

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PULFORD CE VA LOWER SCHOOL**

Leighton Buzzard

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109619

Headteacher: Mr J Meager

Reporting inspector: Mr C Parker  
11897

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2002

Inspection number: 196090

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Pulford Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU7 1AB
Telephone number:	01525 372188
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend Canon Anthony Hulbert
Date of previous inspection:	1 <sup>st</sup> July 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11897	C Parker	Registered inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs Equal opportunities	How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14083	A B Anderson	Lay inspector		How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well does the school care for its pupils?
19387	M Powell	Team inspector	English Art and technology Geography History Music Foundation Stage curriculum	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The number of pupils at the school has risen since the last inspection. Altogether there are now 63 boys and 76 girls aged from four to nine years in five classes. They are taught by four full-time and four part-time teachers. All of the pupils are of white UK heritage and consequently speak English as their first language. Currently, two traveller children are on roll. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low and well below average. Twenty-nine pupils are identified as having special educational needs, but there are no statements. The children's attainment on entry is broadly average.

There has been considerable disruption to the school caused by the illness and absence of teachers in the last few years. Only one member of the teaching staff remains from the last inspection. A new classroom has been built recently to house a library and computer suite.

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

The school currently provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is recovering well from a difficult period of disruption to staffing, but at the moment standards in some key areas, such as writing, are not as high as they should be. However, the school is very successful in fostering the personal development of the pupils. The teaching is now good. The headteacher is leading the improvement strategy with strong support from the teachers and governors. At the present time, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Standards in mathematics are above average. Standards in music are very high.
- The teaching in the Foundation Stage is excellent and the children are achieving very well.
- The teaching is good overall and standards are rising as a result. In most classes, the pupils are now making good progress.
- The school provides very good opportunities for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- The pupils behave very well, have very good attitudes to learning and develop very positive relationships with each other and their teachers.
- The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits, visitors and links with the community.

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

- Standards in writing, science and information and communication technology are not high enough.
- The management of the curriculum is not strong enough.
- Assessment and recording strategies are not coherent across the curriculum.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made satisfactory progress since the school was last inspected in July 1997. Many improvements have been made in the last year following a very unsettled period in which staff absence hindered development plans. In response to the last report the school has raised standards in design

and technology and information technology although more work is needed in the latter. The curriculum planning has improved and the process of school improvement is much stronger and clearly linked to the financial planning. The systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are working well in English and mathematics, but now need to be extended to other subjects.

The very strong emphasis on personal development has been maintained, and consequently the pupils continue to behave very well. The teaching is stronger than at the time of the last inspection. Under the enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher, the teachers have a considerable commitment to improvement that is strongly supported by the governing body.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
reading	A	A	C	D
writing	A	C	E	E*
mathematics	C	A	D	E

<i>Key</i>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

The pupils achieve very well in the reception class. Most of them will reach the early learning goals and a good proportion will exceed them. By the end of Year 2, standards in English are broadly average, but they should be higher, particularly in writing. In mathematics, standards are above average, but the pupils are not yet achieving the levels they should in science. By the end of Year 4, the pupils are achieving well and consequently standards in reading, speaking and listening, mathematics and science are above average, although higher standards of writing could and should be attained. Throughout the school standards in writing and information technology are not high enough. Conversely, standards in music are very high.

The current situation marks a considerable improvement on the results of the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2001. On that occasion, the results were average in reading, below average in mathematics and well below average in writing. These results represented a significant fall on the preceding three years and were very low when compared to similar schools. The school has set itself challenging targets and is working effectively to secure higher standards.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	They are interested and fully involved in their lessons, and consistently demonstrate very positive attitudes to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The standards of behaviour are consistently very good.
Personal development and relationships	The relationships in the school are excellent. The pupils relate extremely well to their teachers, to other adults and to one another.
Attendance	The attendance rate at the school is well above the national average. There is no unauthorised absence.

The pupils' attitudes, their very good behaviour and their excellent relationships are strong features of the school and have a very positive effect on their academic progress and personal development.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Excellent	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.*

The teaching is good overall and excellent in the reception class. In over half of the lessons seen during the inspection, the teaching was either very good or excellent. In most of the remainder it was good. The few satisfactory lessons seen were taught by temporary teachers. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.

The teaching of the youngest pupils in the reception class is excellent. The teacher plans very thoroughly to promote their learning through a very good variety of lively and interesting activities. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the teaching is generally good, but there is some variation. The teaching of English and mathematics is now strong in most classes, but in Year 2 the teaching of writing does not result in the same amount of progress made by pupils in other years. Some of the teachers have particularly strong expertise in music. The teachers are meeting the needs of all of the pupils satisfactorily. Some make good use of homework, but there are too many variations in the arrangements and consequently they are not as effective as they should be. Similarly, the quality of the marking varies considerably.

Most of the pupils are learning effectively because of the good quality of teaching. This is bringing about improvements in standards.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a curriculum that is broad and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, in science, for example, the skills and knowledge that the pupils need are not taught in a systematic way.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The arrangements for supporting the pupils with special educational needs are generally satisfactory, and in some classes they are good. The travelling children also benefit from the support of specialist agencies.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very strongly promoted. The provision for their cultural development is satisfactory. The curriculum is good in relation to western European culture, but it does not do enough to foster a good understanding of life in multi-cultural Britain.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very effective care for its pupils.

Relationships between the school and the parents are good. The school enjoys the active support of the vast majority of the parents. There are very good procedures for promoting and monitoring discipline and good behaviour.

The teachers now keep good records of the pupils' progress in English and mathematics, but in other areas of the curriculum there are few whole-school strategies for recording the pupils' achievements.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher leads the school with enthusiasm and vitality. He has generated a high level of commitment to change and improvement, but at the present time the management of the curriculum is still not strong enough.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body carries out its duties fully and is supporting the school very effectively in its efforts to improve.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is now a very thorough analysis of the school's performance that adds to the governors' clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	The resources available to the school are carefully allocated.

The prolonged absences of teachers and the settlement of contracts have made the management of the budget difficult, but the school started the current financial year with a small credit balance. The

governors and the headteacher budget systematically for expenditure, and after appropriate training are applying the principles of best value to their decisions.

The teaching accommodation is satisfactory. The school has adequate resources except for information technology facilities. This inadequacy is currently being addressed. Together with the governing body the headteacher is now building a strong teaching team after a long period of disruption and instability.

### **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>• The good progress made by the pupils.</li> <li>• The good teaching.</li> <li>• The positive and caring ethos.</li> <li>• The good behaviour and attitudes of the pupils.</li> <li>• The strong emphasis on music.</li> <li>• The generally good relationships between teachers and parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The annual progress reports.</li> <li>• The homework arrangements.</li> <li>• The after-school activities.</li> </ul>

The vast majority of the parents consistently expressed an extremely high level of satisfaction with most aspects of the school. The inspectors agree that the school provides a very positive and a caring approach. As a result, the pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good. Some parents expressed concerns about the annual reports, homework and the range of activities outside lessons. The annual reports have improved recently although they continue to rely on computer generated comments, but the school is anxious to improve them further in future years. The inspection team agrees that there is a lack of clarity in the homework arrangements. There are currently no extra-curricular sporting activities available after school which is unusual for a school of this type.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

#### The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 The pupils achieve very well in the reception class because the teaching is excellent. Most of them reach the early learning goals and a good proportion exceeds them. The children are very well prepared to begin the National Curriculum.
- 2 The pupils are now achieving well in Year 1 and building on the very good start they make in the reception class. In Year 2, where the pupils are currently taught by three teachers, two of whom are temporary, the pupils are achieving satisfactorily in some areas of their work, but not in others. For instance, standards are above average in mathematics and broadly average in English, but they should be higher, particularly in writing. Moreover, the pupils are not yet achieving the standards they should in science because they do not have the benefit of a well-planned curriculum. The school should now ensure that scientific knowledge and skills are taught in a more systematic way in order to raise attainment. **This is a key issue for action.**
- 3 In Years 3 and 4, the pupils are achieving well and consequently standards in reading, speaking and listening, mathematics and science are above average, although higher standards of writing could and should be attained. The pupils who are on the special educational needs register and the small number of travelling children are achieving satisfactorily.
- 4 Throughout the school, standards in writing are not as high as they should be and too many pupils neither present their work neatly, nor have high standards of handwriting. Raising standards of writing is currently the focus for school improvement. The school should continue to improve this important area of the pupils' learning. **This is a key issue for action.**
- 5 Throughout the school standards in information technology are not high enough. The school is currently improving its facilities and should seek to make full use of its resources right across the curriculum in order to raise standards. **This is a key issue for action.**
- 6 Standards in music are very high because the teachers use their expertise to provide the pupils with interesting and motivating activities through which they achieve very well.
- 7 The current situation marks a considerable improvement from the results of national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2001. The results were then average in reading, below average in mathematics and well below average in writing. These results represented a significant fall on the preceding three years and were very low when compared to similar schools. There were several probable contributory factors to this decline in standards. One was the impact of the serious staffing situation being faced by the school at that time. Another was the higher than usual proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register. Furthermore, the tests were administered and marked by a temporary teacher with no experience of Year 2 tests and they were not audited. The inspection evidence shows that this group of pupils, now in Year 3, is now attaining standards that are generally above average because they are being well taught.
- 8 The poor results in 2001 have spurred the school, which now has a more stable teaching staff, to make far greater use of performance data and set itself challenging targets. It is on course to reach these in mathematics this year, but more work is needed in writing, science and information technology. The teachers have not yet had sufficient time to fully rectify the

deficiencies brought about by major disruption to staffing over the last few years, but there are clear signs of a strong recovery.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

- 9 The parents are unanimous in their agreement that their children like school, and this is borne out by the children themselves. They arrive promptly, enter school with a sense of purpose, and quickly settle down in registrations. They are interested and fully involved in their lessons, and consistently demonstrate very positive attitudes to their work. This starts in the reception class and continues throughout the school. All children are confident, motivated and eager to learn, and they concentrate on the tasks they are set. They are attentive to their teachers, willingly ask and answer questions, and freely offer their own ideas and opinions. Their attitudes to learning have a positive impact on their progress and the standards that they achieve.
- 10 The teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and the pupils themselves have very high expectations of the standards of behaviour that are acceptable in the school. The pupils behave very well and act in a mature and responsible manner at all times. Their behaviour in the classrooms is very good and there is no disruption to their learning. They move around the school in a quiet and orderly manner and their conduct at breaks and at lunchtimes is very good. There were no signs of bullying and no isolation of individual pupils. Consequently, the children work and play in an environment that is completely free from oppressive behaviour. There have been no exclusions in recent years. Again the parents are unanimous in their agreement that behaviour in the school is good.
- 11 The relationships in the school are excellent. The pupils get on extremely well with their teachers, with other adults and also with one another. They are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. Children of different ages and ability work very well together in the classrooms. They collaborate well, share resources, take turns and listen to each other. All pupils consistently show respect for their teachers, each other and the environment. During assemblies, they are respectful of the occasion, willingly join in hymn singing and bow their heads reverently during prayers.
- 12 The pupils' personal development is very good. The parents are in total agreement that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. They are learning a very good range of social skills that is helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals. In the classrooms, the majority of the pupils take responsibility for their own work very well, and in lessons they can frequently be observed working independently and taking the initiative for their own learning. When they have opportunities to take on formal responsibilities around the school, for example, the older children supporting younger ones in the playground, they respond in a mature and sensible manner. The school raises funds for local, national and international charities and by so doing the pupils are becoming aware of others less fortunate than themselves. They are taken on a very good range of visits and meet a variety of stimulating visitors.
- 13 The attendance rate at the school is well above the national average. There is no unauthorised absence.
- 14 The pupils' attitudes, their very good behaviour and their excellent relationships are strong features of the school and have a very beneficial influence on their academic progress and personal development.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 15 As reported at the last inspection, the teaching is good. However, there has been considerable disruption to staffing during the intervening period and only one teacher remains from that time. All classes now have permanent teachers except Year 2, which is taught by two temporary teachers in the mornings and the headteacher each afternoon. From the start of next term, the school will have a settled and permanent staff for the first time in many years.
- 16 In over half of the lessons seen during the inspection, the teaching was either very good or excellent. In most of the remainder it was good. The few satisfactory lessons seen were taught by temporary teachers. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.
- 17 The teaching of the youngest pupils in the reception class is excellent. The teacher has a very good knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and plans very thoroughly to promote the children's learning through a very good variety of lively and interesting activities. This was very evident when the pupils acted out 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch'. The classroom is well organised and the teaching assistant works very well alongside the teacher to support and guide the children. Together they give the children a very good start, particularly in the way they help them to develop good basic skills. As a result, the pupils are doing well and they increasingly think and learn for themselves very effectively.
- 18 Overall, the quality of the teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is good, but there is some variation. The teaching of English and mathematics is now strong in most classes, but in Year 2 the teaching of writing does not show the progress made in other years. The lessons are generally well planned and in most instances the teachers' expectations are high. This is particularly the case in Years 3 and 4. The pupils are very well managed and relationships between the teachers and their pupils are very positive. Consequently, the pupils are making good progress in most lessons. Throughout the school, the teachers generally display good subject knowledge. This is evident, for example, in the teaching of mathematics in Year 1 where the teacher uses a very good variety of tasks to develop the pupils' ability to calculate mentally. Some of the teachers have particularly strong expertise in music. In an excellent lesson also in Year 1, the pupils learned a great deal about Caribbean music in a lesson for which the resources were thoroughly prepared and the activities were interesting and imaginative.
- 19 The teachers are meeting the needs of all of the pupils satisfactorily. The pupils on the special needs register are generally well supported. The few travelling children are fully included in all the activities and supported effectively by both the school and visiting agencies. In many lessons, there is a good level of challenge with planned extension activities to stretch the more able pupils.
- 20 Some of the teachers make good use of homework. In the reception class, for example, the arrangements are very good. However, there are too many variations in the arrangements, largely because the school does not have a clear policy and in most cases decisions are left to individual teachers. The headteacher should take steps to agree a whole-school approach to homework and ensure it is consistently implemented. **This is an additional issue for action.**
- 21 The quality of the teachers' marking varies considerably. Currently, the school is experimenting with 'conferencing' where the teachers discuss the work with the pupils and set targets for improvement, but in most classes the more traditional forms of marking are not being used effectively. On the other hand, the teachers do give the children sufficient verbal feedback to

help them to improve their work, and in Year 3 the teacher makes very useful written comments.

- 22 Most of the pupils are learning effectively because of the good teaching they receive. This is bringing about improvements that must be sustained if the pupils are to achieve the standards of which they are capable, particularly in writing, science and information and communication technology.

### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

- 23 The school provides a curriculum that is broad and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, in some areas the skills and knowledge that the pupils need are not taught in a systematic way. For example, the science curriculum does not give the pupils enough opportunities to observe and record their findings because insufficient time is allocated in Key Stage 1. Overall, the opportunities that the pupils have to acquire skills in the use of information and communication technology are now satisfactory, but they are not yet fully developed across all subjects. Moreover, the school does not offer the range of extra-curricular activities that similar schools often provide. However, the provision for fostering the pupils' personal and social development and the effects of their involvement in the community are very good. There is a coherent programme for personal, health and social education across the school. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is of very high quality and ensures that many children exceed the early learning goals. Overall, the arrangements for supporting the pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory, and in some classes they are good. The travelling children also benefit from the support of specialist agencies.
- 24 The school has successfully introduced the national numeracy strategy and is improving its provision for developing all aspects of the pupils' literacy, especially writing. As a result, the pupils in years 1, 3 and 4 are making more rapid progress in these subjects, but at present their progress is insufficient in Year 2. The school has secure plans to enhance the curriculum for information and communication technology as soon as the new hardware and software are in place.
- 25 Many of the foundation subjects are enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors. For instance, the older pupils are soon to visit Swaffham, and there have been many local visits linked to work in history and geography. The pupils have benefited from working with a variety of artists, for example, to make stained glass windows. An annual visit by a youth opera group provides a unique cultural experience and greatly enhances the pupils' enjoyment of singing and their appreciation of different types of music. The local church is used for many different purposes that enhance the pupils' awareness of spiritual matters, and extend their knowledge of local history and various aesthetic aspects of the past through observing, painting and drawing the building. There are very good extra-curricular opportunities for the pupils to sing together and also with groups outside the school. Maypole dancing provides a fresh focus for summer activities. However, there are no extra-curricular sporting opportunities provided for the pupils.
- 26 The teachers have rightly recognised that the time given to developing the pupils' extended writing was inadequate. This is now being rigorously addressed. Furthermore, in Key Stage 1, the gaps between the times when history and geography are taught are too long and therefore the children do not easily retain what they have learned. Conversely, the arts are highly valued in the school. Therefore, opportunities for art and music are appropriately safeguarded and enriched by a wide range of additional activities.

- 27 The school is well prepared to receive the children when they start school. It makes very good use of the transfer information to which parents and carers contribute. Similarly, the information provided at the end of Year 4 ensures that the pupils make a smooth transition to the next stage of education.
- 28 The pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very strongly promoted, in a similar manner to that seen at the last inspection. The provision for the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The curriculum is good in relation to western European culture, but it does not do enough to foster a good understanding of life in multi-cultural Britain.
- 29 The school has a very strong set of values that are consistently promoted and there is an awareness of the need to foster the pupils' understanding of the deeper issues of life. The school assemblies provide a rich resource for the development of this aspect of learning. In addition, the pupils acquire an appreciation of the aesthetic side of nature that is reflected in much of their art and environmental work. The adults in school have high expectations of the pupils' moral and social development. There is an effective code of conduct. Agreed approaches by the staff ensure that the pupils' behaviour is very good, and they are trustworthy and responsible. The school is very orderly and many older pupils take pride in the duties they are asked to perform, for example, to ensure that the younger children are looked after at lunchtimes. They eagerly participate in a range of events that bring them into contact with local people. This includes activities with the local churches, the annual town carnival and many charity events.
- 30 The pupils are well versed in Christian culture and understand, for example, the liturgical cycle of the church year. They take pride in their local culture because it is strongly promoted through opportunities to attend cultural events and to interact with local artists. Much of the work in art is based on examples of western European painting, but provision for encouraging an appreciation of a wider range of art is inadequate. This is not the case in music because the pupils can listen to music from Greece, South America and the Caribbean. Nevertheless, there are few opportunities for them to appreciate the very rich and diverse cultural traditions that contribute to the overall culture of this country. The school should seek ways to extend this element of its provision. **This is an additional issue for action.**

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

- 31 The school provides very effective care for its pupils. The headteacher places a very high priority on this aspect of the provision and gives very good leadership. All members of staff are very caring, dedicated and totally committed to the welfare of the children in their charge. They are very approachable and totally supportive. The procedures for child protection are securely in place and fully understood by all staff. The governing body and the headteacher take their health and safety responsibilities seriously and health and safety inspections are systematically carried out and formally recorded but more extensive use of risk assessment would strengthen the procedures. The members of the non-teaching staff give very good support for both teachers and pupils. Conscientious teachers, who are alert and vigilant, supervise pupils very well at breaks. The lunchtime supervision is undertaken conscientiously, and the standard of care is very high.
- 32 The school has very good procedures for promoting and monitoring discipline and good behaviour. For example, the behaviour policy is supplemented by playground rules that have been discussed and agreed with the pupils. All members of the staff have very high

expectations of what constitutes acceptable behaviour, and sanctions, on the few occasions they are necessary, are administered conscientiously and consistently throughout the school. This also has a positive effect on the high standards of behaviour maintained throughout the school. The procedures for recording and monitoring attendance are very good. The registers are completed correctly and accurately, and non-attendance is recorded conscientiously and rigorously followed up.

- 33 The class teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils extremely well and have a very good understanding of their individual personal needs. In addition to the pupils' pastoral files that are held centrally, the class teachers meticulously maintain comprehensive social and behaviour records.
- 34 The teachers now also keep good records of the pupils' progress in English and mathematics, but in other areas of the curriculum there are few whole-school systems for recording the pupils' achievements. The teachers keep individual assessments of how successful the pupils have been in, for example, completing a science investigation or carrying out an information technology task, but this approach lacks consistency and coherence. The new assessment co-ordinator is currently working with her colleagues to agree a whole-school approach to assessing and recording the pupils' progress in all subjects. They should complete this work and implement the procedures as soon as possible. **This is a key issue for action.**

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

- 35 Relationships between the school and the parents are good. The school enjoys the active support of the vast majority of the parents. A good number of them regularly help in the classrooms, accompany the children on school trips and give of their time to help in other ways around the school. Most parents are fully involved in their children's work in school and at home. They support homework and home reading, and consistently enter appropriate comments in the home-school reading and communication books. There is a very active Parent Teacher Association that organises social and fund raising events for the school. A considerable amount of money has been raised for the school in this way.
- 36 Communication between the school and home is good. The school publishes a comprehensive, informative prospectus and sends out regular, informative newsletters and frequent letters about specific events and activities. The governors hold an annual meeting with parents and publish an annual report. However, both the prospectus and the governors' annual report omit some (minor) items of the statutory required information. Some parents said that they are not kept well informed about how their children are getting on, but the inspection evidence does not fully support these parents' views. Parents are now given an informative annual progress report that clearly indicates what the pupils can do, the progress they are making and sets targets for improvement. They have improved recently although they continue to rely on computer generated comments. The school is anxious to improve them further in future years. Parents are offered the opportunity to attend appropriate consultation meetings to discuss their children's work and progress with their teachers.
- 37 The teachers and the school secretary are very approachable and are available for parents to talk to informally. However, the entrance to the school is not overtly welcoming, and tends to make a physical and mental barrier that some parents find difficult to cross. This inhibits communication between some parents and the school staff.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

- 38 The headteacher has successfully created a very positive climate for learning and an ethos that supports and guides the pupils' personal development extremely effectively. As a result, the pupils' relationships, behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good indeed.
- 39 Together with the governing body, the headteacher is now building a strong teaching team that, after a long period of disruption and instability, is bringing about significant improvements and raising standards. Throughout this turbulent time, the school has maintained an adequate staffing level but from the start of next term it will have a permanent staff for the first time in many years. The headteacher and the governing body have experienced numerous difficulties in dealing with the bureaucracy related to staff illness, chronic absence and termination of contracts. This has had a significant adverse effect on the work of the school that was manifested clearly in the national test results in 2001.
- 40 The headteacher leads the school with enthusiasm and vitality. He has generated a high level of commitment to change and improvement. Major steps forward have been taken in the management of English and mathematics this year, but in other subjects not enough is done to make sure that the pupils are reaching the standards they should. The co-ordinators are not effective in developing and implementing whole-school approaches because they are given neither the responsibility nor the opportunity to contribute to the overall management of the school in a systematic and structured manner. At the present time, the management of the whole curriculum is not strong enough because the co-ordinators have not been given the responsibility for checking that standards are consistently high right across the curriculum. The headteacher should take steps to strengthen the management of the curriculum. **This is a key issue for action.**
- 41 The school improvement plan is very impressive and draws together very effectively the areas of the school's work where improvements are needed. It sets out very clearly in many areas how improvements will be achieved. The action plan to raise standards in science seeks to develop the number of interesting and enriching experiences for the pupils, but it does not ensure that the knowledge and skills set out in the National Curriculum are taught systematically and that the pupils' progress is thoroughly assessed and recorded. In essence, the essential elements of curriculum management that should underpin such activities are inadequately represented. Nevertheless, the school improvement plan is a very important vehicle for bringing about improvements and in some respects is proving very effective, most notably in mathematics where the targets set for the present year have been achieved.
- 42 The governing body is supporting the school very effectively in its efforts to improve. The governors now have strong links with the subject co-ordinators and visit lessons to find out for themselves how well the school is doing. They receive a very thorough analysis of the school's performance in English and mathematics. This is possible because the assessment co-ordinator is making good use of computer software to keep track of the pupils' attainment and to identify the areas where improvements are needed. The quality of the teaching in English and mathematics is also now being monitored in order to foster improvement in these subjects. Performance management is being used effectively to raise standards and improve the management of the school.
- 43 The resources available to the school are being carefully allocated. The prolonged absences of teachers and the settlement of contracts has made the management of the budget difficult, but at the start of the current financial year the school carried forward a small credit balance. The governors and the headteacher budget systematically for expenditure, and after some training

are now applying the principles of best value to their decisions. Specific grants are used effectively to the benefit of the pupils and the support of external agencies is carefully targeted, for example, in the case of the travelling children.

- 44 The school has adequate resources except for information and communication technology. This inadequacy is currently being addressed. A new room fitted with benches for computers and shelving for library books has recently been added to the school. Volunteer parents are currently cataloguing the library books and the school is about to purchase a number of computers that will add to those already in each classroom.
- 45 The teaching accommodation is satisfactory. The classrooms are of adequate size, bright and airy and have storage for resources. The reception class is slightly small, but is adequate for the number of children who currently attend. The hall is large enough for whole-school gatherings and the teaching of physical education. However, noise from the kitchen can be heard during activities held in the hall and is particularly intrusive during collective worship. Access for disabled pupils into and throughout the school is poor. The school is kept spotlessly clean, is well maintained and the learning environment is enhanced by attractive display of the children's work.

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

- 46 The governors, headteacher and teachers should continue to enhance the school's provision through the implementation of its improvement plan. Particular emphasis should be placed upon:
- (1) Raising standards in writing, science and information and communication technology by:
    - (i) providing the pupils with interesting and varied opportunities to write to a high standard in all subjects of the curriculum;
    - (ii) expecting higher standards of handwriting and presentation;
    - (iii) ensuring that more time is allocated to science in Key Stage 1 and that the pupils are given systematic opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge;
    - (iv) making full and effective use of the school's new information and communication technology facilities right across the curriculum from the moment they are installed.  
Paragraphs 4, 5
  - (2) Sharpening the management of the curriculum by giving subject co-ordinators the responsibility to make sure that:
    - (i) the lessons that the teachers plan are consistent with the schemes of work;
    - (ii) there is a coherent approach throughout the school and
    - (iii) the pupils produce work of the quality and standard expected.  
Paragraphs 2, 40
  - (3) Extending and improving the assessment procedures, including the marking of the pupils' work and the recording of their achievements, to provide the teachers with more accurate information about the standards being attained in all subjects.  
Paragraph 34,

In addition the governors and headteacher should consider:

(i) developing and implementing a homework policy to ensure consistency throughout the school; and providing parents with clear information about the school's arrangements and expectations.

(ii) extending the range of opportunities for the pupils to appreciate the very rich and diverse traditions that contribute to the overall culture of this country.

Paragraphs 20, 30

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	9	7	4	0	0	0
Percentage	23	35	27	15	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 more than one three percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	YR- Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	139
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

<b>Special educational needs</b>	YR- Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	29

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	15	11

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	6	11
	Girls	11	10	11
	Total	22	16	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (93)	62 (92)	85 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	12	13
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	21	23	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (97)	88 (100)	92 (93)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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	139
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)	5.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.8
Average class size	27.8

**Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	115

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

*Financial information*

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	331 295
Total expenditure	341 751
Expenditure per pupil	2 406
Balance brought forward from previous year	-10 456
Balance carried forward to next year	-855

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	139
Number of questionnaires returned	58

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	33	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	44	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	67	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	44	15	0	7
The teaching is good.	63	37	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	44	19	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	93	7	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	52	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	33	56	11	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	41	52	4	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	48	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	26	15	0	0

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

- 47 There are 26 children in the Foundation Stage who all joined the reception class in September 2001. Initially, the children attend on a part time basis, the youngest attending full time from Easter. They are taught by a very experienced teacher and a well qualified nursery nurse.
- 48 The children receive a very well planned, broad and balanced curriculum that includes all the six designated areas of learning. The activities are skilfully designed to meet the learning objectives identified in the national guidelines for this stage. This ensures that the children are stimulated, motivated to learn and excited by each new experience. The adults are adept at ensuring that every new learning opportunity develops from a foundation of well established skills, knowledge and understanding. For instance, when they understand that writing involves making marks on paper, the children learn to write basic letter shapes and gradually progress to linking them to form words.
- 49 The teaching is excellent. When they enter the school the children's attainment is broadly average, and by the end of the reception year the great majority is either achieving or exceeding the targets set for them. At the same time, the children's attitudes to learning are carefully fostered because the tasks are exciting and the adults have high expectations of what they are able to do. The very good relationships in the class help to provide a secure learning environment where the children are encouraged to value each other's achievements and to work harmoniously and co-operatively.

### **Personal and social development**

- 50 Most of the children begin school with above average social skills. They are receptive to the class agreements, for example, how to be good listeners and how to move safely and sensibly from one activity to another. They work very co-operatively in small groups and sustain concentration well when they are engaged in independent activities, such as painting or devising their own individual movements during a dance lesson. Boys and girls willingly partner each other for gymnastic activities and when using paired wheeled vehicles out of doors. Their pride in each other's achievements is visible when, for example, a child correctly matches a letter name to a phoneme or successfully removes two bears from a row of ten and identifies the remaining number as eight. By the end of the reception year, the confidence of many to perform in front of the class, or to comment about stories they hear, has risen markedly.
- 51 The quality of the children's personal and social development arises directly from the consistent approaches of the adults. The teacher and nursery nurse provide excellent role models for teamwork and fully involve themselves in all the children's activities. For example, when the children are acting out scenes in the role-play corner, the adults intervene appropriately, making suggestions to ensure that every participant has a fair turn to speak.
- 52 By the end of the reception year, many children exceed the targets set for this area of learning.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

- 53 The children are making good progress from average attainment when they begin the reception class to above average when they leave it. Their speaking and listening skills develop very well

so that they exceed the targets set for the end of the reception year. This is the result of the teacher's very good understanding of how to develop speech as the foundation for other literacy activities. Opportunities for discussion are frequent and varied so that the children learn to speak confidently and clearly, for example, in response to the adults' questioning or when they offer spontaneous observations. At the end of one lesson where the class was discussing an illustration in a story, several children made interesting observations about the movement of a little boat at the foot of a waterfall. Similarly, one confident speaker explaining how rain is formed, commented on the cloud by saying, 'It's got bigger, it's expanded!' Many children confidently recognise the names and the sounds of various letters. Some, who have been in school longer have a good recognition of familiar words and recognise simple rhymes and alliterative patterns. Writing is well integrated into many activities and is well matched to the stage of learning the children have reached. The children are made to feel proud of their work because they label many classroom displays themselves. Some choose to write captions for drawings as homework. They are given excellent support to develop their letter shapes and a significant minority is already orientating letters well and spacing words evenly.

## **Mathematics**

- 54 The adults are very alert to opportunities to integrate counting activities into the normal routines of the class, such as counting out and sorting equipment. The teaching is excellent because the adults have high expectations of what the children can do and are also very patient with the few who find that operations, such as taking two away from a set of ten objects, very difficult. The children enjoy the oral sessions where together they can count on and back and identify the position of selected numbers on a number line to 50. One child very excitedly pointed out the absence of the '0' to start the number line and courteously, but determinedly, asked to be able to supply it on a 'post it' label. The most confident children have a well established recognition of coins and their value and talk fluently about the attributes of two dimensional shapes and concepts such as 'more' or 'less than'. Some children now refer very confidently to 'add' and 'take away'.
- 55 The teaching is brisk and very well pitched to meet the needs of different children. The children enjoy their mathematical work because they are well supported and adults ensure that their skills and understanding are secure before they move on to the more difficult formal recording of work. Overall, the children exceed the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

- 56 The children are developing a good recognition of how places differ from one another. Very good use has been made of 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch' to introduce them to features of a seaside environment and to compare it with their immediate surroundings. The fact that they had entered fully into the spirit of the seaside environment was demonstrated vividly when three children engaged in a role play activity. They have a very well developed awareness of natural habitats around them and recognise that plants require light and water in order to grow. A few children show a highly developed awareness of aspects of scientific phenomena, such as the concept of freezing and melting. Their knowledge of the past and their understanding of changes over time are evident from their comments about a time line composed of photographs of three generations of a particular family. They also show this in their observations about building materials around the school. They are aware of the fact that their own school building reflects the past, but also know that it has a modern section because they had watched the builders erect it. Boys and girls are adept at using a variety of construction materials. A group of girls constructed a very imaginative townscape using wooden blocks. Others attempted to

create a boat, during which they realised that they would have to modify the construction to meet the constraints of classroom space. They are confident when using the computer; for instance, they operate the mouse skilfully and know how to change images on the screen.

- 57 The activities in this area of the curriculum are varied and exciting because excellent planning matches the activities to the learning objectives specified for the Foundation Stage curriculum. Most children exceed the targets in this area.

### **Physical development**

- 58 The children are sensitive to the use of space in their own classroom and when they work in the hall. For example, during a dance activity they moved energetically, responding well to the mood and rhythm of the music. The adults are very diligent in ensuring the children's safety. They are vigilant about the way the children use space and develop an awareness of others. The children manipulate small equipment such as brushes, pencils, scissors and small construction material very well. This was very evident as a group of them very patiently and painstakingly arranged small stickers along a cat's collar made of card, subsequently devising a way of fastening it.
- 59 The teaching is very good and ensures that a range of skills is developed. A few children have very under-developed motor control skills when they begin school, but all meet the early learning goals by the end of the reception class.

### **Creative development**

- 60 The opportunities for creative development are varied and exciting. The classroom provides a considerable stimulus for the children to develop their creativity. For instance, the role-play corner is inviting and is regularly used by the children and the adults. The teacher has very good musical skills and organises exciting opportunities for singing, playing instruments and listening to music. Her questioning of the children stimulates lively responses, for example, when asked to describe the mood of one piece of music, a child replied 'It's very dark and stormy and people were in the sea. I thought there was a shark!' The children also responded very well to the challenge of playing as an orchestra when reading from a pictorial score. The children draw and paint with considerable skill, and some become quite excited as they exercise their newly acquired skills in mixing colours.
- 61 The adults interact very enthusiastically with the children, but at the same time provide many opportunities for them to have free rein to make choices. This was reflected clearly in an activity involving weaving materials of different textures and colours within a large hoop to produce colourful, abstract wall hangings.
- 62 As a result of very high quality teaching, a considerable proportion of the children exceeds the early learning goals in their creative development.

### **ENGLISH**

- 63 The inspection findings indicate that standards in English are improving following the poor results attained in 2001. The school recognised that a radical review of how writing is taught was essential in order for standards to reflect fully the pupils' abilities. A new co-ordinator is spear-heading a rigorous action plan, the benefits of which are already showing. This includes

provision for boosting early literacy skills and additional literacy support for older pupils who have particular needs. The quality and consistency of support for these pupils are now good.

- 64 The standard of recent work seen during the inspection in years 1, 3 and 4 is now a little above average overall. In Year 2, where the staffing situation has been somewhat unsettled, progress is slower and the pupils are not yet achieving the standards of which they are capable. This is more of an issue with regard to writing than reading and the school envisages more settled staffing arrangements for the coming year that should bring greater continuity.
- 65 A whole-school decision to base more of the work in literacy on a variety of texts has also provided the pupils with appropriate opportunities for speaking and listening. For example, while reading 'Owl Babies' the pupils in Year 1 gave clear opinions regarding the reasons that the oldest owl baby felt the need to reassure his siblings about the owl mother's return from her foray for food. These young pupils are amicable and courteous when they engage in paired discussion. They listen carefully to what their partners are saying and respond appropriately. This was clearly seen during a discussion about what is meant by a 'cautionary' tale. The pupils in Year 3 worked industriously to produce dialogues based on models they had discussed in a class text. There was exciting discussion about the quality of the vocabulary as a pair of pupils sought to replace 'said' with more interesting words, such as 'whispered', 'agreed' and 'admitted'.
- 66 The approach to reading is improving as the school implements an effective literacy strategy. The younger pupils enjoy shared reading as a class as well as the times when they sit in a small group and read with an adult. The standard of reading heard in Year 2 was slightly above average, but the records indicate that overall the reading skills of the class are average. However, these children now benefit from more regular phonic work that improves their recognition of individual words. Many of the pupils in Key Stage 2 are fluent, expressive readers, and have firm opinions about the quite challenging books that they choose to read. The home-school communication book records the fact that most pupils are heard to read by adults at home. This has a very beneficial effect on the progress of these pupils.
- 67 The teaching of writing is now beginning to reflect a greater consistency across the school though it is still not fully the case in Year 2. The pupils in Year 1 write for a variety of purposes including captions, labels and, in recent months, a greater volume of extended narrative and descriptive writing. The more able writers are developing an awareness of how to improve the variety and complexity of their sentences. In a narrative piece, for example, one pupil wrote 'Go to school on your own. The school isn't far away!' illustrating well the tetchy mood of a mother scolding her child. The pupils' stories are also more effectively sequenced as they use phrases such as 'In the afternoon we.....' or 'After that, we...'. In Year 2, there is a less consistent approach to writing. Texts are often used as a stimulus, but they do not yet have sufficient influence on the quality of the writing. The pupils do not use their imagination sufficiently to make their writing interesting for the reader and there an over-emphasis on the use of language exercises. However, they spell most common words correctly, reflecting the fact that they have regular practice in this aspect of the curriculum.
- 68 In Years 3 and 4, the standard of writing is improving markedly. This is because the teachers have agreed a consistent approach and understand how to stimulate the pupils as writers. Planning, drafting and editing skills are taught so that the pupils learn to question and improve the characteristics and quality of their writing. The marking of the work is also very helpful in indicating to pupils the features that they need to improve. The older pupils are developing secure paragraphing skills and generally use punctuation appropriately, for example, to delineate

a list like 'sweeping, dusting, making dinner'. Their narrative writing is often enlivened by the insertion of dialogue, sometimes of a humorous nature. In re-telling an excerpt from 'The Twits', for example, a pupil wrote ruefully 'Ah well, I will have to have boy pie'. In general, the pupils' writing skills are not used sufficiently to record work in other subjects such as science, geography and history.

- 69 Some of the inconsistency of approach over time is reflected in the handwriting and presentation of the work of some pupils. There are now agreements about the style of handwriting to be encouraged and pupils benefit from practice sessions. All teachers should now ensure that the pupils consistently use the clear, rounded joined letter shapes agreed upon and that they employ this style too. Furthermore, in all classes, the work should be neatly set out and dated, and rulers should be used for underlining where appropriate. Such simple agreements would go a long way to improving the overall appearance of work across the classes.

## **MATHEMATICS**

- 70 Standards in mathematics are now above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. This marks a significant improvement on last year's tests results and a return to the standards reported at the time of the last inspection.
- 71 An analysis of results and assessments to 2001 shows that progress has varied widely, and in some years the pupils have not achieved as much as is expected. However, this is no longer the case. This year the focus on raising attainment in mathematics and the rigorous implementation of the national numeracy strategy, have resulted in the pupils achieving well and attaining levels that are above average. This is because they are now well taught throughout the school.
- 72 In Year 1 the teacher uses a very good range of strategies to motivate and interest the pupils. This is very evident in the mental activities, which have a pace and momentum that generates enthusiasm amongst pupils of all abilities. In one lesson, for instance, whilst playing the 'shape game' a pupil on the special educational needs register asked, 'Is it an irregular quadrilateral?' The working relationship between the teacher and her teaching assistant is a key feature of the good support the children receive throughout their mathematics lessons. The whole-class sessions are well used by the teacher to ascertain whether or not the learning objectives, made clear to the pupils at the outset, have been achieved. In Year 2, the teaching is satisfactory. The pace is not as rapid as in Year 1 and the whole-class session at the end of the lesson is not being used effectively to assess the extent of the pupils' learning. Nevertheless, the pupils are set a good range of tasks and scrutiny of their work shows they are progressing well and attaining above average standards.
- 73 In Years 3 and 4, the teaching is consistently good and in some lessons it is very good. Consequently, the pupils are learning effectively and making good progress. In both classes, the teachers have very good subject knowledge and set the pupils interesting tasks that have the right degree of difficulty for their particular stage of learning. This was the case in Year 4 where the higher attaining pupils demonstrated their understanding of the equivalent values of fractions, decimals and percentages. In one whole-class session, the teacher introduced a series of word problems to challenge the pupils and assess the extent to which they could apply what they had learned in the lesson. She also successfully encouraged the pupils to assess the extent of their own learning.
- 74 Throughout the school, the pupils are very well behaved and apply themselves extremely well to the tasks they are set. They concentrate well, work hard and participate fully in the lessons.

When they are asked to co-operate they do so willingly, for example, when solving word problems in Year 1. Similarly, in Year 3, the pupils worked very well in pairs to solve problems involving fractions. A strong feature of the pupils' approach to learning is their willingness to ask and answer questions. They have very positive attitudes, are confident and not afraid to make mistakes.

- 75 Mathematics is now well managed by the subject co-ordinator who has achieved much in a short time. The monitoring of the teaching has brought a stronger whole-school approach to the planning and teaching of mathematics. At the present time, however, the co-ordinator is not checking the quality of the pupils' work to ensure standards are high enough. This is a feature of the co-ordinator's role that needs strengthening.

## SCIENCE

- 76 The standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 2 are average, but below those reported at the last inspection. They should be higher. Although the pupils are gaining a secure knowledge of 'sound and hearing', for example, their skills of investigation, observation and recording of scientific information are not being developed systematically. This was very well illustrated in a well planned and managed lesson in Year 1 where the pupils were required to walk away from a sound source, mark the point at which they could no longer hear the sound and record the distance. Although the teacher made many good teaching points, and the pupils benefited from the activity, it was clear that they were not used to working in this way and that their skills are not at the level they should be.
- 77 In Years 1 and 2, a scrutiny of the pupils' work reveals that not enough is recorded in the form of drawings, tables and simple graphs. Where the work has been recorded it is not of a sufficiently high quality, and not many pieces are completed. More must be demanded of the pupils in order to raise standards to higher levels.
- 78 The content areas of the National Curriculum are being covered in Years 1 and 2 and in some cases the lessons are thoroughly planned. However, in other instances there are no records of either the lessons that have been taught or the standards the pupils have attained. This illustrates very clearly that the systems for checking on what is taught and what the pupils learn in science are currently inadequate. The co-ordinator must ensure that that all lessons are thoroughly planned, that the pupils record an adequate range of work and that their achievements are assessed and recorded.
- 79 In Years 3 and 4, the situation is much better. Standards are above average and have been maintained since the last inspection. The pupils have completed a good range of work that is carefully marked with useful comments to help them to improve. In Year 3, for example, through their work on teeth and forces the pupils are developing a good range of investigative approaches. These are built on effectively in Year 4 where they are able to carry out a fair test and their use of scientific vocabulary is significantly better. In these two years, the teachers have built up the pupils' ability to carry out investigations by providing them with good models and structured approaches.
- 80 In one lesson seen in Year 3, the teacher used her good subject knowledge to teach the pupils that the apparent movement of the sun is caused by the spinning of the earth on its axis. She encouraged the pupils to work in pairs to model the relationship between the sun and the earth to very good effect. The pupils contributed well to the lesson and asked many interesting questions that heightened the discussion and extended their learning.

- 81 The assessment of the pupils' achievements and the recording of their progress is currently inadequate. The school's understandable emphasis on raising standards in English and mathematics has led to some aspects of science not receiving the attention that they should have. In Years 1 and 2, not enough time is allocated to science. The school policy sets an appropriate time allocation, but this is not being adhered to particularly in Year 2. The school should now ensure that sufficient time is given to science to allow the teachers to develop the pupils' skills and knowledge to a higher level by the end of Year 2 and the assessment and recording of the pupils' progress is improved.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

- 82 No lessons were observed during the inspection. The following judgements are therefore based on a considerable quantity of art on display, photographic records and work in the pupils' sketchbooks.
- 83 Overall, standards are above the expectations for children of seven and nine years and are similar to those seen at the last inspection. From the quality of the work seen, it is clear that the pupils are stimulated by the teaching they receive and take pride in producing imaginative, well-finished pieces. A variety of skills are carefully nurtured as the pupils go through the school. For example, the interesting portraits produced by the younger children are further developed when pupils in Year 3 experiment with different sizes of figures and seek to portray different facial expressions. The pupils in Year 2 have made very good use of their school grounds to study the line, shape, texture and colour of different natural objects. They have translated their observations very effectively into a series of monster sculptures constructed from a range of materials, such as fur, binca, foil, stocking material and stones. These were then hung around the grounds and provided an intriguing sculpture trail, enlivening many a dark corner.
- 84 The well-informed and carefully planned teaching ensures that a variety of skills is developed consistently. The pupils in Years 3 and 4 have benefited from opportunities to observe the work of several European artists ranging from the impressionist painters to more contemporary artists such as Ann-Marie Le Quesne. They have continued to develop their painting techniques and also used paper collage in imitation of prints they have seen. A very effective series of 'prints' depicting the Edinburgh skyline provides a striking focus in the school hall. The pupils have also decorated tiles depicting their own interests and aspects of the local area. Some older pupils have used their experience of studying symbols, for example, those associated with the church, to produce designs of good quality.
- 85 The standard of the pupils' work indicates quite clearly that the teaching of art throughout the school is good. The teachers have a keen awareness of the importance of developing the pupils' sense of aesthetics. The pupils are introduced to a stimulating variety of media and learn to evaluate their effectiveness for different purposes. The pupils finish their work well, which suggests that the lessons are well organised. The school should now introduce the pupils to the work of a wider range of artists and thereby broaden their cultural awareness.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 86 Standards in design and technology have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. The pupils are achieving well because their skills and knowledge are being developed through a good range of interesting and challenging activities. In Year 1, there are good photographic records of the pupils' finished

products, supported by annotated drawings and lists of materials. In Year 2, the pupils' design drawings are more detailed and list the resources they will need, for example, to make a seesaw. As they progress, the pupils present their designs and preparation in a much more orderly manner. This is well illustrated in the way they approached the making of puppets. The photographs of their finished products show the work to be of good quality.

- 87 In Year 3, many of the skills the pupils have been taught in Years 1 and 2 come together so that the pupils can develop a design and make a product. They also carry out simple evaluations by answering questions, such as 'What are you pleased with?' and 'What would you like to improve?' This enables them to carry out more analysis in preparation for their design and make tasks. A good example of this was when they tried different breads and sandwich fillings before designing and making their own sandwiches.
- 88 In Year 4, the pupils continue to build their knowledge and skills to good effect. In one lesson, very good teaching drawing upon previous work in science helped the pupils to design and make intruder alarms for the 'Borrower's House'. The teacher encouraged them to find solutions to the problems they encountered, and they responded by working well either collaboratively or independently.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

- 89 Six units of work are planned to cover geography and history during the two years in Key Stage 1 and in Year 4. During Year 3, the pupils study two units each of history and geography. In practice, the teachers, especially in Key Stage 1, have considerable autonomy over how the time is organised over a term and there are noticeable variations in the frequency and quantity of work recorded. However, the school has reviewed the content of the curriculum in both these subjects and reached common agreements based on national guidance. The implementation of these agreements would now benefit from monitoring activities to ensure that there is progression in what is actually taught and the programme provides a coherent structure for the pupils' learning.
- 90 By the end of Year 2, the pupils acquire a sense of the similarities and differences between their locality and, for example, the seaside. They understand that over time it is not only places that change, but also everyday objects. They have studied various maps and plans and used their mapping skills well to record features, using relevant keys and symbols. In one very effective lesson in Key Stage 1, the pupils were very absorbed in learning about Florence Nightingale and the state of Victorian hospitals. This was because the resources were of good quality and the teacher used his narrative skills very well. He questioned the pupils in a way that challenged them to think. The climate for learning in this instance was very exciting, but generally there are missed opportunities in Key Stage 1 to record work in a way that reflects the pupils' interest. Overall, therefore, standards of work by the end of Year 2 are only average.
- 91 By the end of Year 4, standards in geography are in line with national expectations, but in history the pupils' work is above average. Previously, the pupils have used a range of evidence including maps, pictorial information, reference books and a visit to St Albans to provide evidence of the influence of people who have settled in this country. In Year 4, they are now applying skills learned earlier during a study of why the Vikings needed to invade and settle in Britain. Their written work suggests that they have acquired a good range of technical language, such as 'encroach,' 'assault', 'inhabit' and 'invade', to record the concepts that they have understood. The variety of their recorded work, particularly in history, reflects a good range of teaching approaches that have effectively developed skills such as evidence gathering

and observation. During a study of a Mexican village, for example, the pupils applied the skills they have learned while investigating their own area to describe the very different features of this distant location. This provides very convincing evidence of the way that work in Key Stage 2 builds systematically on what has been learned previously.

- 92 The teachers plan their work well and ensure that various resources are available for the pupils to obtain information. Some pupils have used their home technology facilities to support their school work. The curriculum in Key Stage 2 is coherent and the activities are well chosen. A number of factors have resulted in a more disjointed curriculum in Years 1 and 2, but the school is aware of this and well placed to redress it. The pupils show a high level of interest in the work, but this is not always consistently reflected in either the quality or the presentation of their recorded work.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

- 93 The school's ageing computer equipment and the pupils' limited access to it are the main reasons why standards are not as high as they should be. The pupils are now attaining broadly average standards which is an improvement since the last inspection but they are clearly capable of higher attainment. The school has a plan to develop the use of information technology across the curriculum, but the pupils still need a wider range of opportunities to use and extend more frequently the skills they are taught. Currently teachers can only set tasks for very small numbers of pupils to complete whilst the rest of the class work on other activities.
- 94 At present, the pupils make adequate use of word and image processing software to attain average standards by the time they reach the end of Year 4. They also use graph-drawing programs to display the results of science experiments, particularly in Years 3 and 4. In a lesson in Year 3, the pupils worked in pairs on the two computers in the classroom, under the supervision of a teaching assistant, to combine text and images. They received good support and achieved well in the lesson, but in this situation it takes several lessons for all of the pupils in the class to complete the task.
- 95 The teachers have completed their national training for information and communication technology and are eager to make more extensive use of it in lessons. The recent completion of a new room to house a computer suite is a major step forward. It will provide opportunities for a whole class to be taught together, once the computer hardware is installed, and enable the pupils to make far more progress through a wider range of tasks. The school should ensure that the new resources are used to the full in order to raise the standards attained by the pupils in information and communication technology.

## **MUSIC**

- 96 The provision for music has improved considerably since the last inspection and it is now very strong. Standards are well above average. This is because the teachers have very good subject knowledge and they make good use of the national guidance to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum in performing, composing and appreciating music. The subject is very well led and ensures that the curriculum is supplemented by a wide range of opportunities for the pupils to listen to visiting musicians and to perform alongside other groups, such as church choirs.
- 97 By the end of Year 2, the pupils are introduced to music from different cultures. This is presented to them in a lively way that captures their attention and their imagination. For example, the Year 1 class having sung a Caribbean song watched a video clip of a limbo dancer

performing to the accompaniment of a steel band in a Barbadian market. The pupils can select instruments to produce appropriate sound effects and perform effectively together showing a good basic knowledge of chords and a well developed ability to follow a conductor.

- 98 The pupils' enthusiasm continues into Key Stage 2 where they develop very good listening skills and sing tunefully and with expression. The relationships in classrooms are very positive and ensure that the pupils co-operate very well during composing activities. The pupils in Year 4 were very animated as they prepared, in small groups, to perform pieces of music containing a variety of effects to portray different moods. The class members provided a very appreciative audience for their efforts and were able to make a range of appropriate suggestions about the tone and mood of each performance. The pupils handle the instruments carefully. It is obvious that they have regular opportunities for using the wide variety of good quality instruments available. By the end of Year 4, the pupils' attainment is well above the expected level.
- 99 The teachers have very good subject knowledge, which enables them to organise the activities skilfully and to conduct their lessons at a brisk pace. The music in the classrooms is enhanced by the fact that several pupils play various instruments. Equally, some members of staff are skilful performers and provide very good role models for the pupils. The curriculum for music is broad and contributes well to the pupils' cultural development and their social skills.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

- 100 Only one lesson of physical education lesson was observed during the inspection in which standards were above average. There is, therefore, insufficient evidence to make either a judgment about overall standards or improvement since the last inspection.
- 101 The teaching in the lesson in Year 1 was good. The teacher managed the warm-up activities very well, leading the pupils through a good range of bends and stretches that prepared them well for the lesson. The main activities were carried out at a good pace with a high level of involvement of all of the pupils. Using racquets and balls, many of the pupils displayed good skills that were improved further through good direct teaching of individuals and small groups. The resources for this lesson were readily available and used effectively by the pupils who responded and behaved very well.
- 102 The school has a good playing field, a hard surface playground and an adequate multi-purpose hall. There is a well developed scheme of work which draws on a range of widely used resources. The Year 4 pupils have weekly swimming lessons, which add considerably to the range of activities the school provides. However, it does not offer any opportunities for the pupils to pursue sporting interests through extra curricular activities. This is unusual in a school of this type.