

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WHALTON C OF E AIDED FIRST SCHOOL**

Whalton, Morpeth

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122302

Headteacher: Ms M J Britton

Reporting inspector: Mr J J Peacock  
25344

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2001

Inspection number: 122302

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Whalton Morpeth Northumberland
Postcode:	NE61 3XH
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Norton
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This Church of England first school with voluntary aided status caters for pupils from four to nine years of age and is much smaller than most primary schools. There are 30 pupils on roll, 13 boys and 17 girls in two classes, one in the infant department and the other in the juniors. Only about one third of the pupils come from the village, with the rest travelling from the surrounding rural area. The attainment of most children when they start in the reception class is broadly average.

Thirteen per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly in line with the national average. A similar percentage of pupils have special educational needs. This is below the national average. Only one pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds or with English as an additional language.

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

This is a very effective small school where the many strengths far outweigh any weaknesses. The extremely capable headteacher provides leadership and management of the highest quality and this is largely responsible for the school's success. Standards in English, mathematics and science are high and have improved steadily, above the national trend. As a result, the school received an award for excellence last year from the department for education. The quality of teaching is very good. It is particularly effective for pupils with special educational needs, enabling all to achieve nationally expected standards in the national tests for seven-year-olds in the past two years. All pupils show a very good attitude to learning and behave very well in lessons. When all these factors are considered, along with the well above average level of funding, the school is providing good value for money.

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

- The excellent leadership and management by the headteacher are instrumental in raising standards. Staff and governors are very supportive, making it a most effective management team.
- The standards achieved in English, mathematics, science, music and information and communication technology are well above those normally expected by the time pupils are ready to leave the school.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The broad curriculum interests and motivates pupils of all ages and abilities most effectively.
- Pupils enjoy coming to this school. All show a very good attitude towards their work and behave very well. Relationships are excellent, helping pupils to be fully included in all activities and to flourish.
- Parents have very positive views of the school and are strongly supportive of it.

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

- The neatness of pupils' written work.
- Teachers' planning to show how computers can be used effectively in all National Curriculum subjects.

*The areas for improvement above are less important weaknesses, not included as key issues, so there will be no requirement for the governors' to produce an action plan.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The programme of improvement was interrupted when the previous headteacher left. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, who has been in post for three years, the issues from the previous inspection have been addressed in earnest. There are now up-to-date policy statements and detailed programmes of work for each National Curriculum subject, giving teachers clear guidance for their lesson planning. As a result, teaching is much better than it was. All pupils' work is routinely dated and very good systems are now in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching. The school has also successfully implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and this is having a marked impact on standards. The level of improvement, taking into account the standards achieved, has been good. The school is well on course to meet the targets set for English and mathematics in 2002, and has the skilled leadership and strong commitment from staff, governors and parents to maintain the current trend of improvement. All can be proud of their achievements and justifiably optimistic about the continuing success of the school.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by ten pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
reading	E	A*	A*	A*	very high A*
writing	C	A	A*	A*	well above average A
mathematics	E	A*	A*	A*	above average B
					average C
					below average D
					well below average E

Pupils' achievements in the 2000 national tests for seven-year-olds, shown above, have largely been maintained in 2001 in spite of disruption caused by long-term staff absences over the past year. When the results in 2000 are compared to similar schools, standards are also very high. Inspection evidence shows that, by the time pupils are seven, overall standards in English, mathematics and science are above the national average. An analysis of pupils' completed work confirms that all pupils are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment and there is no difference between the attainment of girls and boys. All pupils with special educational needs do very well to achieve nationally expected standards. Targets for English and mathematics are realistically based on a detailed assessment of pupils' potential and a high proportion achieves them.

By the time most children are at the end of their reception year, virtually all achieve the early learning goals in the six areas of learning which make up the foundation stage curriculum. By the end of Year 4, standards in English, mathematics, science, music and information and communication technology are well above national expectations. Staff expertise in all these subjects is having a beneficial impact on standards. A new handwriting scheme has been introduced to improve standards, but at present much of pupils' written work looks untidy.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. All listen attentively and concentrate very well in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. There have been no exclusions and no racist or sexist behaviour occurs.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. There is a caring, family atmosphere and the small class sizes mean that all pupils are fully involved in lessons. They are given and readily accept responsibility.
Attendance	Very high. Pupils enjoy coming to school. There has been no unauthorised absence.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

Previously, teaching was judged to be good in all subjects. The quality of teaching is now very good throughout the school. In just over half of the 14 lessons observed it was very good or excellent and in the remainder it was good. This reflects the quality of leadership provided by the headteacher, the enthusiasm and expertise of the teaching staff and the invaluable support provided by classroom assistants and parents. Teaching of this standard has a marked impact on the standards pupils achieve by the time they are ready to leave at the end of Year 4. In the foundation stage, the quality is also very good enabling children to make very good progress and attain the early learning goals in all of the six areas of learning before the end of their reception year.

There is strong commitment to give all pupils the best possible education, and the basic skills for all subjects are taught very well by the talented and extremely conscientious staff. The well above average standards in music and information and communication technology, for example, are directly attributable to the quality of teaching. Other strong features, which contribute to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, are detailed lesson planning, high expectations of pupils, relationships within the small class groups and the support for pupils with special educational needs. These features help to ensure that all pupils are fully included in all activities and as a result, the climate for learning is very effective. They have, for example, enabled all to achieve nationally expected standards in the national tests for the past two years. Teachers intuitively use computers in most of their lessons for routine tasks such as wordprocessing and researching information. However, opportunities to maximise pupils' access to computers and to challenging programs are not always clearly defined in their planning for each subject. As a result, pupils' advanced computer skills are not being fully utilised in some lessons. The quality of teaching overall is an undoubted strength of the school. As a direct result, pupils' productivity and pace of working are very good. They show much interest in the tasks set for them and are keen to do well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Statutory requirements are met. The foundation stage curriculum covers all nationally agreed areas. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Individual targets are clearly defined and the small numbers mean that all are supported very well in lessons. As a result, all achieve nationally expected standards.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. This was also recognised as a strong area in the previous inspection.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Procedures for child protection, monitoring pupils' academic performance, personal development and attendance are very effective.

Parental support and links with the local church and community are strong. All serve to enhance the educational experiences for pupils.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. A clear vision, backed by a high level of professional expertise and a strong determination to raise standards, are the hallmarks of the extremely competent headteacher, who also has a full-time teaching commitment. Staff work exceptionally well as a team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very effectively. Governors are deeply committed to the school and all business is conducted with the best interests of the pupils in mind at all times. Statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Standards and the quality of teaching are closely scrutinised and prompt action is taken to bring about improvements where necessary.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The finances are managed meticulously and best value is sought in all expenditure. Specific grants are spent appropriately.

A measure of the drive and determination of the headteacher, the effectiveness of the governing body and support of the local community is clearly illustrated in the funding and speedy development of the new building within the school grounds for the pre-school and after-school groups. It has taken only two years to come to fruition.

## **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pupils like school and they make good progress.</li><li>• Behaviour is good.</li><li>• Pupils get the right amount of work and teaching is good.</li><li>• Parents are well informed and feel comfortable about approaching school.</li><li>• Pupils are expected to work hard and the school works closely with parents.</li><li>• The school is well led and managed.</li><li>• Pupils are helped to become more mature through an interesting range of activities.</li></ul>	

Inspectors are in full agreement with the very positive views expressed by 27 out of the 30 parents who replied by questionnaire. Three-quarters of all families were represented at the meeting for parents prior to the inspection and all were very supportive.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

**The excellent leadership and management by the headteacher are instrumental in raising standards. Staff and governors are very supportive, making it a most effective management team**

1. The quality of leadership and management has further improved since the previous inspection, following a change of headteacher. The new headteacher has been in post for three years and is proving to be extremely capable, providing leadership and management of the highest quality. This is largely responsible for the school's success. Overall, leadership and management are excellent and having a positive impact on the daily life of the school. The headteacher has a clear picture of what she wants to achieve for the benefit of the pupils and community. As a direct result of her vision, commitment, knowledge and high quality leadership, the school is managing to improve on the high standards reported previously. Staff and governors share her very strong commitment to the school and work hard with her to meet the clear and specific aims of this small Church of England school. These aims and values are strongly reflected in all aspects of school life such as pupils' very good attitudes to their work and their behaviour.
2. The effective delegation of responsibility to staff and governors is a strong feature. It promotes a feeling of unity as all work together very effectively as a team. All share responsibility to evaluate the school's performance and to plan for its future. The rapid development of the new after-school building in the school grounds is a prime example of what can be achieved working this way. Staff work closely together to co-ordinate the development of subjects within the curriculum, giving much support to one another. Their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. The experienced teacher in the infant class, for example, carries out her responsibilities very efficiently and effectively. The newly formed foundation stage for reception age children is currently managed as part of Key Stage 1. This is appropriate in such a small school. Non-teaching staff feel part of the 'school team' and value the guidance and support they receive from teachers. The quality of their work adds to the success of pupils' learning experiences.
3. The governing body carries out its statutory duties effectively and works extremely hard to support the school. The experienced chair of governors has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through regular weekly meetings with the headteacher. Individual governors are each linked to a specific subject of the National Curriculum as well as areas such as literacy, numeracy and special educational needs. This gives them a clear overview of learning in particular subjects. All approach their duties conscientiously and are proud to be associated with the school. Importantly, all appreciate the level of improvements brought about by the headteacher and express confidence in her. Minutes of the governing body's meetings indicate that meetings are well attended and business is conducted efficiently. The statutory requirements for the special educational needs Code of Practice are met.
4. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching, a key issue in the previous inspection, are in place for the core subjects of English and mathematics and to a more limited extent in other subjects. In response to a recent national initiative, the school has very good procedures and documentation for assessing the quality of teaching and

rewarding those who perform highly. The headteacher constantly strives for high standards and has a regular programme for analysing national test results and monitoring pupils' completed workbooks to evaluate the standards being achieved. Last year, for example, this highlighted the need for a new handwriting scheme to be introduced.

5. In the previous inspection, the school had three key issues to address. All have been tackled rigorously. The latest curriculum guidance has been successfully incorporated into detailed subject programmes of work, and these guide teachers' planning effectively. Very effective procedures to monitor and evaluate teaching are helping to raise standards in all subjects and all pupils' work is dated and marked thoroughly.
6. The school office is run most efficiently. Administration staff are friendly and welcoming, giving visitors a very good first impression. Satisfactory use is made of new technology in the office, with an electronic mail facility for parents and computer programs for managing the finances. Government grants are used effectively and correctly. Compared to other similar schools, for example, there is a favourable ratio of computers to pupils. The headteacher, ably supported by the chair of the finance committee, is meticulous in making sure that funds are applied to the best effect. Overall financial control is very good. The large contingency budget, amounting to almost ten per cent of the total, is being safeguarded sensibly to cover an anticipated short-term drop in pupil numbers. A few minor items for improvement found by the last audit by the education authority auditors were promptly dealt with. The school buys its resources at the most competitive prices and pays careful attention to quality. Taking into account the exceptional way in which the school is led and managed, the standards achieved, the very good quality of teaching and pupils' very good attitudes, along with the high costs for each pupil, the school is providing good value for money.

**The standards achieved in English, mathematics, science, music and information and communication technology are well above those normally expected by the time pupils are ready to leave the school**

7. There is a very strong determination by the headteacher and staff to maintain high standards. Pupils' performance in the national tests in 2000 showed that the school achieved the second best results amongst primary schools in Northumberland. This achievement was recognised by a national award for excellence from the department for education. Performance is equally as strong in the unconfirmed results for 2001, with all achieving expected levels and six out of ten pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in all areas except writing where three achieved it. This is made more remarkable, considering the disruption caused by a maternity leave and long-term absence of a teacher due to an operation and the number of pupils on the special needs register in each year group. The high proportion achieving nationally expected standards each year at age seven shows that the teaching is highly effective and that pupils with special educational needs are being supported very well, enabling all to make very good progress and reach the required standard.
8. Attainment on entry to the reception class is broadly average. Children benefit from the detailed lesson planning which effectively covers the six areas of learning in the foundation stage curriculum. The quality of teaching is very good and as a result, most make good progress in language and literacy, mathematics, in their knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and in their personal and

social development. For example, children listen well to all adults, respond well to instructions and work well on the tasks set for them. In their physical development, progress is also good. Good use is made of the outdoor play area and equipment such as large climbing frames and wheeled toys for children to push or ride. By the end of their reception year, virtually all children achieve the early learning goals in the foundation stage curriculum. This gives them a good start for the next phase of their education.

9. Results in the 2000 tests for seven-year-olds, in comparison with all schools, show standards in reading, writing and mathematics were very high, being in the top five per cent nationally. In teacher assessments in science, the results were also very high for pupils achieving the expected level and the higher Level 3. When the school's performance is compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, the pattern is the same, very high. The unpublished results for 2001 are equally impressive.
10. Inspection evidence shows that attainment for current seven-year-olds so early in the academic year in English, mathematics and science is above average. Pupils are well on course to match the performance of pupils in the previous two years. The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and a marked improvement in the quality of teaching is helping to ensure that standards remain high. The high standards are also a credit to the pupils who show such positive attitudes towards their work.
11. In English, pupils are provided with regular opportunities to express themselves in class discussions. Most make good progress in their speaking and listening as a result. Reading is taught effectively, allowing pupils to develop their technical skills well. All have good strategies, for example, to try and read unfamiliar words. Most read with understanding. The close liaison between home and school, with parents regularly hearing their children read and writing comments in reading diaries is helping to improve standards.
12. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to write in most subjects. For example, in science, pupils record their results following a survey into ladybirds and record findings from experiments conducted to investigate taste, smell and touch. The daily literacy sessions successfully introduce skills that pupils can use when writing in other subjects. Year 1, for example, are taught when to use capital letters and in Year 2, pupils recognise adjectives and discuss the best choice to make their writing more interesting. The standard of their spelling is above average.
13. In mathematics pupils do well. This is mainly because of the clear structure of lessons, which closely follow the guidance of the National Numeracy Strategy, the quality of teaching and pupils' positive attitudes. All pupils enjoy the challenge of finding answers to number problems and most competently explain how they worked out an answer. By the age of seven, pupils successfully count in twos, fives and tens, halve and double numbers and competently add and subtract numbers to 50.
14. Much of the work in science is of a practical nature. By the time they are seven, pupils have studied electricity, magnets, sounds, light, materials and living things, such as plants. In a lesson seen in Year 2, for example, pupils were helped to appreciate the link between different foods and a healthy lifestyle when they set about making a healthy sandwich.
15. Pupils continue to achieve well in the junior class. Their rate of progress is particularly good, largely because of the quality of teaching. The mature, sensible attitude most pupils show towards their work is another key factor. A scrutiny of

completed work from last year and pupils' current workbooks shows that by the time they are ready to leave the school at the end of Year 4, pupils' attainment is well above the average in English, mathematics and science. Standards have remained high in all three subjects. Their attainment is also well above the standards expected in music and information and communication technology, and above expectations in all other subjects.

16. The formal structure of literacy and numeracy sessions continues to have a beneficial effect in standards in the junior section of the school. Detailed lesson planning, well chosen texts and teachers' skill in teaching reading, supported by parents at home, helps all to reach nationally expected standards. Teachers provide very good opportunities for pupils to write in a wide range of contexts and styles, often using computers. Pupils, for example, write instructions on how to make beans on toast, record debates about foxhunting and imaginative stories about being lost in space. Pupils also write poems and character profiles about people in stories they read, using punctuation correctly. All pupils demonstrate a fluent joined style of handwriting when completing handwriting exercises but the neatness is often not carried over into their other exercise books.
17. Pupils in the junior classes do very well in mathematics and this is due mainly to the teachers' structured approach in lessons and the way they promote pupils' interest in the subject very effectively. In a Years 3 and 4 lesson, for example, pupils were quick to calculate the answers to number problems involving two- and three-digit numbers. They enjoyed a series of challenging tasks associated with mathematical shapes, trying to find the relationship between the number of sides and lines of symmetry, for example. By the end of Year 2, all show a good knowledge of fractions, decimals and negative numbers. Pupils collect, record and process data well, producing graphs about countries visited, musical instruments played or parent occupations.
18. In science, pupils have many opportunities to investigate and conduct experiments independently of their teacher, for example, testing the strength of supermarket carrier bags and growing beans in different conditions. All are well motivated and work hard in lessons to complete a copious amount of work in their books. Some examples of topics covered include monitoring how materials such as frozen peas change when defrosting, separating solutions, plant growth, healthy lifestyle and sound, light and electricity. Girls and boys of all abilities achieve equally well in science, as well as in English and mathematics.
19. Teachers' expertise in music and information and communication technology helps pupils to achieve well above expected standards in these two subjects. In the music lesson seen with junior pupils, the quality of teaching was excellent. As a result, pupils were introduced effectively to musical composition and all were able to clap simple four bar rhythms, giving each note the required number of beats. All are able to sing in tune. Pupils of all ages use computers confidently and competently. Following a power cut, for example, Year 2 pupils were able to re-start the computer unaided, loading the correct program. Five- to seven-year-old pupils know the functions of various keys on the keyboard and change font size, use capital letters and print their work. All demonstrate good control of the mouse when selecting options in mathematic programs. Junior pupils make good use of a digital camera when scanning a photograph of themselves onto a letter sent to pen pals or recording visits to a colliery and Roman fort at Wallsend. They use data gathered on pupils' favourite Harry Potter book and present it accurately in a variety of graphical forms.

20. Pupils with special educational needs do very well at this school. For the past two years all have achieved nationally expected levels of attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This is due to the careful planning by teachers and the effective support of the classroom assistants, parents or specialist learning support teachers, such as the teacher for hearing impaired pupils. It means that every pupil can be fully included in all classroom activities. The small numbers in each class and skilled support helps everyone to achieve the challenging targets set for them. All pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life, with teachers ensuring equality of opportunity for all. As a result, these pupils achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment by the time they are ready to leave at the end of Year 4.

### **The quality of teaching is very good**

21. The overall quality of teaching is very good throughout the school. It has improved since the previous inspection in June 1997 as a direct result of the headteachers' leadership and a shared determination by all staff to raise standards,
22. The quality of teaching observed during this short inspection was good or better than this in all of the 14 lessons seen. It was very good or excellent in just over half of them. Staff are now guided effectively in their lesson planning by detailed teaching programmes for all subjects, and as a result the quality of their lesson planning is very good. Other strong features that contribute most to the effective teaching are: high expectations of pupils; relationships within the small class groups and the support for pupils with special educational needs. In addition, the good use of homework further enhances the quality of learning. As a direct consequence of the quality of teaching, pupils work conscientiously in their lessons, concentrating well until they finish their work.
23. There is evidently a very strong determination by all staff to raise standards, and pupils are playing their part by showing a very good attitude towards their work and trying constantly to do their best. As a result of this, a copious amount of pupils' completed work was available to the inspection team for their scrutiny. Teachers' enthusiasm, their very good knowledge of the curriculum and the knack of making learning challenging and exciting, helps to keep all pupils fully motivated and extremely busy. In a Years 3 and 4 history lesson, for example, pupils enjoyed researching information on the Roman wall and Roman buildings using the Internet. This deepened their knowledge and understanding of the period.
24. The most important element in maintaining high standards and the very good teaching is teachers' very good subject knowledge and level of expertise. As a result, basic skills are taught effectively and very good links are made between different subjects. In Years 3 and 4, for example, a geography topic on the local community involved pupils extending their skills by using computers and a digital camera to design a booklet called 'A walk around Whalton'. Literacy skills, as well as a geographical knowledge and design skills, were combined and put into practice. Overall, expectations of pupils are high and they respond by behaving extremely well and working conscientiously. Pupils of all abilities are given suitably challenging tasks. That is why they achieve so well.
25. Another strong feature of most lessons is the effective way teachers use support staff or parent helpers when they are available. The very good attitude pupils in general have towards their work means that they can be trusted to work diligently, whether they are supervised by an adult or not. Children in the mixed-age infant

class, for example, did not need telling to find something else to do when they had finished their task and their teacher was occupied with another group. Praise is used well throughout to motivate or raise pupils' self-esteem. This was evident in the supportive comments attached to pupils' marked work.

26. The quality of teaching in the literacy hours and during numeracy sessions is very good throughout the school. All teachers use the skills that pupils have learned in these sessions effectively when teaching other subjects. In history in Years 3 and 4, for example, pupils' literacy skills were developed well as they researched information from the Internet about the Roman period and recorded it in their books. Pupils are frequently provided with the opportunity to use computers as part of their work in all subjects and this invariably involves them practising their literacy or numeracy skills.
27. The consistently good quality of teaching accounts for pupils achieving highly in English, mathematics and science. In English, all achieve the targets set for them by the time they are ready to leave the school. In mathematics, pupils do particularly well in the national tests for seven-year-olds, with eight out of ten achieving the higher Level 3 in 2000. Standards are well above average by the time they are nine years of age. This is a direct result of the quality of teaching and the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. In information and communication technology in particular, pupils' well above average achievements reflect the vastly improved level of resources and quality of teaching. Both teachers have a considerable level of expertise in music and provide pupils with a wide range of challenging experiences. This accounts for the high standards achieved in the subject.
28. All teachers work hard to establish a good working atmosphere and promote effective learning. Pupils obviously enjoy the calm, orderly atmosphere in lessons and behave very well. This results in a productive working environment in all classes and sustained levels of concentration. The quality of teaching in the reception class is very good. Pupils of all ages in this class are keen to work. The close adult support available with the small numbers, clear instructions and carefully structured tasks ensures that all are fully involved. As a direct result, effective learning occurs in virtually all lessons. Planning of children's work meets the new requirements of all six areas of learning in the foundation stage curriculum.
29. A further strength of teaching is the very good provision made for pupils with special educational needs. The small number of pupils in each class guarantees them much individual attention. Staff use expert advice and good assessment information to ensure that individual learning plans identify precise and achievable targets in relation to literacy, numeracy and social behaviour. Teachers take full account of these individual targets in their lesson plans. They work closely with support staff to ensure that the best possible use is made of their time and talents. As a result, all pupils with special educational needs consistently receive the help they need to make very good progress in relation to their personal targets. In the 2000 and 2001 national tests for seven-year-olds, for example, every pupil achieved the expected level in all areas. Teachers and learning support staff continuously monitor individual pupils' progress and further action is planned accordingly. Alongside this, trained specialists such as the teacher for the hearing impaired, work with individual pupils, making sure that they can have full access to the curriculum and be fully included in all activities. Teaching is usually of a high quality, characterised by well-planned activities and a sensitive and caring approach

which successfully builds pupils' confidence. As a result, pupils with special educational needs do well in this school.

30. Parents, in their responses to the questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection, were generally happy with the amount of homework their children were expected to do. At the meeting for parents, all felt that the tasks set were well matched to pupils' capabilities. Inspection findings support parents' views. The school's policy statement gives clear guidance to teachers and parents on homework. Teachers make good use of homework as part of their strong commitment to raise standards, and the amount and quality effectively supports pupils' learning.

### **The broad curriculum interests and motivates pupils of all ages and abilities most effectively**

31. The high level of expertise, enthusiasm for teaching and long hours of planning, result in a very good curriculum being provided in this small school. The challenging activities help to motivate pupils, who invariably work hard in class. All appear to enjoy coming to school judging by the high level of attendance and show very good attitudes towards their work. Children in the reception class are also very well provided for with interesting and exciting learning experiences covering all the early learning goals in the six areas of the foundation stage curriculum. A wide range of activities is planned, and there is a suitable balance between teacher-directed tasks and self-initiated activities. Children are well prepared to begin work on the National Curriculum by the end of their reception year.
32. Good planning ensures that infant and junior aged pupils spend enough time on each National Curriculum subject, religious education and personal and social education, and that a suitable range of other experiences is provided. For example, all pupils in school benefit from 20 swimming sessions each year, all have French lessons and infants have philosophy on their timetable! Detailed planning means that lessons are very carefully structured so that no time is wasted and all pupils work at the right level, hence progress in learning is very good. The match of work to pupils' ages and levels of attainment in the two mixed-age classes is planned carefully. Pupils who need additional help to complete their work benefit from the small numbers and the individual support which is available.
33. Much emphasis is placed on teaching literacy and numeracy. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are well established. Mathematical skills are used very well to support other subjects, for example when pupils made graphs from their results after defrosting peas in science and recording temperatures in geography. Opportunities to use literacy skills are also planned in all other subjects. For example, pupils write about the lifestyle of the ancient Egyptians, or record the results of experiments into growing bulbs in science. Curriculum provision for information and communication technology has improved significantly since the previous inspection, due to the increasing expertise of all teachers and better resources. Pupils use computers to help them with their work in most lessons and all show an advanced level of skill.
34. There is an appropriate sex education policy. The school is involved in a pilot scheme to raise awareness about drugs to reception age children. From an early age, pupils are being taught most effectively how different types of drugs are misused.

35. Very good links are maintained with pre-school groups and families of children about to start school, which helps the teacher to provide the right sort of activities in the reception class. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, and care is taken to make the transition from this school to the next, at whatever age it occurs, as smooth as possible.
36. Other opportunities are taken to enhance pupils' learning through European sponsored initiatives such as the links maintained with Germany through the Socrates project and sporting activities with neighbouring schools. Visits to places of interest are also used well to improve pupils' first-hand experiences wherever possible, despite the distances involved the cost of these trips. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities is provided for a school of this size. It is anticipated that more opportunities will be available as the use of the after-school building is developed.
37. The school is committed to the principals of equality of opportunity, and no pupils are excluded from any activity by reason of race, gender, social circumstance or ability. The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum on offer is an outstanding feature of this small school and largely responsible for every pupil achieving their full potential.

**Pupils enjoy coming to this school. All show a very good attitude towards their work and behave very well. Relationships are excellent, helping pupils to be fully included in all activities and to flourish**

38. From the reception class onwards, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, show very good attitudes to their work and their life in school. In the 14 lessons observed, for example, attitudes and behaviour were very good in eight and good in the remainder. There is a quiet, purposeful working atmosphere throughout the school.
39. Pupils obviously enjoy coming to this school as attendance levels are very high and there is no unauthorised absence. This excellent record was achieved despite the effects on attendance of the outbreak of the foot and mouth disease, which resulted in all animals on every farm in the area being slaughtered.
40. The high levels of enthusiasm by pupils and the interest they show in their lessons make a considerable contribution to their level of achievement in all subjects. Pupils listen carefully in class and work hard, concentrating well on the tasks set for them. This is a reflection of the very good teaching and excellent relationships between pupils and all adults in school. For example, in a literacy session on poetry in the Years 3 and 4 class, pupils were well motivated by their class teacher's enthusiasm, and were eager to share their ideas for lines in their poem about the colour yellow.
41. Behaviour is very good, both in and around school. There have been no exclusions in the past two years. All pupils are confident that isolated incidents of bullying have been dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations of staff. They walk sensibly about the school, and lunchtimes are pleasant social occasions. There is a real sense of community as older pupils look

after younger ones at breaks and lunchtime. Everyone, adults and pupils alike, treat each other with respect. Boys and girls are totally integrated in class and at play. Pupils of all ages co-operate very well with each other in class. In the history lesson in the junior class on the Romans, for example, all worked well independently of the teacher, gathering information from books or the Internet, sharing resources and discussing their work maturely with one another. This rapport and the strong working relationships are key factors in promoting good progress.

42. Overall, the personal development and relationships of pupils is excellent. Pupils take full advantage of the many and varied opportunities provided to show independence and responsibility in their learning and in all aspects of school life. Great care is taken to ensure that every pupil is fully included in all activities. This is a strong characteristic of the school, helped by the small numbers and the close relationships. Pupils of all ages willingly undertake a wide range of responsibilities, from tidying up in the reception class to preparing the hall for assemblies in Year 4. The level of initiative and personal responsibility shown by pupils of all ages is excellent. For example, when junior pupils were designing a multimedia page about the Romans, they organised themselves into pairs to work on the computers and, following a power cut, Year 2 pupils took it upon themselves to re-programme the class computers.

#### **Parents have very positive views of the school and are strongly supportive of it**

43. The strong links with the church and parents, which were reported in the previous inspection, still exist today. The response by parents to the questionnaires and their attendance at the meeting prior to the inspection was unusually high, with nearly every family represented. Virtually all of those who attended the meeting for parents prior to the inspection showed pride in the reputation the school enjoys in the community and were very supportive in their comments. An analysis of the returned questionnaires shows an overwhelming majority of parents are very happy with the school and confident that their children are getting a good education. Parent governors report that parents appreciate the family atmosphere within the school and the approachability of the headteacher and staff. Inspection findings confirm parents' positive views. Pupils are very well taught by a dedicated and caring staff who expect them to work hard and to achieve their full potential. Almost all (96 per cent) agree that the school is helping their children to become more mature and responsible.
44. There is a strong commitment by the school to work closely with parents for the benefit of pupils and this helps to foster the excellent relationships and parents' positive views. During the inspection, some of the parent volunteers were seen helping in the classrooms. In the infant class, for example, the six reception children concentrated very well on the task of recognising mathematical shapes with a parent, enabling the teacher to spend valuable time with older pupils when introducing three-dimensional shapes. The teacher's planning for both groups ensured that the quality of learning was very good and in the final session, when all came together again to report on their activities, it was apparent how hard all had worked. Parents spoken to by the inspection team confirm that they feel welcome in school and are kept well informed about how their child is getting on. Virtually all (96 per cent) agree that their child is making good progress. Parents of pupils with

special educational needs, and those with more able pupils, had no concerns about the school's provision for both groups of pupils.

45. Parents play their part in the partnership with school in a number of ways. Their interest in their children's progress is evident from their involvement in the home reading programme, help given with homework and the fundraising activities of the very active parent teacher association. The development of the after-school club building, which will also be used for a pre-school playgroup, relied not only on parents but the whole community's support. The speed with which it moved from planning to opening was a credit to all concerned.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **The neatness of pupils' written work.**

46. Much of the written work inspected was completed by pupils during the previous academic year, when considerable disruption was caused by one teacher going on maternity leave and the other recovering from an operation. It was apparent that pupils continued to work hard for the temporary teachers and high standards were maintained. However, the neatness of finished work was disappointing with untidy writing and the careless way mistakes were crossed out. Few pupils were correctly joining their letters and a variety of styles were being used.
47. The headteacher immediately began to tackle the problems with the introduction of a new handwriting scheme and regular periods set aside within the weekly timetable to practise. As a result, most pupils now write in a fluent joined style when using their handwriting books. However, the care taken to produce beautifully neat writing in these books is not always carried over into pupils' normal workbooks and some good work is spoilt by untidiness.

### **Teachers' planning to show how computers can be used effectively in all National Curriculum subjects**

48. Teachers plan long-term (covering an academic year) medium-term (for each term) and short-term (covering a week's lessons). Planning by both teachers shows a clear development of skills for all subjects, including information and communication technology. However, neither list opportunities for pupils to use computer skills taught in information and communication technology when doing their work in other subjects such as history and English. In some of the lessons seen, computers were used in an uninspiring way with pupils simply copying out poems or written work. In the scrutiny of mathematics books, graphs were laboriously produced by hand in exercise books rather than using the class computer.
49. The new National Curriculum 2000 guidance identifies the ways new technology such as computers, sensors, tape players and video cameras can be meaningfully used in each subject of the national curriculum. There is an expectation that every

possible opportunity will be taken to maximise pupils' access to computers and new technology. The single sentence in planning guidance asking teachers to 'use computers whenever possible' shows a distinct lack of emphasis in the school for promoting this important area. This is quite easily put right. It involves teachers including details of programs they will make use of and listing challenging and interesting activities using modern technology in their medium-term planning for each subject. By planning ahead and sharing ideas, teachers will be able to make better use of pupils' advanced computer skills in all lessons to raise standards further.

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

50. This school is at the heart of the community and with its high standards and excellent leadership, parents can have every confidence that their children will be encouraged to meet their full potential in a caring and supportive environment. The broad curriculum and quality of teaching to be found here, complete a healthy picture for the school's future success. Consequently, there are no key issues for improvement identified in this inspection.

The following less important weaknesses, not included as key issues, should be considered by the school:

- improve the neatness of pupils' written work;  
(paragraphs 16, 46, 47)
- include in teachers' planning, detailed opportunities for pupils to use computers effectively in all subjects of the National Curriculum.  
(paragraphs 48, 49)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	14
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	7	6	0	0	0	0
Percentage	7	50	43	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	30
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	4

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	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.1
National comparative data	5.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	4	6	10

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	10	10	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	10	10	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Separate figures for boys and girls are excluded as there are 10 or less boys and girls in the year group taking the test.

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	24
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 – Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15
Average class size	15

### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	27

*FTE means full-time equivalent*

## **Financial information**

Financial year	2000 / 01
	£
Total income	108, 784
Total expenditure	99, 809
Expenditure per pupil	3, 127
Balance brought forward from previous year	7, 168
Balance carried forward to next year	9, 642

## **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0
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**

Number of questionnaires sent out	30
Number of questionnaires returned	27

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	88	4	8	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	79	17	0	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	75	25	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	54	33	8	0	4
The teaching is good.	83	13	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	25	4	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	83	13	0	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	17	0	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	63	33	0	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	83	13	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	79	17	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	42	4	4	4