

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN WILKINSON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Broseley

LEA area : Shropshire

Unique reference number : 123434

Headteacher : Miss. R. A. Postlethwaite

Reporting inspector : Elizabeth Camplin
3586

Dates of inspection : 28th – 30th January 2002

Inspection number : 195868

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 5 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Coalport Road
Broseley
Shropshire

Postcode: TF12 5AN

Telephone number: 01952 882950

Fax number: 01952 883215

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. N. Wood

Date of previous inspection: 20th – 22nd May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

John Wilkinson Primary School is situated on the fringe of the old Shropshire town of Broseley. The school is smaller than the national average for primary schools. It caters for 173 pupils whose family backgrounds are broadly typical of national socio-economic standards. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is similar to most schools across the country. Almost all pupils are white and include three pupils who are competent in English but whose first language is German or Persian. Eight children are in the reception year and they are taught with 13 pupils from Year 1. Girls outnumber the boys on roll, particularly in the current Year 6. When pupils start school, most have benefited from attending a playgroup and attainment broadly matches national expectations for their age. Though the percentage of pupils on the register of special educational needs is below the national average the range of need is significantly marked. It includes autism, dyslexia, multi-sensory impairment, physical, speech and communication, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and moderate learning difficulties. Outside support agencies are involved in planning provision for 17 pupils. Three of these have statements of special educational needs and they represent a higher than average percentage compared with all other primary schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

John Wilkinson Primary is an effective school. Teachers plan thoroughly and manage pupils very well to ensure teaching and learning of consistently good quality. Standards achieved exceed the national average by the time Year 6 pupils transfer to secondary school. Pupils throughout the school work hard and are keen to achieve to the best of their ability in all subjects. The school is capably led and managed by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior members of the teaching team. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Academic standards are good by Year 6. Pupils make effective use of literacy, numeracy and new technology in much of their work.
- The headteacher and staff provide such a wealth of opportunities to learn that pupils produce a particularly impressive range of work in creative and practical subjects.
- The school's aims and values are strongly reflected in the sensitive management of pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development.
- Pupils respond very well to the school's expectations. They are eager to learn, feel valued and safe and develop a strong sense of mutual support and personal responsibility.
- Governors fulfil their responsibilities very well. They set performance targets that are essential for the school's future development.

What could be improved

- The gap could be closed between standards achieved in statutory tests in reading and mathematics by girls in Year 2 compared with the attainment of girls of the same age nationally.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1997. Since then it has made good improvement. It has sustained a good quality of education and standards achieved by pupils in Year 6 have

improved in line with the national trend. Boys in Year 2 have also performed better in reading, writing and mathematics than boys of the same age nationally, whereas girls have not reached the expected standard in reading and mathematics. The need to raise girls' achievement is rightly the school's highest priority for improvement. Teaching hours now exceed the recommended minimum and lessons are carefully planned for classes with mixed-age groups. Governors have a much better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and fulfil their responsibilities very well. However, the School Development Plan does not yet include precise enough objectives to make it easy for governors and staff to identify progress with key priorities and to evaluate gains in pupils' achievement.

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	A	C	C
Mathematics	E	A	B	A
Science	C	B	B	B

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

Test results have improved in line with the national trend. The most significant improvement has been in mathematics where standards are high compared with similar schools. For three successive years, boys have performed well at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, though girls in Year 2 have not scored well compared with girls nationally. Girls' results have been poor in reading and mathematics. However, by Year 6 there are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls. The school exceeded its challenging targets in 2001 in both English and mathematics and work seen during the inspection was good enough to suggest that pupils in Year 6 are likely to reach their targets again this academic year. Overall, pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and girls do better in both infant and junior age groups than statutory test results indicate. Standards are high in art, design and technology, and history and above expectation in aspects of information and communication technology (ICT). The achievement of children who are under six years of age is also good. The current small group in the reception year is likely to exceed goals for their age in key areas of learning by the end of the academic year.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very keen to learn. The interest shown by pupils with special educational needs is a credit to them and the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils show high levels of consideration for each other and behave particularly well.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils form very good relationships. They develop into mature and responsible young people with a strong sense of community identity.

Attendance	Attendance is particularly good.
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For three successive years the average rate of attendance has been above the national average. There are a few girls whose high level of absence has an adverse effect on their progress.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Almost one third of lessons observed were very good and none was unsatisfactory. Teachers manage pupils very well and plan lessons thoroughly. However, they occasionally concentrate too much on providing information rather than giving pupils enough time to ask or answer questions and correct errors independently. Reception children receive a good introduction to learning and work with a marked degree of independence. All pupils, including the most able, those with special educational needs, and three with a different mother tongue from English, respond well to teachers' expectations of them. English and mathematics are taught effectively and pupils are encouraged to practise literacy, numeracy and other practical skills in a wide range of challenging tasks. Their response is good. Girls and boys work hard, especially during activities that demand physical and creative effort. Overall, all pupils steadily but surely acquire essential skills that equip them well for transfer to secondary school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is of high quality. The school draws very well on community resources to offer pupils a wealth of opportunities to learn.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils' special educational needs are carefully diagnosed and provision for them is very well planned and managed.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils' needs are assessed and managed effectively. Care is taken to respect and acknowledge their individual cultures and backgrounds. These pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	A high quality of provision has been maintained since the previous inspection. Adults share a strong commitment to the school's core aims and values. They cater sensitively for pupils' personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils receive a high standard of care. They are especially well supported when they experience personal and emotional difficulties.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and the management team promote very good relationships and a positive climate for learning. They work hard to make sure all pupils progress well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors ably fulfil their responsibilities. They are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses and work closely with staff to plan and support priorities for improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has a sound record of monitoring and evaluating its performance. It sets appropriate priorities for development but plans of action are not yet specific enough to make them fully effective.
The strategic use of resources	There is good use of finance to support professional development, improve the building and ensure a good range of learning resources.

Governors keep abreast of developments in education and share a good understanding of the principles of best value. They compare the school's performance with that of other schools and set themselves, and staff, the right challenges to move the school forward.

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 enjoy school and behave well. • Reception children settle very quickly. • Teaching is good. • Pupils develop a good sense of personal responsibility and care for each other. • Parents appreciate the many different opportunities their children have to learn. • Parents enjoy the special lunches and curriculum evenings to which they are invited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents would like a wider range of activities outside normal lessons. • A minority feels children are not sufficiently challenged in mixed-aged classes. • Some parents would like more information about programmes of work and more advice about how to help children at home. • A few parents feel the school does not provide sufficient information about their children's progress.

Parents' positive views were fully substantiated. The inspection team found that annual reports provide a very good summary of pupils' progress and targets. Concerns about insufficient challenge were unsubstantiated. Inspectors found pupils make good progress in mixed-age classes. Though some opportunities for learning outside of lessons are different from those organised in previous years, the variety offered is still very good. Inspectors agree that there are aspects of communication that could be improved to strengthen the sound home/school partnership.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Academic standards are good by Year 6. Pupils make effective use of literacy and numeracy skills and new technology in much of their work.

1. The results of statutory tests in Year 6 have been steadily improving in recent years. Pupils achieve standards in English, mathematics and science that are, overall, above the national average and the average for schools with pupils from similar social and economic backgrounds. When the relatively modest number of very able pupils, and the high percentage of pupils with complex educational needs and English as an additional language, are taken into account, the progress pupils make is good. Attainment in mathematics and science is particularly strong. One pupil reached Level 6 in mathematics in 2001, the standard expected of a typical fourteen-year-old. Every pupil reached the expected level in science. Almost a third of the class exceeded the expected Level 4 in mathematics and science whilst an impressive 50 per cent exceeded the expected standard in reading. It is evident that as they mature and gain confidence, the vast majority of pupils achieve highly for them. Yet the school knows that if it can succeed in its aim to enable girls to make as good a start in reading and mathematics at the infant stage as they do in writing, Year 6 pupils have the potential to achieve even higher standards in the future.

2. The school has found that pupils and some girls especially, are more confident in their use of basic literacy and numeracy skills in creative and practical, rather than abstract, tasks. Teachers acknowledge that some pupils find it difficult to use a broad and interesting vocabulary in creative writing when they have only imagination rather than real experience to draw on. They therefore plan many opportunities for girls and boys to practise basic skills, including the application of ICT, in as many everyday activities as possible. They enable pupils to make sense of natural links between subjects and to support each other's learning through co-operative and collaborative tasks. Written work produced in English and mathematics lessons is consistently sound, but the very best examples of work in literacy and numeracy stem from work in other subjects, such as science, history, art, and design and technology. These are often of high quality and better by the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6, than assessment results alone indicate.

3. It is easy to identify reception children's good early understanding of a range of purposes for reading, writing and recording information. A lower-achieving five-year-old boy, for example, whose hand-control and knowledge of writing was poor when he started school in September, was, by December, writing a shopping list for a Christmas party. He practised number skills through an imaginary visit to a shop where he counted out pennies to purchase things he needed, such as crisps, sandwiches, cakes and a drink. In a shared literacy lesson with Year 1 pupils, the five-year-olds were keen to suggest alternative endings to the story of 'The Three Little Pigs' and also did well to identify a variety of words beginning with 'sh'. Every one of them made a suggestion and the more able came up with some excellent vocabulary including 'shadow' and 'shower'. These younger children performed equally well in a lesson about measurement. They made 'measuring mice' of different sizes to use as non-standard units of measure. They independently found, and pictorially recorded, things that were shorter and things that were longer than each mouse. They realised that because their mice were different their findings had to be different too.

4. Pupils in the Year 1 and 2 mixed class developed sound knowledge of the meaning of a half and a quarter of a whole during a numeracy lesson about simple fractions. After being divided into groups based upon prior attainment, they engaged in practical tasks that they found interesting and fun. For the lower-attaining group of mainly Year 1's, the experience of

making pizzas, with two types of topping, helped them consolidate the concept of two equal parts. The older and more able pupils, on the other hand, made good use of a number game board and structured apparatus to solve problems involving halves and quarters up to 20. One high-achieving girl even correctly worked out halves and quarters of numbers up to 40. The classteacher guided and supported pupils well, intervening when necessary to help some to resolve errors. Many pupils reached the stage where, next time, they are ready to work together to check the accuracy of their work, before requesting an adult to check for them.

5. Drama activities, discussion of pictures, and shared reading times help pupils considerably with reading and language development. A group of girls from Years 2 and 3, for example, were able to explain the meaning of words, such as 'gasped', 'interrupted' and 'protested' when they encountered them in their reading books. They had discussed and imitated these types of responses with teachers and this had helped them to remember the words. Interest in traditional celebrations, such as Guy Fawkes' Night, led Year 3 pupils to produce some well-organised accounts of the Gunpowder Plot. The study of labels on pharmaceutical packaging enhanced pupils' ability to identify important health and safety information. An ICT and design and technology task to make an information book resulted in every child in the Year 2/3 class publishing their own very attractive book about different living things. They could read all of them competently. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have studied photographs and pictures about life during the war. This helped them to produce some very imaginative and sensitive accounts of life as an evacuee in wartime. For example, one girl from Year 4 began empathetically "On the day I was evacuated a lump of sadness came to my throat and got stuck in my head." Pupils in the same age band used graphic design software skilfully to make patriotic posters in the 'Dig for Victory' style of the 1940's.

6. The oldest juniors have plenty of evidence in their classrooms of practical work involving numeracy and literacy skills. They have enhanced their knowledge of shape and symmetry by making a variety of patterns with a different number of sides or angles. They have discovered the rule of perimeter by investigating the perimeter of different kinds of shapes. Their knowledge of fractions and percentages was extended by solving problems about average attendance and absence rates, and of measure by investigating rates of fall from specific heights, with or without a parachute. Juniors refined their ability to write precise instructions and measure accurately when they all made a 'mad hat' and a shelter from paper prototypes. They wrote short but imaginative reports about the current situation in Afghanistan. Interesting opportunities to practise literacy even incorporate lunch-time experiences. A 'special menus' file, to which pupils have access, is a useful collection of menus stemming from special meals that the cook has planned and prepared for guests, such as parents and carers. Pupils' knowledge of alliteration and interest in language is promoted through the names of the dishes, such as Copperfield Cottage Pie, and Merry Mixed Vegetables. The meals even include the Welsh translation of 'Welsh Rarebit'!

7. It is understandable that parents are proud of children's good academic achievements by the time they leave the school.

The headteacher and staff provide such a wealth of opportunities to learn that pupils produce a particularly impressive range of work in creative and practical subjects.

8. The school is proud of the curriculum it offers and considers it is as good or better now than it was when the school was first inspected. For this reason, the headteacher wanted to check whether the curriculum met the statutory requirements to be broad, balanced and relevant. She asked for it to be evaluated by the inspection team. The school thought it was especially important to receive this feedback given that some parents expressed reservations about the adequacy of opportunities outside normal lessons. In the

time available a lot was discovered about teaching and learning beyond the short inspection remit to evaluate literacy and numeracy. Finding out about the diversity of opportunities in practical and creative subjects and areas of learning for reception children proved to be a rewarding experience.

9. One inspector observed a very good physical education lesson where the oldest juniors were learning to play netball. The lesson objectives were thoroughly planned with a specific emphasis on marking and dodging, attacking and defending. Pupils' physical effort was impressive, as was their sense of teamwork and sportsmanship. Pupils with special educational needs were fully involved and the standard achieved by the whole class was high. In another lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, pupils demonstrated their good understanding of the importance of design when making a product. Many had responded positively to a request to bring a torch from home and this effective planning generated a good collection of different kinds of torches. A valuable discussion followed about why there were differences between them and when would they be used. From this pupils went on to carefully draw a torch design for a purpose of their own choosing. An art lesson for pupils in Years 4 and 5 involved learning techniques for making a large tapestry. Pupils' willingness to persevere and work with care was very good, particularly a child with special educational needs who frequently finds it difficult to concentrate in other more formal activities without direct adult support.

10. Educational visits, visitors and special events are very imaginatively planned into topics that cross the boundaries of subjects and pupils' personal, social and cultural development. Examples abound, but several stand out for mention because of splendid follow up work. One example was a day at Jackfield Tile Museum. Pupils from Year 5 saw and discussed the tubelining technique that resulted in all Year 5 pupils working co-operatively to make their own tiles, using striking colours and intricate Victorian-style designs. Another example was a range of creative work inspired by a local artist and parent. Junior pupils' pictures of flowers and plants and two-dimensional and three-dimensional artwork in the style of Henry Moore are outstanding. Such worthwhile experiences help pupils to develop pride in shared effort and, just as importantly, add to an appreciation and knowledge of traditional local crafts.

11. The involvement of Shropshire Wildlife Trust in the autumn term 2001 enabled pupils to work in partnership with environmentalists to make improvements to the school grounds. This opportunity taught pupils a lot about how to care for plants and wildlife. Reception children enthusiastically joined forces with older infants and juniors as they all worked diligently in teams on various parts of the grounds. Together, pupils planted bulbs, relocated the pond, and made a viewing platform from which they can watch wildlife in the garden and pond. The platform contains a handprint of every child in the school. The work will probably interest pupils in decades to come.

12. Overall, the school provides a very good curriculum that makes very effective use of community resources.

The school's aims and values are strongly reflected in the sensitive management of pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development.

13. The headteacher, staff, and members of the governing body make sure that provision for pupils' personal development is embedded within each day's experiences at school. They have high expectations of themselves to lead by example. It is noticeable how well all adults interact and work together to create a strong sense of community. Everyone is sensitive to individual needs and this inspires pupils to be considerate and sensitive in dealings with each other. The school has a deserved reputation, for example, for helping pupils to come to terms

with family bereavement and the frustrations of living with severe learning disorders. The memorial garden in the school grounds is a pleasant spot where pupils can sit quietly when they feel a need to be alone, think or calm down.

14. One of the school's principal educational aims is to create a stimulating environment where children feel valued, safe and eager to learn. The approach to welcoming children who are beginning their fulltime education, or transferring from other schools, is a very good example of putting this aim into practice. Parents of reception children appreciate visits to their homes prior to admission because it gives them an ideal opportunity to discuss their children in familiar surroundings. Regular contact with the local playgroup leader and classroom visits before formal admission also help put children at ease. Parents notice how happy children are when they join their class and how quickly they settle and make progress. Parents of pupils transferring from other schools, or coming from abroad, also feel that teachers and classroom support assistants make their children feel especially welcome. An Iranian parent, for example, is very pleased that her daughter has established good friendships and loves school.

15. Once they are part of the class group, reception children enjoy many stimulating opportunities for managing their own role-play and exploring their environment. From the start, teachers take every opportunity to make sure children learn to work and share in a variety of groupings and in mixed-aged groups. They encourage older pupils to help the younger ones and the younger ones to learn from older friends. The school is exceptionally good at enabling pupils to collaborate in practical activities. One has only to walk around the building to appreciate the high quality of pupils' efforts in art, design and technology and history, for example. Samples of work are mounted with considerable care and the impact is both visually exciting and thought-provoking. Display celebrates achievement and fosters feelings of pride, awe and wonder, all at the same time. It also consolidates pupils' knowledge of arts and crafts and fosters a curiosity to find out more about their heritage and that of others around the world.

16. Assemblies are used creatively to help children learn from each other. Younger pupils, for example, were observed thinking about how they could recognise and deal with potential hazards in the home. They were treated to many 'when', 'where' and 'how' questions, that resulted in lots of sensible suggestions and good learning. Older pupils were challenged to think about equality issues and whether boys and girls should do all the same things. The lively discussion was soundly steered towards the notion of a right to choose irrespective of gender, and was to be continued the following day. At the end of these shared sessions the lighting of a candle effectively promotes a few moments of quiet reflection about shared values, children's place in the world, its beauty and mysteries.

17. The school has other simple and successful ways of promoting good behaviour and eliminating unkind conduct. It involved pupils in deciding what rules are necessary to make learning a pleasure and they came up with many suggestions for an anti-bullying policy. The policy works well because pupils understand its purpose. All pupils to whom inspectors spoke informally expressed satisfaction that they rarely quarrelled or fell out with other children. They feel that staff treat them fairly and always explain when they think pupils have done something unacceptable.

18. The school understands the satisfaction pupils can feel from participating in regional or national competitions, local festivals and projects to care for the environment. Teachers are quick to grasp any opportunity they think will appeal to pupils and widen their horizons in exciting ways. In the past year alone teachers have entered and enabled pupils to win a choral speaking and a photography competition and to reach the national finals of 'Mathematical Challenge'. They have entered mixed sports teams for swimming galas,

cross-country running and rounders' tournaments. They have worked with pupils to produce a wall mural for display on the premises of a local company and engaged a visiting artist to create a willow tunnel in the school grounds. Adults themselves set an example of how to obtain personal satisfaction from hard work on behalf of the school. A classroom assistant and a teacher won awards recently and their success has motivated pupils to do their best to earn the same recognition.

19. Pupils are not sheltered from facing up to the less attractive features of life in the modern world. They are taught to explore reasons for natural disasters, conflict, discrimination and crime. Adults aim in this way to foster pupils' sense of morality and appreciation of how to make the world a better place for everyone to live in, irrespective of background, religion or culture. Work on the Second World War, for example, has been considered in the context of suffering in Great Britain and Europe. Adults with experience of life during the war in both England and Germany have corresponded with pupils. Parents have temporarily loaned mementos, such as bravery medals won by members of national forces on both sides. Teachers also recognise how access to the media encourages debate and reflection. They are using, for example, recent newspaper articles, videos and the Internet to develop pupils' understanding of what is happening in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Pupils are therefore discovering that right and wrong are not clear-cut concepts but require considered thought in the context of the cause and effect of current events.

20. The school gives very good specific help to pupils who need to improve their social skills, channel energies and feelings productively, and learn to work independently. The daily morning 'Fun Club' successfully develops the listening and co-operative skills of a specially selected group of pupils with special educational needs. A Monday homework club at the local library is also increasingly popular with some pupils who need a quiet place to concentrate on homework.

21. Overall, the school is very effective in managing pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development through the creative use of lesson time and learning opportunities outside normal lessons. Provision is even better now than at the time of the previous inspection.

Pupils respond very well to the school's expectations. They are eager to learn, feel valued and safe and develop a strong sense of mutual support and personal responsibility.

22. Over eleven hours of the inspection were spent observing pupils at work. Many more involved looking at samples of past work and talking to pupils, staff, parents and governors about the features of the school that give them most pleasure and pride. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning, their willingness to try anything new and to listen carefully, were common characteristics of many lessons, irrespective of age. It was a treat to watch reception children organising a play about 'The Three Little Pigs' and life in a Victorian kitchen. They were animated, inventive, and absorbed in talk but also considerate of older peers working within close proximity. Not once did they have to be reminded to calm down or lower their voices. When they were asked to tidy up, they responded very sensibly and earned the teacher's praise for the care they had taken.

23. Reception and Year 1 pupils thoroughly enjoyed finding out about how a washing day was managed in Victorian times. They were fascinated by the names and purposes of a variety of artefacts the teacher had assembled for them to study. They were curious to know how each worked and were keen to offer suggestions. Every child wanted to draw, paint or write about implements, such as the dolly peg or posser. By the end of the lesson pupils had learnt a lot and were still eager for more.

24. The mixed-age Year 2/3 class was learning about life during the Second World War. Their interest in this topic was apparent from the first visit to the classroom when several pupils eagerly explained how they had obtained the artefacts on display. They knew those that parents and grandparents had loaned and others that had been borrowed from a local museum. They handled them with due care and showed a mature respect for the bravery exhibited by people who had lived through the war. One boy recalled how his great-grandfather had lost a limb and how much the class had learnt from corresponding with two war veterans earlier in the term. Pupils clearly empathised with the feelings of children who had been separated from parents and friends. Their response to the teacher's plan to design and make a photograph frame for an evacuee was excellent. Many of the class brought a frame from home and then the class shared observations of how and from what they were constructed. The task brought home to them the value of family life and gave them the chance to reflect on how lucky they were to be members of a safe and happy school community.

25. As pupils get older, their confidence and ability to shoulder responsibility and exercise initiative develops well. They show an increasing interest in the world beyond school and family. They want to help people less fortunate than themselves and to learn how to deal with dangers and hazards if and when they encounter them. For example, junior pupils organise fund-raising for people suffering from muscular dystrophy and for helping 'Children in Need'. They participate in real-life problem solving activities organised by 'Crucial Crew', an organisation that teaches pupils about such things as first aid and being safe on the roads or in water. Pupils have an excellent record for participating in regional and national competitions, and for their contribution to sporting and musical events in Shropshire. They are happy when they win, but they are also pleased just to take part and meet pupils from other schools.

26. Pupils show a strong sense of mutual regard for each other. Boys and girls are happy to work in mixed gender and age groups. Not one disruptive incident was observed. The more able are consistently supportive of slower learners and pupils with special educational needs. They do not grumble or protest if they are occasionally interrupted. Instead, they follow the example of teachers and respond quietly and calmly and concentrate on getting on with their own work. Several pupils with English as a second language, and pupils who have transferred from other schools, have settled quickly and happily. They have found their new schoolmates consistently welcoming and interested in their previous experiences.

27. Most important of all, pupils know how to have fun and celebrate together. For many people the school's 25th birthday anniversary in September 2001 was an event never to be forgotten. Governors and parents clearly think it made an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development as they showed off their school to the public. Pupils acted responsibly as hosts and hostesses to invited guests and, following the event, older juniors produced some lively accounts of the day for retention in school archives. It was an event that epitomises everything good about the school's ethos and characterises it as a happy place in which to learn.

Governors fulfil their responsibilities very well. They set performance targets that are essential for the school's future development.

28. The governors contribute very well to the effectiveness of the school and have a much better understanding of their roles and responsibilities than at the time of the previous inspection. They are committed in their support of the headteacher and staff. From the start of this inspection they were positive about external evaluation as a potential force for change and development. It soon became clear how much time and energy they had spent dealing

constructively with the key issues of the previous inspection report. They quickly lengthened the teaching day and strengthened the monitoring of school development. They appointed working committees to oversee specific areas, such as curriculum planning, staff deployment and the use of accommodation. They agreed a detailed asset management plan to use capital monies effectively and overcome major accommodation deficiencies. The Finance Committee devised a new format for the School Development Plan that systematically set out educational priorities, itemised planned expenditure and a safe level of contingency fund. Planned improvements to classrooms and administrative areas have steadily been completed and are making a big difference to working space for both pupils and staff.

29. Systems of communication have improved considerably since 1997. Governors meet regularly with the headteacher and members of the teaching and support staff. They provide a friendly but critical ear and are also prepared to initiate ideas of their own, such as bidding for sponsorship money for new computers. The chairman of governors sets a first class example by meeting with the headteacher to discuss the success of school policies on a week-by-week basis. The outcomes of these meetings are shared through emails to fellow governors so that they are all well informed and keep up-to-date with developments. Other governors follow the chairman's lead and are frequent visitors to school. They have specially delegated responsibilities, and so keep abreast of action to develop or maintain the quality of provision, such as that for pupils with special educational needs or for improving standards of literacy and numeracy. They make good use of governing body meetings to receive reports from the headteacher and subject co-ordinators about the term's events, pupils' learning experiences and standards achieved.

30. Governors have first hand knowledge of pupils' progress. In addition, they review and evaluate results of statutory assessment tests in Years 2 and 6 and the outcomes of school tracking systems. They study the statistics to identify trends and patterns in pupils' performance compared with other primary schools. They celebrate successes, such as exceeding performance targets in 2001. They set challenging targets for future years, but they also face up to weaknesses in test results at either key stage. They know that standards achieved by girls are too low at the end of Year 2.

31. Governors' vision for the future is for girls and boys to perform equally well and attain even higher standards. That is part of the reason why they have worked closely with staff to devise a Performance Management Policy that meets the professional development needs of staff and pupils' learning needs. Having undertaken training in school self-evaluation they realise how important it is to question what the school is doing and how it can do things more efficiently and effectively. Governors are channelling funds in the right direction to increase teachers' and classroom assistants' expertise. They chose, for example, to fund training for classroom support assistants in Additional Literacy Strategy (ALS) teaching techniques. This training has proved very beneficial to the adults involved and to pupils with learning difficulties whose phonic skills are improving rapidly as a result of more rigorous support. The governing body has reached the stage where there is shared understanding about what needs to improve and now it is actively exploring options about how further improvement can be achieved.

32. Governors have asked the headteacher and the deputy headteacher to spearhead several initiatives that may provide some of the answers to girls' difficulties. One is to conduct a close study of girls and boys' learning styles. They want to establish whether there are some teaching methods that work better for boys so that they can redress the balance. Others are to improve pupils' comprehension and problem solving. The purchase of more reading books and a greater emphasis on shared reading in class is already reaping positive rewards, as the reading results in Year 6 in 2001 demonstrate. Governors have also invested

in the services of a mathematics adviser who has helped teachers to improve pupils' mental agility and confidence to solve mathematical problems, irrespective of the way in which they are presented.

33. The governing body takes seriously its statement in the prospectus that the education of children should be a partnership between home and school. They want parents to be well-informed about school policies. They produce a detailed and helpful annual report and help organise and support curriculum workshops for parents, such as a recent one about teaching and learning in mathematics. Parent governors have been instrumental in encouraging further dialogue with parents about the things they are happy with and the things they think are not working well. Governors are determined to build on the partnership's many strengths and make sure any misunderstandings are resolved. Overall, the governing body serves its local community well.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The gap could be closed between standards achieved in reading and mathematics by girls in Year 2 compared with the attainment of girls of the same age nationally.

34. Between 1998 and 2001, seven-year-old girls' overall performance has lagged behind boys within the same class groups, especially in mathematics. In 2001, Year 2 boys' and girls' test scores in reading surprised teachers, as they were below the levels predicted on the basis of their own knowledge of prior attainment and progress.

35. The differences between the statutory test results achieved by girls compared with boys do not reflect well upon the school's educational provision at the infant stage. Consequently, staff and governors are determined to explain and address the reasons for girls' difficulties with tests at the end of Year 2.

36. So far, the school has produced several working hypotheses as sound starting points for exploration and progress with investigations has been steady. There are courses of action that have not been adopted, however, that could help teachers strengthen their plans to determine the possible causes of girls' slow progress. The school collects information about children's attainment when they start school and records the percentage of pupils who are admitted in the autumn, spring, and summer terms. It has yet to analyse this information in sufficient depth to establish whether, from the start of Year 1, a pattern emerges of gender differences in literacy and numeracy based on time spent at school. More precise information about issues in girls' performance at the end of the reception year would help the school take remedial action at an early stage.

37. There is potential for parents to be more actively involved in nurturing girls' confidence and skills. The school has a home/school agreement and one of the key objectives is to encourage pupils to read regularly to a member of their family and undertake mathematical challenges. Advice is provided to the parents and carers of pupils on the register of special educational needs about how to respond to children's needs. Those who liaise with the school regularly find this useful. However, the school is aware that some parents are more willing or confident than others to help at home on a regular basis. Teachers are disappointed by the reluctance of some to meet and discuss difficulties with them, as they believe that the school is open and receptive. Not all parents agree. Some expressed a wish for more information about targets for children's future development, the ways in which they could help at home and the work that pupils are going to do over the term ahead.

38. Having realised that there is a possible communication issue to resolve, governors are already planning to address it in the interest of girls and boys. They want to establish

what kind of further guidance parents would like. They may find that parents who lack confidence in their own skills as readers, for example, may prefer to share activities that involve talk rather than reading. They may enjoy interpreting pictures and posters rather than text, or help their child to make lists of words with similar meanings. Teachers who have tried this find that it has proved worthwhile.

39. The school is vigilant in monitoring pupils' attendance and has evidence to show that a small number of girls have poor attendance records. These girls suffer from discontinuity of teaching. Governors know this but are missing opportunities to discourage it. They are not using the prospectus or annual report to celebrate the very good attendance of the vast majority of pupils or to set targets for improvement for persistent offenders. Governors could consider whether the release of more details about strengths and weaknesses in boys and girls' performance could prove an incentive to some parents to co-operate more with the school's improvement objectives.

40. The deputy headteacher manages several of the school's current initiatives to enhance girls' self-confidence and progress and also co-ordinates provision for pupils with special educational needs. Two other members of the senior management team are responsible for the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies and the management of the reception, infant and junior stages. These senior teachers work closely with the headteacher to monitor samples of work and occasionally visit classrooms to observe what is happening and to provide feedback on the quality of teaching. All are committed and highly competent professionals who are serving the school well. Nonetheless, now that funding for this kind of release from class responsibility has expired, there is not such a systematic programme as there was formerly for monitoring teaching and learning. There is a need, therefore, to forecast more precisely when and how observation of aspects of learning can take place. The school could, for example, undertake brief observation of the beginning and ends of lessons to find out the frequency of girls' responses compared with boys. Such a coherent plan of action should enable staff and governors, in the short term, to make the best use of scarce time to evaluate any pupil's or group of pupils' progress, prior to possibly planning for more class release time in the longer term.

41. The School Development Plan provides everyone involved in the management of the school with a framework for sharing aims for improvement over the next two years. Its disadvantage, however, is that it does not provide a precise overview of standards achieved currently by both girls and boys in each key stage. It does not summarise the specific aspects of achievement that will be the focus of each term's monitoring. Every subject includes the headings 'what needs to be done', 'core monitoring', and 'success criteria'. However, the vast majority of these statements are too broad and open-ended to provide a clear picture of what needs to be tackled first, in what way and what the anticipated impact on standards is likely to be. Currently, for example, three of the action points for science describe an intention to promote thinking skills, develop staff expertise and update resources. The monitoring criteria linked with these are for the headteacher and co-ordinator to monitor developments and develop resourcing. The success criteria are that monitoring has been completed and evaluated successfully, that resourcing has improved and thinking skills developed. A discussion about the development plan for science quickly exemplified the scope for more precise information about action points and educational outcomes. A science advisor visited the school and gave some demonstration lessons about how to make effective use of measuring instruments, such as stopwatches and spring balances. After this, the school invested funds into buying more of these, with the result that pupils have received more practical experience in their use and have improved accuracy and self-confidence when undertaking scientific experiments. The gains in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills can be easily measured through formal or informal assessment and

the value for money provided by the purchase of the additional resources and professional development time is also easy to evaluate.

42. Finally, the development plan lacks a section to set out the school's intentions for closer liaison between the school and parents, so that girls and boys benefit as much as possible from the educational partnership. This is one of the school's prime aims. Governors have scope to improve methods of consultation and feedback so that all parents feel they can play a useful part in shaping the school's future direction.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

43. The school should continue its efforts raise standards, particularly at the end of the infant stage, by: -

- A. Defining the reasons for seven-year-old girls' poor performance in reading and mathematics;
- B. Being more precise in describing the course of action necessary to address the needs of younger girls;
- C. Making further use of the home/school partnership to aid pupils' learning;
- D. Determining how, over the next three years, more management time can be provided to enable senior teachers to address key improvement objectives.

(Paragraphs 34 - 42)

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	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	5	11	1	0	0	0
Percentage	0	29	65	6	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. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents approximately six percentage points

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	173
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	33

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.30

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.00

National comparative data	5.60
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National comparative data	0.50
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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	15	13	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	14	14
	Girls	10	12	11
	Total	21	26	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75 (76)	93 (94)	89 (82)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	14
	Girls	12	12	11
	Total	26	26	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (91)	93 (88)	89 (94)
	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	14	12	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	11	14
	Girls	11	10	14
	Total	21	21	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (93)	81 (85)	100 (93)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	11	11
	Girls	9	9	11
	Total	20	20	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 (81)	77 (81)	85 (85)
	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	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	165
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)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.57
Average class size	28.60

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	77.50

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000
	£
Total income	352660
Total expenditure	341983
Expenditure per pupil	1944
Balance brought forward from previous year	14962
Balance carried forward to next year	25639

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
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	170
Number of questionnaires returned	57

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	37	2	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	46	39	12	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	49	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	51	5	5	0
The teaching is good.	53	40	0	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	37	18	5	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	28	7	4	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	40	9	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	30	49	12	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	49	33	9	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	42	0	2	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	33	14	16	11

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents expressed dissatisfaction with the school's decision to revert to having mixed-age classes throughout the school.