

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHFIELD CE (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Southampton

LEA area: Southampton

Unique reference number: 116395

Headteacher: Mr John Zealander

Reporting inspector: Mr Graham R Sims
28899

Dates of inspection: 11th – 12th March 2002

Inspection number: 197378

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Carol Pollard
Date of previous inspection:	15 th September 1997

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6-10
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 PART B: COMMENTARY	
 WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	 11-14
 WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	 15-16
 WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	 16-17
 PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	 18-21

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Highfield CE Primary School is a voluntary-aided Church of England primary school, situated on two sites about half a mile apart, in the long-established residential area of Highfield in Southampton, close to the university. It is an average-sized primary school, with 242 boys and girls on roll between the ages of 4 and 11. It is very popular with parents and draws its children from a wide area. The school is over-subscribed. Children come from a range of home backgrounds and social circumstances, but, overall, the socio-economic nature of the school's intake is favourable. Around 20 per cent of the pupils, an above average proportion, come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Thirteen per cent of pupils have English as an additional language, although only four pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The school population is quite stable, with fewer than six per cent of pupils joining or leaving at times other than the normal joining or leaving times. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Fifteen per cent of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs. Seven pupils receive help from outside specialists for a range of needs, including dyslexia, autism, behavioural, communication and physical difficulties. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Children join the school at the start of the year in which they have their fifth birthday. Although there is a considerable range, children's overall level of attainment on entry is well above average. Since the last inspection, class sizes in the infant department have been reduced but, as a result, most pupils are now taught in mixed-age classes. A separate diocesan inspection has evaluated the school's provision for collective worship and religious education.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Highfield CE Primary School is a well-led and successful school, which offers its pupils a good standard of education. The school has maintained consistently high standards since its last inspection. Good-quality teaching helps pupils to learn well and to achieve standards which are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Although the school has an above average income, it provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve very good academic standards in English, mathematics and science.
- The teachers provide very good quality teaching in the junior department.
- The school tackles identified weaknesses or areas needing improvement well.
- The school has a caring ethos, based on its Christian foundation, and keeps a careful track of pupils' progress.
- The school integrates pupils from different ethnic backgrounds well and ensures good racial harmony.

What could be improved

- The way some pupils respond to their work and listen to others.
- Some aspects of the school's provision for its youngest children.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents and carers of pupils in the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been a good degree of improvement since the last inspection in September 1997. The school responded well to its previous key issues and has worked hard to improve the quality of education which it provides for its pupils. There have been significant improvements in the way the school is managed. Through its school development plan, the school now sets clear achievable targets for improvement and monitors its progress towards them. New systems have been established to evaluate how effectively the school is functioning. There are clear lines of responsibility and accountability for staff. Most of the weaknesses identified in the teaching in Years 1 and 2 have been addressed and the good-quality teaching in Years 3 to 6 has been maintained and improved. The teachers now make good use of their assessments of pupils' attainment to modify their teaching plans and to ensure that work is appropriately matched to pupils' needs. Procedures for keeping parents informed about their children's progress have improved, and parents now receive written reports twice a year. The school now fully meets its statutory obligations with regard to the appraisal of teachers and the daily registration of pupils. The school has maintained consistently high academic standards since the last inspection.

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			similar schools ¹	Key	
	all schools				2001	
	1999	2000	2001	2001		
English	A	A*	A	A	Very high	A*
Mathematics	A	A*	A	A	Well above average	A
Science	A	A*	A*	A*	Above average	B
					Average	C
					Below average	D
					Well below average	E
					Very low	E*

In 2001, the national test results at the end of Year 2 were well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics; in reading, they were amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country. When compared with the results of schools of a similar nature, they were well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. Standards have improved since the last inspection in keeping with the national trend; the biggest improvement has been in mathematics. Results at the end of Year 6 were not quite as high as those at the time of the last inspection, when they were exceptionally high, but were, nevertheless, well above both the national average and the average for similar schools in English, mathematics and science. In science, and taken as a whole, the results were amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country. The school received a School Achievement Award in 2000 and 2001 for maintaining consistently high standards. The school monitors pupils' progress very carefully and, as a result, sets itself appropriate targets, which it has been successful in meeting.

Although there is a wide range, the overall level of attainment when children start school in the Reception class is well above average. By the time they start Year 1, most children have moved well beyond the expected goals for learning in communication, language and literacy and in their mathematical development, but are not as advanced in their personal, social and emotional development. The inspection findings show that standards at the end of Year 2 are well above average in reading, and many pupils show quite advanced skills for their age. In writing, the overall standard is well above average because most pupils achieve the nationally expected level, even though few pupils exceed it. Standards are high in mathematics and pupils handle numbers very confidently. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science, although standards in writing are not as good as those in reading. Over half of the pupils produce work which is above the nationally expected level in reading, mathematics and science. A third of the pupils achieve this standard in writing, but a further third do not achieve the expected standard. The school has identified writing as one of its priorities for development, and is implementing various strategies to bring further improvement to this aspect of pupils' work. Throughout the school, standards in speaking are very good, but some pupils do not listen well. Most pupils are well motivated, make good progress and achieve high standards, commensurate with their abilities and prior attainment. A few pupils, however, have to be coaxed hard to work, and make only satisfactory progress. Pupils with identified special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of learning to speak English generally make good progress as a result of the additional help they are given by teachers and assistants.

¹ 'Similar schools' are defined by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals; this measure has been found to be significantly related to the levels of attainment normally found in schools nationally.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory overall, but variable. At times, the pupils are highly motivated, show keen interest and are eager to participate in lessons and other activities. Occasionally, however, some pupils show an indifference to what the school provides and a reluctance to get on with their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall, but also variable. For much of the time, standards of behaviour are very good, and pupils are polite and courteous. Occasionally, however, some pupils do not do as they are requested. The behaviour out of the classrooms is generally satisfactory, but is not always as orderly as it could be.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory overall. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff are generally good and, in many cases, are very good. Many pupils show great maturity in their approach to work and in their dealings with adults. Some pupils, however, show an immaturity in their response to work and find it hard to work independently.
Attendance	Good. The level of attendance is above the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence is negligible. High levels of attendance make a positive contribution to the effective learning of the pupils.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 and 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	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 the teaching is good. As a result, pupils learn well and maintain consistently high standards as they move through the school. The school has a team of hard-working staff who are committed to their work. The teaching is strongest in the junior department, where almost all of the lessons observed during the inspection were either good or very good. Here, the teaching is characterised by thorough planning which makes very good use of the teachers' assessments of pupils' abilities and ensures that work is well matched to pupils' needs. Most pupils learn well. Whole-class sessions are generally very productive, but some pupils do not concentrate well when working on their own. The teaching in the infant department is much more variable, although the teaching is generally better for the older pupils. The lessons observed during the inspection ranged from good to unsatisfactory, and did not always reflect the high standard of work which pupils clearly achieve during the year. Some of the work provided for the youngest pupils is too structured and not challenging enough. Pupils throughout the infant department show great enthusiasm for their learning, although they do not always concentrate and listen as well as they should. The teaching of English and mathematics is good, and the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well, although some pupils display a reluctance to write. The school generally caters well for pupils of all abilities. Pupils with special educational needs are given good-quality support which helps them to make good progress towards the targets which are outlined in their individual education plans. When necessary, effective support is provided for pupils who are at an early stage of learning to speak English. More able pupils are provided with sufficient challenge to enable them to achieve above expectations, although this is not always the case in the infant department. Some staff are beginning to use new technology very effectively to assist pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a satisfactory curriculum which meets statutory requirements. The school gives sufficient emphasis to English, mathematics and science, whilst maintaining appropriate balance in other subjects. Good enrichment is provided during occasional themed weeks in which there is a special focus on one subject. Some aspects of the curriculum for the youngest children are too formal.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and is managed well. Pupils' needs are identified, appropriate educational plans are provided, and pupils' progress is monitored carefully. Teachers and assistants provide appropriate and sensitive help.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school integrates a sizeable proportion of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and provides for them well. Many already have some command of English and, because they are highly motivated, they make good progress. Teachers and assistants provide much support for those at an early stage of learning to speak English and, when necessary, bring in outside agencies to provide additional support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides well for pupils' personal development, having actively sought ways to improve its provision in this area by introducing a programme for personal, social and health education and formulating a comprehensive values policy. Although there is room for further improvement in pupils' response, the school does help them to become more mature and responsible as they move through the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is good. The school has a caring ethos, and provides a learning environment in which the pupils feel happy and secure. Policies and procedures are well organised.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides the school with good leadership, which has tackled previously identified areas of weakness well and has enabled the school to maintain consistently high standards since the last inspection. He receives good support from the deputy headteacher and subject coordinators.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are effective and fulfil their responsibilities very well. Statutory duties are met. Governors take an active interest in the work of the school and are helping to shape its direction in a quiet, supportive way. They take an active role in determining the strategic direction of the school. They have produced an excellent, comprehensive and informative handbook for parents.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has some good procedures for evaluating its own performance, and keeps very good track of pupils' progress. Procedures for development planning are good, and their effectiveness is seen in the good range of improvements since the last inspection.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of the resources available to it, although the cramped working conditions in parts of the infant department make teaching difficult. Administrative arrangements are good and efficient. The school seeks to obtain the best value when taking spending decisions.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and are making good progress. • The teaching is good and staff have high expectations. • It is easy to approach the school, which is well led and managed. • The Christian ethos of the school and the good standards of pastoral care. • The school is providing their children with a good all-round education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about their children's progress. • The range of extra-curricular activities and sport. • The way the school deals with relationship problems and anti-social behaviour. • The size of classes in the junior department and the nature of mixed-age classes in the infant department. • Greater differentiation; some children find it hard to keep up, others are not challenged enough.
<p>[The views of parents are based on those expressed by the 30 parents who attended the parents' meeting and the 152 parents (63%) who returned the parents' questionnaire, some of whom also enclosed letters or added their own written comments]</p>	

The parents who attended the parents' meeting and those who returned the questionnaire generally expressed a good degree of satisfaction with the education provided by the school. Some concerns about the information parents receive from the school were raised during the parents' meeting and 25 parents raised various concerns in writing. The inspection team agrees to a large extent with all of the positive and some of the negative views expressed by parents. There are many good features to the school, and staff work hard to promote pupils' learning and to provide a caring environment. The school has responded to parents' concerns regarding the information it provides about their children's progress by issuing reports twice a year. The inspection team considers the range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school to be satisfactory. The school has implemented a programme of personal and social education and has spent time in developing a values policy. These initiatives are starting to have an impact on pupils' personal development and the way relationship and behavioural problems are dealt with, although the inspection team feels more could still be done to help pupils' personal development. The large size of the classes in the junior department does reduce the attention teachers can give to individual pupils, although teachers manage well under the circumstances. The decision to have mixed-age classes has been taken after much thought, and ensures that the school complies with the government's legislation on the size of infant classes, whilst still maintaining the school's standard admissions number. It has had the benefit of reducing class sizes. It does, however, create a much wider range of ability within each class, which makes it harder for teachers to pitch work at the right level for all pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils achieve very good academic standards in English, mathematics and science.

1. Most pupils who attend the school come from supportive home backgrounds and, when they start school, they display an awareness of language and number, which is well above that which is normally found. The school consolidates these good foundations in the infant department, and then extends them well in the junior department so that, by the time pupils leave school, nearly all achieve the nationally expected standards in English, mathematics and science, and a significant proportion exceed them.
2. Since the last inspection, the school's national test results in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 have, on almost every occasion, been well above the national average. For the last three years, the results in reading have been amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country. Results have also compared favourably with similar schools. In 2001, for example, they were well above the average for similar schools in reading and mathematics, and were above average in writing. Although there have been small fluctuations from year to year, there has been a perceptible improvement in the results in reading and writing, and a more marked improvement in mathematics. Pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics, with around half of the pupils exceeding national expectations in these areas. Progress in writing is satisfactory, and almost all pupils achieve the nationally expected level, although few pupils exceed this level.
3. A similarly positive picture is apparent in the school's national test results at the end of Year 6. Results in English, mathematics and science have been well above the national average every year since the last inspection. For the last two years, the overall results have been amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country. Results have also been well above the average for schools whose pupils come from similar backgrounds. The results in 2001 were slightly lower than those achieved in the year of the previous inspection, which was a particularly successful year when the gap between the school's and the national results was exceptionally large. Since then, there have been fluctuations in the school's results, but the school received a School Achievement Award in 2000 and 2001 for maintaining consistently high standards over a three-year period. Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science, with over half of the pupils exceeding national expectations in these subjects. Although girls achieve slightly better results than boys in English, the difference is not significant and is similar to the national picture.
4. The school places great importance on developing pupils' reading skills, and pupils achieve high standards in this aspect of English throughout the school. Reading skills are developing effectively during the whole-class and group-teaching sessions during the literacy hour, building effectively on the support which many pupils receive at home. By the time pupils enter Year 3, most pupils read with fluency and good understanding and have a reading age which is above, and in some cases well above, their chronological age. By the time pupils leave school, most can read complex texts with good understanding. Many pupils are starting to display more advanced reading skills, and are developing the ability to see beyond the literal meaning of the text and to draw inferences. They also show good understanding of the characteristics of different styles of writing. In a very good lesson in Year 6, for example, pupils identified ways in which formal and informal styles of writing differ and showed good awareness of when and why different styles are appropriate.
5. Pupils display very good speaking skills throughout the school. They also display a good ability to understand and respond appropriately to others, although they do not always listen as attentively as they should. Nearly all pupils have the confidence to join in discussion and are eager to express their opinions. Younger pupils are almost too keen, and do not always await their turn to speak. Generally, such interruptions are a result of the pupils' enthusiasm and teachers deal with them patiently, with the result that pupils' ability to await their turn improves as they move through the school. By Year 6, most pupils are very articulate, showing good understanding of teachers' or other pupils' questions, and responding using appropriate vocabulary.

6. Writing is the least successful of the four key English skills but, nevertheless, standards are well above those normally found. The school is well aware of the differences between pupils' reading and writing skills and has introduced various strategies to raise the standard of writing further. By the end of Year 2, most pupils write competently, although few excel at this stage. By Year 4, pupils are starting to show better ability to produce extended writing, using descriptive phrases well in order to make their writing interesting. By Year 6, higher-attaining pupils achieve very good standards, producing varied and interesting writing with imaginative vocabulary and precisely chosen words. Whilst lower-attaining pupils show reasonable understanding of structure, they do not use such rich vocabulary and show a much less secure grasp of grammatical and spelling conventions.
7. Standards in mathematics are very good. Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities have a very secure understanding of number. Children in the Reception year count confidently in twos. Pupils in Year 2 spot patterns when dividing numbers by 3 or 4, and add up numbers quickly and accurately. Pupils in Year 3 identify equivalent fractions. When solving more complex problems, pupils in Year 6 establish important facts before rushing in to solve the problem, and they understand the importance of estimating their answer because they are aware that calculators do not know if an answer is wrong. Most pupils display an enthusiasm for mathematics and enjoy solving mathematical problems.

The teachers provide very good quality teaching in the junior department.

8. The overall quality of the teaching in the junior department is very good. As a result, pupils learn well and maintain consistently high standards as they move through the school. Of the nine lessons observed during the inspection in this part of the school, one was satisfactory, four were good and four were very good. Pupils from Years 3 to 6 who were interviewed all commented that the teaching is good and that their teachers are very helpful. One teacher in the junior department has been invited by the local authority to become an advanced skills teacher for English.
9. Very thorough planning provides a firm foundation for the teaching in all classes. An English lesson in Year 4, for example, used the teacher's assessments of pupils' previous work to ensure that appropriate work was provided for different groups of pupils. Similarly well-differentiated work, based on the teacher's very comprehensive records of pupils' previous work, was observed in Year 6. The same thorough planning is also evident when looking at past work which the pupils have produced. Short suspense stories written by pupils in Year 6 were the outcome of two weeks of carefully planned teaching, in which the pupils had shared examples of suspense stories during group reading sessions, analysed stories as a class and been taught how to give structure to their stories and create suspense in their writing. The outcome was a collection of well-written stories in which all pupils had clearly made progress, and the most able pupils had produced some very good quality writing.
10. The teachers have high expectations and provide good challenges for the pupils. In a very good mathematics lesson in Year 6, for example, the pupils were caught up in the excitement and challenge of solving mathematical problems expressed in words. The problems were based around the pupils' residential trip to Stubbington, which provided a motivational starting point. Throughout the lesson, the teacher challenged the pupils to do more. Similar challenge was evident in a good English lesson in Year 5, in which the teacher used open-ended questions well to challenge pupils of all abilities and to make them think. In a good mathematics lesson in Year 3, after establishing what pupils knew about equivalent fractions at the start of the lesson, the teacher quickly moved on to extend pupils by getting them to work out more complex fractions. In the best lessons, a really brisk pace contributes significantly to the way pupils learn. In an English lesson in Year 6, for example, the teacher gave pupils a copy of a letter and told them that they had two minutes in which to identify particular features. This and other similarly short, sharp, but well-focused activities helped pupils to concentrate, but also enabled the teacher to cover a lot of ground and contributed significantly to pupils' learning.
11. The teachers provide a good balance between whole-class sessions, group and individual work and a good variety of activities which interest and motivate the pupils. The whole-class sessions are generally very effective. In a very good opening session to an English lesson in Year 5, the teacher's

questions and a range of well-chosen texts helped pupils to discover essential features of an opening paragraph. The teacher involved all pupils by asking them to write down their own thoughts and answers to his questions on individual whiteboards. He also involved pupils well by drawing the more reticent pupils into the discussion and by giving various responsibilities to others, such as completing cards to be displayed on the board. In Year 6, the teacher made very effective use of paired work to stimulate ideas and discussion. Pupils were asked to look at and discuss a text in pairs. This helped all pupils to become involved and prepared them well for the whole-class discussion which followed. In a geography lesson, pupils worked in a similar way in small groups, preparing arguments for and against a proposal for the siting of a new port.

12. The teachers use a good range of resources and materials which help to reinforce the main points of learning in the lesson. In the English lessons observed, teachers had carefully chosen a range of texts for pupils to consider and compare. In the mathematics lessons, appropriate activities and resources were made available for different groups of pupils to ensure that each group could make progress at their own level. In a number of lessons, good use was made of the overhead projector to provide a focus for pupils' attention and to clarify teaching points. In two lessons, teachers made very effective use of a computer connected to an interactive whiteboard. In an English lesson, this captured pupils' attention and they were eager to be involved. In a science lesson, the use of a digital camera and material from two CD-ROMs not only held pupils' attention but also helped to illustrate teaching points very clearly which helped pupils to learn well.

The school tackles identified weaknesses or areas needing improvement well.

13. The school has responded well to the key issues and other weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report. There have been significant improvements in the way the school is managed. The school now has a well-structured development plan, with clear achievable targets for improvement. All subjects and aspects of the school are reviewed as part of a regular cycle of monitoring, and the school has developed good procedures to evaluate its own performance and determine how effectively the school is functioning. Governors are fully involved in the development planning process and monitor the progress made towards the targets which have been set. There are clear lines of responsibility within the school's management structure, which make allowances for the difficulties of the split site, and ensure that there is effective oversight of both school sites. Subject coordinators have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, and the work of the English, mathematics and science coordinators has been effective in ensuring that the school maintains high standards. The school has implemented new procedures for evaluating the performance of teachers and links targets for individual teachers into the school's overall priorities for development.
14. The school is also developing effectively as a self-evaluating and self-improving school. The school has developed a framework, based on the schedule for inspection, for evaluating the quality of education it provides. The school's current development plan, based upon its strategic overview for the next five years, has identified appropriate areas for future development, and progress is being made towards achieving targets in writing and the improvement of the school's provision for information and communication technology.
15. Although there are some aspects of the school's provision for its youngest pupils which could be improved further, the school has rectified the main weaknesses identified in the previous inspection with regard to the quality of the teaching in Years 1 and 2. Pupils attain high standards and achieve well in reading and mathematics, and make satisfactory progress in writing.
16. There have been significant improvements in the marking and assessment of pupils' work. During the inspection, a number of examples were observed of teachers using previous assessment of pupils' work as an important starting point for the lesson and ensuring that work was closely matched to pupils' needs. Samples of pupils' work are marked according to National Curriculum assessment criteria so that teachers have a clear understanding of the standard of pupils' work. Procedures for keeping parents informed about their children's progress have improved, and parents now receive written reports twice a year.
17. The school has worked hard to raise awareness of the way values and attitudes are transmitted and to make better provision for pupils' spiritual development. The school now has a well-formulated

values policy which gives staff clear guidance on how pupils' spiritual development can be promoted through the curriculum and the daily activities of the school.

18. The school works well, as a whole team, to overcome the shortcomings of its accommodation and the problems of working on two widely separated sites. The playground for the junior site is separated from the main school building by a road, which constitutes a significant safety hazard for the pupils. The school manages this hazard well, but the unsuitable provision limits the use of the school's external facilities and imposes additional burdens on the staff. The headteacher and governors have continued to press for improvements to the situation, although they have yet to be successful in obtaining closure of the road which would allow safe and unrestricted access to the school's external facilities.

The school provides has a caring environment ethos, based on its Christian foundation, and keeps careful track of pupils' progress.

19. The school's procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety, including the school's arrangements for child protection, are good. There are appropriate arrangements for first aid, and close supervision ensures that the hazards of crossing the road to reach the junior school playground are minimised.
20. The teachers know the pupils well, and they deal with them in a calm, patient and caring manner. This is a feature that parents value particularly. Parents cited the strong Christian ethos of the school, the good role models provided by the staff, the way staff promote understanding and tolerance and the very good pastoral care as aspects which they particularly liked. A Muslim parent had chosen this Church of England school for her children because of the values which the school promotes. Another parent spoke very positively about how the school had helped her 'difficult child' and of the respectful way in which staff had treated both her and her child.
21. Pupils from Years 3 to 6 commented that they feel secure within the school environment and that they enjoy school. Even when incidents do occur from time to time, the pupils say that they are quickly sorted out and that they do not have to be concerned by bullying or harassment from other pupils. Another positive feature commented on by a number of parents is the friendly way in which older pupils treat younger pupils and the fact that the school is seen to be part of the extended family.
22. A further indication of the way the school cares for its pupils is the comprehensive procedures the school has for keeping track of pupils' progress. The system has improved since the last inspection, and the school's assessment procedures now provide a clear indication of the level each pupil achieves in English, mathematics and science year by year. This enables the school to highlight any pupils whose progress is a cause for concern and to take any necessary action to bring about improvement.

The school integrates pupils from different ethnic backgrounds well and ensures good racial harmony.

23. Around 20 per cent of the school's population comes from minority ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the diverse range of ethnic backgrounds of families living around the university. Many of these pupils come from homes where English is not the main language, although very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. One of the school's aims is "to value all children ... treating everyone with equal consideration and mutual respect". This aim is amply fulfilled, as the school integrates the wide range of cultures well, striving to meet any particular needs.
24. During the inspection, good racial harmony was observed throughout the school, with pupils from different backgrounds working happily together and playing a full part in class discussions. At the pre-inspection meeting for parents, it was clear that parents value the school's inclusivity, and some cited the positive relationships within the school as one of the factors which pleased them most about the school. Pupils themselves also expressed positive views about inter-personal relationships, and felt that the school is a friendly place, where all get on well together.

25. The staff are instrumental in promoting positive relationships and ensure that any pupils experiencing difficulties are providing with appropriate help. In a music lesson in the Reception class, for example, the teaching assistant showed one child, who spoke little English, patiently and carefully how to play the musical instruments, enabling the child to participate in the lesson. In a mathematics lesson in Year 3, the teacher ensured that a pupil who was reluctant to answer questions was drawn into the discussion by his encouraging manner and appropriate questioning. In the same lesson, another pupil was seen to offer help and encouragement to the same pupil.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The way some pupils respond to their work and listen to others.

26. Most pupils show very positive attitudes to their work for much of the time. Pupils in the infant department are keen and enthusiastic. In a history lesson for Years 1 and 2, pupils showed much interest in the good range of historical artefacts, such as a washboard, tongs, brushes, pegs and irons, which the teacher had used as a focus for the lesson. Pupils in the junior department participate well in whole-class discussions and practical activities. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, for example, participated in lively discussions during the introductory sessions in two English lessons. Much of the pupils' written work shows good care and attention and the standards achieved by pupils throughout the school show that they all participate and learn sufficiently well to achieve high standards.
27. Good, responsive attitudes are shown on other occasions. In one class, for example, a corner of the room is given over to a display mounted each week by different pupils. The items displayed during the week of the inspection, relating to a pupil's interest in ballet, spoke not only of the pupil's wider interests, but also of the considerable care and attention which had been given to the way in which the display had been mounted. In another part of the room, a pupil had brought in a model of an African hut, which he had made in painstaking detail at home, clearly inspired by what he had been learning at school. On one morning before school, a group of almost 30 pupils participated in the school's string orchestra, many of them showing considerable skill, born of practice, but all of them trying hard to play to the best of their ability.
28. At times, however, such positive attitudes are not always displayed and the pupils do not listen as well as they should. In the infant department, although displaying much enthusiasm, pupils do not always do as they have been requested by the teacher. In an information and communication technology lesson, pupils needed constant reminders not to call out, and one group of pupils took a very long time to settle to their work. In a mathematics lesson, extensive chatter amongst the lower-attaining group of pupils impeded their progress until they were directly supervised by the teacher. Similar responses occur in the junior department, although to a lesser extent. In an information and communication technology lesson, whilst most of the pupils were concentrating on their tasks, a small number of pupils behaved in a somewhat immature and silly manner and made unsatisfactory progress with their task. Even in Year 6, although the teacher is positive and firm, pupils do not always respond instantly to a request to stop and listen when asked.
29. In some lessons, the pupils do not always give the response that some good and very good teaching deserves, particularly when they are asked to work on their own or in groups. In one lesson, after a really good whole-class session in which the teacher had elicited many answers through good questioning and sought to involve pupils as much as possible, the teacher had to cajole part of the class to get on with their individual tasks. One group of pupils made very little progress when the teacher was giving attention to other groups of pupils. In all classes, a few pupils show a marked aversion to getting down to their written work.
30. At the pre-inspection meeting for parents, a number commented that their children found it hard to cope when they perceived that other children were achieving more highly than they. On the occasions on which a less than positive response was observed during the inspection, it nearly always came from the middle or lower-attaining groups of pupils. Whilst some pupils who find the work hard rise to the challenge and feel consistently encouraged to do their best, others find it discouraging to be in what they perceive as the 'bottom' group. Some pupils find it hard to keep up with the more able pupils and, rather than trying harder, have a tendency to give up.

31. The teachers work hard to encourage pupils to give of their best. Occasionally, the way they try to encourage and motivate the pupils is counter-productive, as they lavish unmerited praise on unworthy efforts. At the end of one lesson, pupils were told they had been excellent during the lesson and were given the maximum reward towards their whole class achievement, when one group of pupils had accomplished very little during the group-work session. Such praise sends confusing messages both to those who had tried hard and to those who had made little effort. In another class, a teacher's over-use of the word 'excellent' for satisfactory responses left no room to praise really meritorious efforts.

Some aspects of the school's provision for its youngest children.

32. The teachers in the infant department show a similar dedication to their work as those in the junior department and strive to provide an interesting and stimulating environment for the pupils. One of the teachers has been invited by the local authority to become a leading mathematics teacher. Lessons are generally carefully planned. In an information and communication technology lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2, for example, the teacher linked the teaching of skills to the previous week's work in geography, providing a large bar chart to focus pupils' attention during the discussion and differentiated tasks for pupils to work on in their groups. The planning for some lessons, however, either does not take sufficient account of what pupils can already do, or does not provide clear enough learning objectives to give a focus for the lesson. This resulted in some unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection in Reception and Year 1. In a mathematics lesson, for example, in which the teacher had gone to some trouble to prepare resources, the tasks both in the mental starter session and for pupils to accomplish on their own were well within the pupils' existing capabilities and provided no new learning. Although the tasks given to the pupils were differentiated, they were so simple and so short that pupils finished them very quickly. Indeed, one group of pupils completed their tasks before the teacher had finished explaining to the last group what they had to do.
33. Some of the work planned for children in the Reception year does not allow them enough opportunities to plan and initiate activities themselves. Most of the sessions observed during the inspection were formal literacy and numeracy lessons, with few opportunities for children to select and use activities and resources independently, or to experiment, plan and make decisions for themselves. Some of the activities provided instead did little to help children make progress in their learning. In one lesson, for example, the children were all given a worksheet which required them to do little more than colouring in. In another lesson, which started with appropriate counting and measuring activities, the children were held for too long as a group with the result that some became bored and restless. When they moved away to work on their own, all the children had the same worksheet to complete.
34. In September 2000, changes were made to the structure of the infant department, which has increased from three classes, with one class for each year group, to four classes, with one class for the younger children in the Reception and three which contain pupils from mixed year groups. The changes have been made in order to comply with the government's legislation to restrict the size of infant classes to 30 pupils, whilst at the same time maintaining the school's standard admissions number of 35 pupils. Although there are tangible benefits in having smaller class sizes, the ability range for which teachers have to cater in the mixed-age classes is now much wider. Although teachers are very conscious of the need to provide sufficient challenge for the most able, whilst still meeting the needs of the lower-attaining pupils, such a balance is not easy to maintain. In one lesson, the teacher, quite rightly, altered what she had originally planned because the work in the previous lesson had been too easy for many of the pupils, but the introductory task, which was taken by the teaching assistant, still presented little challenge for most pupils and caused a restless start to the lesson.
35. The need to find an additional classroom to accommodate four classes has limited the space available for teaching the children in the Reception year. The classroom areas for these children are cramped, making it difficult for adults and children to move around the classroom. Although a certain amount of shared space is available to the two classes for the youngest children, it is difficult for teachers to set up the variety and range of activities normally provided for children of this age, which encourage them to develop their abilities to make independent choices, and to provide a

sufficiently wide range of activities to encourage experimentation and investigation. The outdoor accommodation limits opportunities for children's physical development.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

36. In order to improve the quality of education provided and the standards pupils achieve, the governors, headteacher and staff should work together to:

Help all pupils to mirror the positive attitudes shown by most pupils for much of the time. Particular attention should be given to:

- ensuring all pupils respond quickly and appropriately to teachers' requests;
- improving the response of some pupils when asked to work on their own;
- ensuring that all pupils listen attentively when others are speaking.

(Paragraphs 26 – 31)

Improve aspects of the school's provision for its youngest children by:

- ensuring that all children are provided with sufficiently challenging work which takes account of their prior attainment and individual needs;
- ensuring that the curriculum provided for children in the Reception year provides sufficient opportunities for them to plan and initiate activities themselves;
- pursuing opportunities to improve the accommodation and resources available for children in Reception.

(Paragraphs 32 – 35)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

20

Number of formal discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

17

[In addition to this figure, there were many informal discussions with staff, other adults and pupils]

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	4	6	7	3	0	0
Percentage	0	20	30	35	15	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 five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	–	242
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	–	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	–	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	–	36

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	32

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
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	19	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	14
	Girls	19	19	19
	Total	33	33	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (100)	97 (100)	97 (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	19	19	19
	Total	34	34	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	20	14	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	19	20
	Girls	13	11	14
	Total	31	30	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91 (94)	88 (91)	100 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	19	20
	Girls	13	11	14
	Total	32	30	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 (94)	88 (91)	100 (100)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	7
Pakistani	12
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	2
White	165
Any other minority ethnic group	16

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	30.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	212

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	506,814
Total expenditure	522,901
Expenditure per pupil	2,161
Balance brought forward from previous year	59,020
Balance carried forward to next year	42,933

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	242
Number of questionnaires returned	152
Percentage of questionnaires returned	63

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	36	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	45	3	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	52	5	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	55	5	2	0
The teaching is good.	46	48	1	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	47	23	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	35	4	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	38	4	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	33	46	19	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	51	40	3	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	42	3	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	40	23	5	4