

INSPECTION REPORT

PIKEMERE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Alsager

LEA area: CHESHIRE

Unique reference number: 111042

Headteacher: Mrs J Davies

Reporting inspector: Mr D Byrne
28076

Dates of inspection: 12th – 14th March 2002

Inspection number: 196603

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: 4 -11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Pikemere Road
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Stoke-on-Trent

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr S Bristow

Date of previous inspection: 14th July 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Pikemere Community Primary School is set in a quiet, residential part of Cheshire, with 222 pupils aged from 4 to 11 years. The attainment of the children when they start school in the Reception class is above average. A high proportion of children have advantaged socio-economic backgrounds and the percentage of pupils on the school roll eligible for free school meals (2%) is well below the national average. No pupil requires support for English as an additional language. The level of pupil mobility is very low. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (17%) is below the national average, and the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs (1%) is low.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school that achieves high results in the end of key stage National Curriculum tests. The quality of teaching is good overall with some very good and excellent teaching in Key Stage 2. The majority of pupils respond well to challenging and stimulating lessons and display very good attitudes to school and good behaviour overall. The new head teacher provides very good leadership, which gives the school a good capacity for future improvement. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with particular strengths in Key Stage 2. Pupils' learning is significantly enhanced by their very good attitudes to work.
- The performance of pupils in English, mathematics and science is well above average.
- Pupils make good use of information and communication technology.
- The head teacher provides a very clear educational direction for the school
- Good provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The levels of attendance are well above the national average.

What could be improved

- The standards achieved by pupils at both key stages in writing and independent work in mathematics and science.
- The role of the senior management team and subject co-ordinators in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.
- The use of assessment information to inform planning, set targets for pupils' improvement and identify the performance of different groups.
- The quality of the communication with parents
- Resources for children in the Reception class and for all pupils in English and geography.

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 improved at a satisfactory rate since the last inspection in July 1997. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved significantly, however the progress in

improving the procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning has been unsatisfactory. The progress of readers with difficulties in Key Stage 1 has been improved and the work provided in mathematics for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is now much more effectively matched to pupils' abilities. Overall, the quality of communication with parents has declined since the last inspection. The quality of liaison with parents of children with special educational needs is, however, now much better.

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	A*	A	A	A
mathematics	A*	A	A	B
science	A*	A	A	A

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The table above indicates that the standards achieved in English, mathematics and science have been consistently well above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2 in each of the last three years and in 1999 the results were in the top 5% of all schools nationally. In 2001, the National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 6 in English and science were well above the national average and also the average for similar schools whilst in mathematics the standards attained were well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Inspection evidence supports the positive picture painted by the test results. In information and communication technology, pupils' attainment is above national expectations at the end of both key stages. Pupils make particularly good use of e-mail facilities. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well developed, and enhance pupils' learning across the school. The targets for pupils' performance in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 are appropriately challenging.

By the end of Key Stage 1, the end of key stage National Curriculum test results indicate that pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science has been consistently well above the national average between 1998 and 2001. In 2001, attainment was well above the average for similar schools in reading and mathematics and above the national average in writing. Pupils apply their skills of literacy and numeracy satisfactorily across the curriculum. Inspection evidence supports the end of key stage National Curriculum test results.

Pupils make good progress overall between the time that they start Year 1 and complete Year 6. Progress is particularly good in Years 3, 5 and 6 where high quality teaching inspires pupils to work hard and achieve high standards. The progress of pupils with special educational needs matches that of other pupils. Throughout the school, however, the performance of girls is better than that of boys in writing and to a lesser extent in reading. The school recognises this and is considering ways of narrowing the gap in performance.

Children start school with above average skills in most areas of their development except in their personal, social and emotional development where their skills are at an average level. The children make good progress in the Reception class and most pupils achieve and many

exceed the targets of the Early Learning Goals before they start Year 1 in their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative and physical development.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Overall, pupils' attitudes to school are very good. Pupils enjoy learning and demonstrate good levels of perseverance and are keen to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The vast majority of pupils behave well during lessons, outdoor in the playground and during lunch.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The majority of pupils take responsibility and use their initiative when expected to but in science and mathematics pupils could do better when performing independent investigations. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Very good. Well above national average with good levels of punctuality.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is good and is a strength of the school. In Years 3, 5 and 6 the standard of teaching is very high. The teaching is of a consistently good standard in the Reception class. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught across the school and computers are used very effectively to support learning, especially in Key Stage 2. Teachers work hard to create extremely bright and lively displays in classrooms and around the school that inspire and enthuse pupils to learn. Throughout the school, teachers successfully provide an education that includes all pupils in all aspects of school life.

In Key Stage 1 and 2, the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics is very good. High expectations are made of pupils and lessons are well planned and organised so that pupils learn rapidly. Pupils listen well and work hard. Good use is made of learning resources to bring learning alive and in some classes, some excellent links are made with contemporary literature for example, the Harry Potter novels, to inspire and motivate pupils. The purpose of lessons is usually shared with pupils so that they know what is expected of them. In the excellent and very good lessons, pupils are encouraged to offer their own views about how successful the lesson has been in achieving its aims. The skills and interests of individual teachers make a significant contribution to the progress made by pupils in some subjects. This is most noticeable in music and information and communication technology. In both these subjects, the energy, enthusiasm and very good subject knowledge of teachers provides pupils with excitingly presented and stimulating lessons that encourage very high levels of performance from pupils. Throughout the school, teachers set high expectations for pupils to present their work neatly, and pupils take great pride in being neat and orderly.

However, too few opportunities are given to pupils to practise and improve their standard of writing in extended pieces of work. Although teachers correct pupils' work promptly, the use of marking to set targets for pupils to improve their work even further is currently unsatisfactory.

The teaching of children in the Reception class is of a good standard with some very good features. This ensures that the children make a very good start to their education. The basic skills of reading, writing, number and use of computers are well taught. Children are given a good range of well-structured practical activities that strike a good balance between opportunities for children to make their own choices and activities which are more closely directed by adults. A good emphasis is placed upon promoting pupils' personal, social and emotional development so that good levels of personal independence and problem solving skills are developed.

A strength of teaching and learning across the school is the quality of teamwork between teachers and classroom support assistants. This enables staff to effectively meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs so that pupils with Learning Difficulties make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

Throughout the school, pupils work hard and show good levels of perseverance and concentration. When pupils are stretched and challenged, they become totally engaged in their learning and show good levels of independence and ability to use their initiative. However, the level of challenge and the expectations for pupils take responsibility for their own learning vary between classes. Most pupils thrive on being asked to be independent as is demonstrated during work in information and communication technology in Key Stage 2 and in science in Years 3 and 6 but in other classes, for example Years 2 and 4 the expectations for pupils to work on their own and to develop their own methods are not high enough.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good overall. In Key Stages 1 and 2, all subjects are given an appropriate amount of time with a good emphasis given to information and communication technology. The provision of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. All pupils have suitable individual education plans that guide their learning. Progress towards the targets is regularly reviewed.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision overall. Good use is made of information and communication technology to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures through well-established links with schools in other countries.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall with regard to procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare. Procedures could be better for assessing pupils' progress. Not enough use is made of assessment information to set targets for improvement and to evaluate the impact of teaching and learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The head teacher provides very good leadership and is moving the school forward effectively and rapidly. The role of the recently formed senior management team and the impact of the subject co-ordinators upon influencing standards are unsatisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body is keen and committed to support the head teacher and her staff and ensures that all statutory duties are fulfilled.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The head teacher, staff and governing body have accurately identified which aspects of the school need improving and use the school development plan to evaluate the school's progress. The governing body has recently devised suitable ways of checking that all income is well spent.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall. Staff are sensibly deployed and the accommodation is used effectively. The very high budget surplus that has accrued in recent years is earmarked to improve the quality of education.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recent improvements in the management of the school. • That their children achieve high standards and make good progress. • That teachers are very accessible and willing to listen to their' concerns. • The way in which the school follows up parents' concerns with feedback, and the way in which problems are resolved. • The standard of behaviour in the school. • That their children like coming to school. • The attitudes and values the school promotes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about their children's progress. • The range of extra-curricular activities. • The quality of communication about the school's homework policy.

The inspection findings confirm the parents' positive views about the majority of issues but pupils' standards of independent learning could be better. The information given to parents about their children's progress needs to be improved and the information about the school's homework policy is not clearly communicated. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory overall and provision is currently under review. Changes in staff and also in the contribution made by some students to extra-curricular activities has altered the range of clubs available to children.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with particular strengths in Key Stage 2 Pupils' learning is significantly enhanced by their very good attitudes to work.

1. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and is a strength of the school. During the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning was good or better in nine out of ten lessons with over half being very good or excellent. No lesson was unsatisfactory. Throughout the school, teachers work closely with classroom support assistants to ensure that every pupil, regardless of gender or ability is involved in all aspects of school life. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and this contributes to pupils behaving well and displaying very good attitudes to all aspects of school life.
2. In the Reception class, the teacher and classroom support assistants work together very closely as a team to provide the children with a stimulating and exciting curriculum. Teaching and support staff provide appropriate activities which build on the generally above average levels of attainment that most children have when they start school. Good use is made of assessment to direct activities towards improving comparative weaknesses in the children's knowledge and understanding. A good emphasis is placed upon promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development and also on encouraging children to enjoy writing and reading. There is a good balance between focused teacher-directed activities and structured, play activities. Expectations are set for children to organise their tasks and take responsibility for tidying up. Literacy is taught well using a stimulating and exciting approach that links actions and short songs and rhymes to illustrate initial sounds and common words. By creating a bright and lively classroom environment, full of examples of writing, children are encouraged to try out writing for themselves. Good use is made of role play to act out stories for example, the story of Cinderella, as well as writing notes and signs. Mathematical development is promoted well by enabling children to participate in well structured and relevant activities for example, real money is used to encourage children to learn about money and the process of giving change when an object is purchased. Good links are made between mathematics and other areas of study. Mathematical language is effectively promoted as part of work on Jack and the Beanstalk. A high quality wall display included the words high and low and short and tall thereby promoting the idea of comparative size.
3. Despite limited classroom resources, the Reception teacher and classroom support assistants have created a lively and stimulating classroom bursting with attention-grabbing displays. Children respond by displaying very good attitudes to their work and trying hard to match the quality of the work displayed. The staff have created specific areas for writing and for role-play and through these, the children are constantly being stimulated to try out writing and to use their imaginations. Very good provision is made to develop the children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them by making good use of resources. Classroom exhibits include plant pots with seeds germinating, frog-spawn and a class hamster. Children are encouraged to observe the exhibits by using a hand lens and some children have made a diary showing the way the seeds grow. During work comparing toys of the past with the present, children's interest was aroused by providing pupils with real examples of old wooden toys. Pupils have an early introduction to information and communication technology by having regular access to the computer and also by exploring the way it is possible to control a programmable toy. Religious education is part of the children's curriculum and current

work includes learning about the similarities and differences between the marriage customs of Muslims and Christians. The curriculum for the creative and physical development of children is successfully taught. Children have used paint, crayons and pencils to create some good quality drawings of old toys and through being taught how to use polystyrene tiles, some very impressive, individually made prints have been made. Physical development is encouraged by teachers and support staff demanding that children use essential tools such as pencils and scissors correctly and also using the hall to develop their skills of balance and movement.

4. In Key Stage 1 and 2, a strength of teaching is the outstanding quality of displays created by teachers. The time and effort spent by teachers and support staff in improving the quality of displays in recent months is justified by the way that pupils are excited and interested in the high standard of work that the displays depict. Pupils in Year 5 talk with enormous pride about the stories, poems and letters that are part of an excellent display based upon "Harry Potter". In Year 6, an outstanding representation of the water cycle and the life of a river very successfully reinforces ideas being studied in geography. The very high quality of pupils' work used as part of the wall displays sets high examples for all pupils to aspire to as well as providing a way of praising examples of good work. The pupils respond to the positive encouragement provided by the classroom environment by working hard and trying to do even better.
5. The basic skills of English and mathematics are well taught. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge of both the literacy and numeracy strategies and have successfully implemented the two initiatives. Lessons are well organised and managed so that pupils are involved in lessons and enthusiastic about their work. Teachers are skilled at using questions to establish the existing knowledge of pupils and to promote discussions and debates amongst pupils. The purposes of lessons are shared with pupils, and this enables them to see what is expected of them and work towards achieving as well as they can. Where teaching is particularly good, pupils are encouraged to offer their own views about how successful the lesson has been in achieving its aims. Particularly good subject knowledge of the teachers for music and for information and communication technology contributes to pupils making particularly good progress in these subjects in Key Stage 2. By liaising with peripatetic teachers, an impressive school orchestra has been established that performs very well in front of others.
6. Teaching and learning in science are good overall with a particular strength in developing pupils' knowledge of established scientific facts. High expectations are made of pupils to learn ideas that are often well in advance of the expectations for their age. In a Year 3 class, for example, pupils were expected to not only explore the way that light from primary colours can mix to create white light but also to learn about ideas about the spectrum and even different wavelengths.

The performance of pupils in English, mathematics and science is well above average.

7. Pupils are achieving well and by the end of Key Stage 2, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science and have remained consistently high over the last three years. Pupils get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and most children comfortably achieve the Early Learning Goals by the time they start Year 1 and many exceed this level. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, overall pupils make very good progress, particularly in Years 3, 5 and 6, where teaching is very good. In Year 6, inspection evidence indicates that the rate of

progress has improved significantly recently. The teacher's expectations are high and as a result pupils are starting to work at their full potential.

8. Standards in English, mathematics and science are high for several reasons. The school wants pupils to do well and takes effective measures to prepare pupils for end of key stage National Curriculum tests. The very good relationship between teachers and pupils promotes very good attitudes to learning amongst pupils who are enthusiastic and willing learners. The curriculum is now well planned to ensure that each subject of the National Curriculum is taught in a systematic way which progressively builds on pupils' knowledge and understanding as they move through the school. Regular reviews of what is taught have recently been introduced and these are helping the school to identify new ideas and ways of teaching. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well and good opportunities are given to pupils to apply and practise their skills in other subjects. Information and communication technology is used effectively as a tool to support learning, especially in Key Stage 2. Classroom support assistants work closely with teachers to ensure that all pupils are involved in lessons and given work that challenges and extends their learning at an appropriate level. Their support often gives less confident pupils a feeling that they can do well so that they work as hard as they can. A key factor in the high standards is also the support and involvement of parents with the life and work of the school and the way they support their children at home and provide resources such as computers and books.
9. In English, the pupils are given a love of books from the start. From the earliest age, children are encouraged to browse through books, appreciate illustrations and become aware of different types and styles of books. By the end of Year 2, most pupils enjoy reading and are competent and confident in using books. Skilful teaching in the Reception and Year 1 class encourages pupils to have the confidence to practise their skills of forming letters and writing their names and to recognise and spell common words appropriate for their age. In Reception, the use of a scheme that links songs and actions to recognising the common letter sounds and blends inspires pupils to work at a standard that is higher than normally found. Pupils are given interesting activities to develop and practise their skills, such as in Year 1, where pupils are encouraged to write for a real purpose by writing menus for a party and also by preparing and anthologising their own poetry about the moon. By the age of 7, pupils write confidently. They use a neat, joined up style of handwriting and pupils write in simple sentences using suitable punctuation and capital letters. Most pupils know and recognise words that are either adjectives, verbs or nouns. They know the principles of writing simple instructions for example, how to make Jelly Oranges and water pistols as well as writing a narrow range of imaginative pieces. Pupils in Year 2 have produced well-written pieces describing the characters of Katie Morag and have created a riddle based upon the Harry Potter books. The standards achieved by the pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading are well above the national average and above the national average in writing.
10. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have improved their standard of formal writing. The quality of presentation is very high. Pupils use established conventions of writing in paragraphs, make accurate use of a range of punctuation for example, speech marks, and spell most words correctly. Pupils understand the principles of and know how to write factually and are aware of the features of instructional writing as opposed to imaginative and creative writing. Pupils in Year 6 read well. Their levels of comprehension are high and most pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the work of a range of contemporary authors as well as famous classical writers.

11. Standards in science are high in terms of end of key stage National Curriculum test performance. Pupils have a good knowledge of each aspect of science and use key scientific vocabulary well to express their ideas. Teachers place good emphasis on teaching facts and giving information and pupils therefore learn key information quickly. The strong emphasis upon developing pupils' knowledge is supported by the fact that many pupils also have a wide range of experiences outside school and bring with them a good range of general knowledge that adds to their scientific knowledge and understanding. In Year 6, some pupils expressed unusually high levels of knowledge for their age about the abstract idea of gravity. Without prompting, a higher attaining group of pupils conducted a debate about the way that the larger an object is the greater is the force of gravity upon it. The minority of pupils who attend the BAYS (The British Association for Young Scientists) science club benefit from the excellent leadership and guidance by the BAYS co-ordinator. This ensures that those participating in the club can take responsibility for working on their own to solve scientific problems.

Pupils make good use of information and communication technology

12. Computers are used well in Key Stage 2 to support pupils' learning and good standards are achieved. This is primarily because of the very good leadership and management of the subject by the co-ordinator. The school has a limited range of computers but they are all used very well. Particularly good use is made of information and communication technology in establishing links with pupils in other countries. Close links are established with schools in Latvia that involve pupils in sending and receiving messages and exchanging information with others. The school has a well planned and informative website that serves as a brochure for the school, a current diary and provides information about events for parents and updates of school activities. A gallery of pupils' art work is displayed as well as accounts of a range of curricular activities. Good use is made of a digital camera to add relevance and interest to the site that is constantly updated and maintained by the pupils.
13. In lessons, teachers plan carefully to ensure that pupils have access to computers, and the mini information and communication technology suite is used to provide opportunities for directly teaching the key skills. From Reception to Year 6, computers are part of each pupil's education. As well as using word processing programmes for writing and editing text, pupils develop skills of representing and interpreting data, collecting and presenting data from field research, using spreadsheets and creating designs for example, 'Boaster Posters' and logos for carrier bags. From Year 2 upwards pupils regularly use the Internet and participate in regular e-mail correspondence. In Year 3, during the inspection, pupils were gathering data about the weather of European cities on a daily basis and in Year 4, changes in light, temperature and humidity have been recorded and analysed using the computer as part of science. Pupils have used the computer to compose music. As part of the class focus of Harry Potter, pupils in Year 5 have used images from computer programmes to create profiles of the main characters of the story as well as using the Internet for research to find out about aspects of geography.
14. Whilst the majority of pupils use Personal Computers, some laptops are also available and used. Information and communication technology is treated as an integral part of the curriculum not a separate subject and this contributes to the high standards achieved by many pupils.

The head teacher provides a very clear educational direction for the school

15. The head teacher provides a very educational direction for the future improvement of the school and knows how to achieve the vision. In the short time that the head teacher has been in post, many essential changes have been implemented in order to pursue the head teacher's aim of achieving excellence. All planned changes are considered and carefully evaluated so that there is maximum benefit for the education of the pupils. The head teacher has recognised that although pupils achieve high standards in terms of end of key stage National Curriculum test results, many pupils could do better in other aspects of their education for example, in taking more responsibility for their learning and developing their skill of using their initiative. There is a clear, well planned school improvement plan that guides the future areas for development with targets to improve the use of assessment, improve the levels of independence of pupils and develop better systems for communicating with parents. Even though writing is of a good standard by National Curriculum expectations, there is recognition that standards could be even better and do not fully match the potential of the pupils.
16. The head teacher has established a new senior management team structure that offers better management for the school and continued improvement in future. The very recent nature of the senior management team, however, means that its impact upon managing the school is not yet evident. Successful efforts have been made to make everyone in the school feel that they can contribute to all decisions. Staff are set high expectations but are also given good levels of support by the head teacher so that they can achieve their targets. Staff development is high on the head teacher's agenda and as a result of close liaison with staff, both individually and as a group, the needs for training are clearly identified and built into the school improvement plan. Relationships between the head teacher and staff are good and teachers and support staff are working together well as a team in order to stop the possibility of complacency and to strive to achieve the highest possible standards.
17. Relationships between the head teacher and the governing body are very good. The governing body has accepted that change is needed. There is a strong sense that only the best is good enough for the school's pupils and there is determination and perseverance amongst governors to ensure that the school's aims are achieved. Improvements in aspects of financial management brought about as a result of the guidance of the head teacher have ensured that the planned spending of the large budget surplus has been wisely evaluated. The head teacher and chair of finance of the governing body have established good procedures for checking that the money the school receives is spent effectively so that best value is obtained.

Good provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

18. The school makes good provision for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A sense of spirituality is successfully developed in a variety of ways. Pupils are provided with a happy and secure environment where, regardless of gender or ability they are expected to respect others, themselves and the world around them. Very good relationships exist amongst pupils and between pupils and staff, and these contribute to good academic standards and progress. During lessons and at lunchtime and playtime, pupils are well mannered and considerate and most have good levels of self-esteem. Teachers and pupils share the same set of values and beliefs that guide the pupils' behaviour and the way they treat one another. Acts of Collective Worship contribute to pupils' sense of spirituality by enabling pupils to listen to stories with a message and then spend some time quietly thinking about what the message means to them and how they might learn from it. The high quality of music that is

performed by pupils during assemblies has a very positive impact upon pupils and adults. Pupils are encouraged through their relationships with teaching and support staff to treat others with dignity and respect and to be sensitive to their feelings. Aspects of the curriculum are well used to develop pupils' awareness of others for example, pupils in a Year 6 literacy lesson used the autobiography of the Iron Woman' to explore the views and attitudes of the main character. Across the school, teachers treat pupils in a way that gives value to their ideas and makes them feel part of school life.

19. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. There is a clear moral code that is promoted consistently across the school and an effective system has been established to reward and celebrate all types of achievement, academic and personal. Adults provide good role models for pupils to aspire to. Pupils' views are respected by encouraging them to discuss what they feel is the best way of behaving for the benefit of themselves and others. The school successfully promotes opportunities for pupils to be aware of issues such as fairness, integrity and the need to keep a promise. Social development is fostered through the strong sense of community that pervades school life. During many lessons, pupils are encouraged to work together and to share ideas in order to answer questions. Experiences such as the annual residential educational visit add to the way pupils learn to develop positive social skills. Many pupils work together to perform a range of school jobs and routines, such as operating the over-head projector during assemblies.
20. The school makes good provision for promoting pupils' awareness of their own culture and that of other cultures in their own society. During an excellent assembly, the story of Elmer the elephant was very skilfully used to make pupils aware of the fact that whilst they can belong to a group for example, the pupils of Pikemere, everyone can still be different and these differences should be valued and celebrated rather than seen as a point for ridicule. The information and communication technology links with schools abroad offer pupils very good opportunities to communicate with pupils living in another country and in so doing learn about how they live and understand the similarities and differences between their culture and those in Alsager. Further opportunities are provided for pupils to learn about other cultures through curriculum areas such as geography and religious education and also to learn about British culture through music, art and history.

The levels of attendance are well above the national average.

21. As a result of high levels of parental support and the provision by the school of a safe, secure and friendly atmosphere in the school, pupils enjoy coming to school. All staff, both teaching and non-teaching, make pupils feel welcome in the school and there are good procedures in place to reward those who have good attendance. In the few cases where pupils are frequently absent, the school quickly picks this up and contacts the home to find out whether there is a problem or not.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The standards achieved by pupils at both key stages in writing and independent work in mathematics and science.

22. Pupils are very competent writers and have the potential to work on their own in mathematics and science to a high standard. The expectations for pupils to achieve their true potential in these aspects of their education are too low and pupils could do better.
23. Although the standard of pupils' writing is well above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils only write for a narrow range of purposes, and show a restricted understanding of the different styles of writing. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their writing skills across the curriculum. A similar picture exists in Key Stage 2. Pupils across the ability range organise and sequence their thoughts in a logical and systematic way but not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their ideas and to effectively incorporate some of the techniques and strategies that they have learned into new and challenging pieces of writing. Pupils frequently complete work that is not demanding enough in terms of the need for self-expression and they are not sufficiently challenged to produce extended pieces of work. As a result, they tend to lose confidence when given the task of writing sizeable pieces of work. The comparatively narrow range of writing experienced means that too many pupils lack the confidence to choose the most effective style of writing for an intended purpose.
24. In both mathematics and science at both key stages, pupils are not consistently expected to think for themselves and to use their very good knowledge and understanding to solve practical problems or find answers for themselves through practical investigation. In some classes in Key Stage 2, pupils are expected to work on their own and plan and record their intentions, their findings and their explanations. However, in other classes, the emphasis is mainly on pupils acquiring knowledge but with too few opportunities for pupils to work on their own in applying what they know to solve problems. The pupils' skills of performing practical work in both mathematics and science are satisfactory, but below the standards of which they are capable.

The role of the senior management team and subject co-ordinators in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning

25. Although an effective structure of committed and suitably experienced teachers has recently been created, the impact of the senior management team in monitoring how well subjects are taught and the levels of progress and attainment made by pupils is currently unsatisfactory. The head teacher, senior staff and subject co-ordinators fully recognise the need to develop their role in monitoring teaching and learning so that everyone involved in the pupils' education openly reviews and evaluates the quality of learning in the school so that the pursuit for excellence is successfully achieved. Although the school improvement plan has a list of appropriate targets for future development, and identifies the members of staff responsible for achieving the targets, suitable training for staff to improve their skills of management has not yet been fully implemented. The school does not have a clear statement or policy about the way the school monitors and evaluates how well it is doing although individual staff are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject for which they are responsible.

The use of assessment information to inform planning, set targets for pupils' improvement and identify the performance of different groups

26. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and the use of assessment information to guide and improve standards and the quality of curricular planning are unsatisfactory. Although the school complies with the statutory requirements for assessment by the end of each key stage in English, mathematics and science there is no consistent approach to using assessment information to identify and track groups of pupils in particular those who are gifted and talented.
27. The school does not have a clear policy for assessment that establishes clear criteria and expectations to guide staff. Although optional National Curriculum tests, and other standardised tests are used in addition to end of key stage National Curriculum tests, the assessment information is not effectively used to set targets for improvement for either groups of pupils or individuals. Foundation Subjects are assessed using the national guidance, but the information gathered is not effectively used to monitor the quality of teaching and learning or to evaluate the quality of the curriculum.
28. There is clear evidence from analysing standardised test results that girls do much better than boys in writing and to a lesser degree, reading. The school has recognised this and is looking at ways of improving the boys' performance. As yet, however, the school has not devised an effective system of tracking the progress and attainment of boys and girls as they move through the school and taking effective action to reduce the difference in performance.

The quality of the communication with parents

29. Parents are very supportive of the school overall and feel that their children are given a good quality of education and that children achieve good standards overall. Parents believe that their children are happy at school, behave well and are developing good attitudes to learning and to other people. Most parents feel that the school is approachable but some feel that aspects of information given to them by the school need improving, particularly the quality of annual reports about their children's progress, the policy for homework and, in Key Stage 2, details about what is being taught in each year group.
30. Inspection evidence supports the parents' concerns. The quality of the pupils' annual progress reports is unsatisfactory overall because there is not enough detail about how well individuals are doing in comparison with national expectations for their age and written comments are frequently rather vague and woolly. Homework, although used very effectively to support pupils' learning in some classes for example, in Years 5 and 6, is not consistently provided in all classes and parents are confused about what is expected. Similarly, the planned topics for each year group in Key Stage 2 are not effectively communicated with parents and this reduces opportunities for parents to plan ways of giving additional support to their children out of school.

Resources for children in the Reception class and for all pupils in English and geography

31. In the recent past, there has been a very low investment in maintaining and developing resources for learning. This has resulted in deficiencies in resources in some subjects and a lack of suitable storage space and ageing furniture. There is a severe shortage of

suitable books to support learning across the school. The library has a very small number and limited range of books with a particular weakness in non-fiction materials for pupils of all ages. Although pupils have an adequate knowledge and understanding of the process of using a library to seek information or to find stimulating novels, the access within the school is poor and as a result, pupils' library and research skills are not as good as they could be. Resources for geography are unsatisfactory overall.

32. The resources for pupils in the Foundation Stage are barely adequate for learning and unsatisfactory in terms of access to suitable outdoor play facilities and equipment. Although the class teacher and support staff make good use of all resources available to them, many additional resources have to be made or borrowed which adds unnecessary pressure to the demanding role.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to build on the many strengths and good levels of attainment, the governing body, head teacher and staff should:

1) raise the standards achieved by pupils in writing and in independent work in mathematics and science by:

- adapting existing curriculum policies so that pupils' skills of writing for a range of audiences and purposes are fully developed;
- providing regular opportunities for pupils to develop the confidence to perform and record investigations with the minimum of support.

2) improve the role of the senior management team and subject co-ordinators in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning by:

- devising and implementing a policy that defines the role of the senior management team and subject co-ordinator in monitoring how well the school is doing;
- providing INSET to develop the management skills of individual staff.

3) make better use of assessment information to inform planning, set targets for pupils' improvement and identify the performance of different groups by:

- devising and implementing a policy that guides teachers and senior staff with regard to the way in which pupils' attainment and progress are assessed and recorded;
- establishing a consistent approach to setting targets and reviewing the progress made by pupils towards targets for improvement;
- ensuring all groups of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, gifted and talented, boys and girls and those from minority ethnic backgrounds are identified and their attainment and progress monitored and steps taken to narrow any differences in performance.

4) improve the quality of the communication with parents by:

- improving the quality of the pupils' annual progress reports to parents;
- ensuring that an effective system is devised for informing parents about the school's homework policy and for explaining what is being taught to each year group.

5) use some of the budget surplus to improve the range of resources for:

- children in the Reception class by improving the range and breadth of classroom resources and the provision for appropriate outdoor activities;
- English by improving and extending the range of books across the school, including both fiction and non-fiction materials;
- geography by developing a suitable range of resources to support the curriculum.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	25
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	3	10	10	2	0	0	0
Percentage	12	40	40	8	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents 4 percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	222
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	37

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.6
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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	16	12	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	15
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	25	25	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (100)	89 (100)	93 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	15	15
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	26	26	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (100)	93 (100)	93 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	91 (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	11	19	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	9	11
	Girls	18	16	19
	Total	29	25	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	97 (85)	83 (94)	100 (94)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	7	11
	Girls	18	12	19
	Total	29	19	30
Percentage of pupils	School	97 (88)	86 (97)	100 (97)

at NC level 4 or above	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)
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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	222
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	1	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)	8.56
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.93
Average class size	31.71

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	79

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	412,523
Total expenditure	416,928
Expenditure per pupil	1878
Balance brought forward from previous year	38,756
Balance carried forward to next year	34,351

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
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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

Number of questionnaires sent out

222

Number of questionnaires returned

99

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	18	2	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	67	21	6	4	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	78	12	6	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	26	22	10	8
The teaching is good.	64	28	2	2	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	28	22	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	20	6	2	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	16	6	4	2
The school works closely with parents.	48	44	4	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	66	22	2	2	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	18	4	4	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	20	26	6	6

Other issues raised by parents

- Many parents expressed concern about the amount and the quality of homework and many state that they are unsure of what they should do to support their children at home.
- The long established practice of having only two parents' consultation evenings was criticised.
- Many parents felt that recently improved expectations for pupils to increase their levels of independence was benefiting their children although a small minority felt that expectations were too high.
- The recently improved provision for pupils with special educational needs and the better communication between school and home was praised.

