

26. The school promotes itself very well to parents. Comments made at the parents' meeting and responses to the questionnaire were very positive and parents clearly hold the school in high esteem. This aspect of school life remains a very positive feature as it did in the last inspection. Parents feel that they receive very good information from school, both for routine matters and about the curriculum. They are made very welcome when they visit school and feel valued by the school. It encourages them to help in classrooms, for example as 'Reading Mums', and some help as librarians. Attendance at special assemblies and mass are very good.

The school analyses pupils' achievements very well and uses the information to improve their standards.

27. The school has put a lot of effort into improving its assessment procedures since the last inspection. The systems are now in place and are used consistently and rigorously.
28. It uses assessments undertaken when children start school to establish priorities for development and to ensure that work can be matched more precisely to their needs. It carries out a variety of tests and assessments as pupils move through the school. These enable teachers to find out what pupils know and understand. They also provide teachers with information that enables them to set targets for all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics for one year. The school continues to develop portfolios of pupils' work and record of achievement books, which it regularly updates and uses in most subjects to help teachers to level work to National Curriculum requirements and check pupils' progress.
29. The school thoroughly analyses test results and performance/assessment data and it is using this information effectively to set targets for future performance. Recording systems are thorough and are embedded in the school's work. For example, the headteacher and subject co-ordinators record developments in literacy and numeracy and maintain the tracking system to help teachers assess pupils' progress. These approaches, which are consistently followed, are helping to improve pupils' performance across the school.
30. The targets that governors have agreed are suitably challenging and based upon accurate information.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The standards in writing, especially handwriting, spelling and writing across the curriculum.

31. The school has accurately identified the need to improve writing standards. The school has already introduced strategies for dealing with this problem, but many pupils do not have the skills to sustain their writing with any degree of confidence and some of the current writing lacks breadth, depth and maturity.
32. Pupils' writing skills are promoted well in Year 2 and there are many examples of pupils writing in other subjects. However, some of the difficulties with basic spelling, grammar and punctuation persist throughout the school. Even more able pupils spell common words incorrectly. By Year 6, pupils organise their work unaided, but do not readily use written language with creativity or imagination in subjects other than English.
33. Standards of handwriting are variable, but the quality and clarity varies greatly from class to class. The school has not yet firmly established approaches towards spelling. However, the school had recognised this prior to the inspection and action was identified to address the issue in the school development plan. Teachers use the literacy hour well to raise standards, but they do not pay as much attention to presentation in other subjects.

There is a noticeable difference between the standard of written English in literacy lessons and in other subjects. Although there are isolated examples where teachers promote literacy skills well through other subjects, more often this does not happen in any systematic way. This weakness contributes to the lower standards in writing.

34. The school has a very accurate perception of its strengths and weaknesses and a clear focus for future development. Priorities for improvement are precise. For example, the school is aware of its need to improve standards in writing, motivate boys and challenge more able pupils. Teachers have in place an impressive range of purposeful assessment procedures and they use information very effectively to track pupils' progress. They set targets for individual pupils. This process now needs to include pupils themselves so that they know what they need to do to improve further.
35. Much work remains to be done, but the school is well placed to succeed through its very determined approach towards raising standards.

The opportunities for pupils throughout the school to show more independence in their learning.

36. Teachers are skilled in their whole-class teaching, but do not balance this sufficiently with opportunities for enquiry and for pupils to work independently. Teachers need more strategies to provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their progress and to refine and enhance their work. Pupils need more opportunities to solve problems, handle materials and use and enhance their skills and knowledge.
37. Whilst children in the Foundation Stage and throughout the school are provided with high quality learning activities, they do not select and choose their own activities and resources; they use the ones that are set up for them. This reduces their investigative and independent learning.
38. In mathematics, teachers frequently direct pupils in the way work is recorded, sometimes on worksheets and at other times in a preferred style in the commercial scheme. This results in pupils finding it difficult to organise their own findings to demonstrate the depth of their understanding. Teachers should create more opportunities for pupils to think of ways to record their own work. In science, planning often does not sufficiently address the needs of all pupils and especially higher attaining pupils in experimental and investigative work. For example, when carrying out an experiment, pupils are encouraged to ask themselves:
 - What do we need?
 - What did we do?
 - What happened?
 - What did we discover?What pupils did not consider was:
 - What do we think will happen?
 - Did it happen as we expected?
 - Why did it happen?
 - What will happen if we repeat the experiment?
 - Can I improve what I have done?
39. In many subjects, pupils do not think enough for themselves. For example, much of the work in history is based on worksheets and does not develop pupils' historical skills. Although pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of the times they are studying, they do not ask enough questions. They do not explain and suggest consequences of the main events and changes and do not consider sufficiently how the past is represented and interpreted in different ways by different people.

40. Older pupils need to increase levels of initiative and responsibility. For example, they could be more increasingly involved in assessing their own work. At present, teachers do not encourage pupils enough to meet the specific targets set for them in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils need to be more involved in setting and recording their own targets. This motivates pupils and gives them pride, as they understand how they can improve and recognise when they have been successful. This is especially true for higher attaining pupils, but also true for all pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

41. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of education the headteacher, staff and governors should:
- (1) improve the standards in writing by:
 - raising teachers' expectations so standards of writing and spelling in all work matches the work expected in English lessons;
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to draft, revise and edit their writing;
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop longer pieces of writing across the curriculum;
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to correct their work after it has been marked so that they learn from their mistakes.
 - (2) improve the opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage and pupils throughout the school to develop their independent learning by:
 - allowing them to initiate, choose and select resources and activities;
 - devising their own means of recording;
 - undertaking more research, investigative and experimental work.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	17
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	14

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	1	3	8	4	1	0	0
Percentage	6	18	47	23	6	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than five percentage points.

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)	36	230
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	129

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	53

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	18	19	37

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	14
	Girls	16	18	17
	Total	28	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (57)	84 (90)	84 (77)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	13	16
	Girls	16	16	17
	Total	30	29	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (87)	78 (83)	89 (93)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	17	24	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	14	17
	Girls	20	20	24
	Total	34	34	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (59)	83 (81)	100 (88)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	14	15
	Girls	20	21	22
	Total	33	35	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (50)	85 (59)	90 (59)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	228
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	176

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	36
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65
Number of pupils per FTE adult	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	567,871
Total expenditure	554,117
Expenditure per pupil	2,000
Balance brought forward from previous year	28,000
Balance carried forward to next year	41,754

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 52%

Number of questionnaires sent out	289
Number of questionnaires returned	150

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	22	3	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	68	27	2	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	35	3	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	35	10	3	13
The teaching is good.	80	18	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	30	8	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	23	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	21	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	43	47	7	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	61	33	2	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	70	24	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	30	9	4	12