

INSPECTION REPORT

WEST HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

West Hill, Ottery St Mary

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113106

Headteacher: Mrs Sue Nield

Reporting inspector: Mr Graham R Sims
28899

Dates of inspection: 28th – 29th January 2002

Inspection number: 197913

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
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Lester Bowker
Date of previous inspection:	7 th October 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in the country village of West Hill, next to Ottery St Mary and ten miles to the east of Exeter. At present, there are 161 boys and girls on roll between the ages of four and eleven. It is smaller than most primary schools, although the number on roll has increased since the last inspection and the school is very popular. The school serves the locality of West Hill and its surrounding villages, but a third of the pupils come from further afield. Most pupils come from backgrounds of high social and economic advantage. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and no pupils have English as an additional language. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. All of these figures are well below the national average. At the time of the inspection, around 20 pupils were on the first stage of the school's register for special educational needs, and the school was in the process of updating its procedures to take account of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs. There are no pupils receiving additional help from outside agencies or with statements of special educational needs. This is below the national average. Most children have attended privately run playgroups or nurseries before they join the Reception class. The attainment of children when they start school is generally well above average. Since the last inspection, the school has turned its hall into an additional classroom, and children in the Reception class are taught in a small conservatory area in order to avoid mixed-age classes and to have smaller teaching groups. The school now hires the adjacent village hall for use as its school hall at certain times during the day.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

West Hill Primary School is a good school, with some very good features. The new headteacher and her deputy work very effectively together and are providing very good leadership and clear educational direction for the school. Their new initiatives are building successfully on the school's already well-established reputation for high academic standards. The school is an inclusive, happy community in which pupils display very positive attitudes to their work. The good quality of the teaching and the way pupils apply themselves to their work result in good progress and in standards which are well above average throughout the school. Although the school receives an above average income, it provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils of all abilities make good progress throughout the school and achieve standards in English, mathematics and science which are well above the national average.
- The school is a happy, friendly, but hard-working community. Staff cater well for most aspects of the pupils' personal development and set high expectations. The pupils respond by working hard and displaying very positive attitudes and very good behaviour.
- The quality of the teaching throughout the school is good, and there are some examples of outstanding teaching. The teachers plan thoroughly and are diligent, committed and caring.
- The headteacher and her deputy provide very good leadership. Their analysis of all aspects of the school is very thorough and they have a clear understanding of what works well and what needs to be improved.

What could be improved

- Accommodation provided for children in the Reception class, as this limits the range of learning opportunities.
- Provision for and standards achieved in information and communication technology.
- The range of opportunities for pupils to exercise their own initiative and independence.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has not only maintained all of the positive features noted in its last inspection in October 1997, but has also instigated a good range of improvements which have made it an even better school than it was. All of the key issues from the last inspection have been tackled effectively. Teachers have become much more conscious of the differing needs of pupils within their classes. For example, all lesson plans now indicate how work is to be differentiated according to pupils' needs, and lesson observations undertaken by senior staff and subject co-ordinators have focused on how well teachers provide for different ability groups. Assessment procedures are thorough and are now used to help teachers plan the next stages of learning. Although it was not possible on this short inspection to observe any physical education lessons in Years 3 to 6, it is clear that the school has addressed the previously identified weakness in this area by providing a clear structure to the planning and ensuring that all aspects of the curriculum are covered for this subject. Extra-curricular sporting activities, many of which are run by parents, continue to provide an important addition to the curriculum for physical education. All staff now have clearly designated responsibilities as subject co-ordinators. The new headteacher has increased the scope of these responsibilities, with the result that staff are now much more involved in managing their subject areas, which is having a beneficial impact on developing the curriculum and improving current practices. There is now a well-structured programme for monitoring the quality of teaching, and staff are finding the new procedures useful in helping them to review their own practice and in identifying ways in which they can improve. Weaknesses in teaching identified in the last inspection have been rectified. Academic standards have continued to rise and are higher now than at the time of 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	Key	
	all schools					
	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*

The table of results indicates that the school has achieved consistently high standards over the last three years. In 2001, the results in all subjects were amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country, and the overall results were amongst the top five per cent of schools whose pupils come from similar backgrounds. The school's results were well above the national average at the time of the last inspection, but have continued to rise, at a similar rate to the national improvement trend. The picture of test results at the end of Year 2 is similar. Although slightly lower than in the previous three years, when the overall results were amongst the top five per cent in the country, they were still well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The overall trend is one of improvement, at a similar rate to the national trend, and standards at the end of Year 2 are higher now than at the last inspection. The school consistently sets itself high targets and has been successful in meeting them.

Most pupils come from favoured and supportive home backgrounds and, generally, show a high degree of readiness for starting school. The school builds well on these early achievements, and pupils make good progress throughout the school. In the Reception, virtually all children exceed the expectations for learning, despite the restrictions which the school's cramped and inadequate accommodation impose on the curriculum offered to them. Inspection findings confirm the picture painted by the National Curriculum assessment tests and show that standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average throughout the school. Around two-thirds of the pupils exceed national expectations in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school. Standards of work in subjects such as art, history, geography and religious education are good, and standards of musicianship are high, boosted significantly by the fact that many pupils learn to play musical instruments. Standards in some aspects of information and communication technology are not as high as they should be, but inadequate resources have hampered the teaching of this subject. Given the high level of academic achievement of most pupils, the school needs to develop a wider range of opportunities for pupils to exercise their own initiative and to become truly independent learners. Nevertheless, all pupils leave the school very well equipped for the next stage of their education, with a wide range of basic skills.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils display very positive attitudes towards school and to their learning. They respond positively to their teachers, are well aware of their expectations and try hard to fulfil them. Pupils' response in lessons is very positive, and most are eager to answer questions and to participate in discussion.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The pupils maintain high standards of behaviour, both within the classroom and around the school. They are polite, courteous, friendly and helpful. As a result, the school is an orderly and well-disciplined community, where learning is rarely interrupted by inappropriate behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships with adults and amongst pupils are very good. Pupils say the school is a friendly place. They respond very well to the responsibilities they are given, and many offer to help within the classroom and in their own free time. Most pupils are mature and confident in their dealings with others. In lessons, however, and despite their obvious ability, many still seek frequent reassurance that they are doing things in the right way; they have yet to become truly independent learners.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The level of attendance is just below the national average, and is affected by the large number of pupils who are absent for holidays during term-time. Not all pupils arrive punctually in the morning, and late arrivals disrupt the start of the school day.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

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. There is now a much more active approach to monitoring the quality of teaching through the observation of lessons, and staff are becoming more open and receptive to examining their own practice and developing the ability to reflect critically on how they teach and how pupils learn. Some particularly good teaching was observed in Years 3

and 5 during the inspection. In the latter class, the teacher was skilful at helping pupils to examine and evaluate what they were doing, so that they learnt how to become more self-critical and improve their own performance. The quality of the teaching in the rest of the school is consistently good. The teachers plan their lessons carefully and, in most subjects, cover all aspects of the curriculum thoroughly. At times, however, the teaching style is somewhat didactic, and not enough emphasis is given to helping pupils to use their own initiative so that they become truly independent learners. Throughout the school, the pupils' ability to concentrate and work productively has a very positive effect on their learning, and enables them to make good progress, even when the subject matter is somewhat dry. Teachers are much more conscious than before of the need to differentiate work given to different groups of pupils. Effective sessions were observed during the inspection, for example, where small groups of pupils were withdrawn from the main teaching group to receive work which was appropriately targeted to their needs. The teaching of English and mathematics is good, and the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are also promoted effectively through work undertaken in other subjects, although not enough attention is given to helping pupils understand how they can improve the quality of their writing in subjects other than English. The teaching of reading is given a high priority in the Reception and Years 1 and 2, and voluntary helpers and teaching assistants play a significant role in helping pupils to develop good reading skills. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 display very good reading skills, but more guidance could be given to ensure that all pupils read a wide range of good quality literature. There are some good examples of the effective use of new technology to assist pupils' learning in other subjects. Generally, however, not enough use of is made of information and communication technology, and some aspects have not been taught to an appropriate level.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school fulfils statutory requirements and provides pupils with a good range of learning experiences. The school has identified and is rectifying weaknesses in its provision for information and communication technology. Inadequate accommodation limits the curriculum offered to children in the Reception class.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school has few pupils with special educational needs, although some pupils learn less quickly than others. The school has well-established procedures for identifying and giving support to these pupils, and for setting targets and reviewing pupils' progress. Older pupils could, however, be more involved in setting targets within their individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	The school caters well for pupils' personal development, and the introduction of personal, social and health education lessons is making an important contribution in this area. Pupils are helped to develop an understanding and respect for different faiths, cultures and beliefs, and there is very good provision for pupils' moral and social development. More opportunities need to be provided to help pupils to exercise their own initiative in their work.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Within the constraints of an overcrowded building, the attention given to pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school has good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and keeping careful track of their progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and her deputy provide the school with very good leadership. They have very clear ideas as to how the school should develop, based on a thorough understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Subject co-ordinators are beginning to fulfil their roles much more effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive of the school and maintain a critical and careful overview of finances and future developments. They fulfil their statutory duties well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has conducted very perceptive and detailed analyses of its provision for mathematics and information and communication technology, which have been used to identify ways in which provision could be improved. Subject co-ordinators are beginning to analyse work in their subjects more effectively.
The strategic use of resources	The school's finances are managed efficiently, and administrative procedures have improved substantially. The school makes good use of its resources and understands the need to seek best value when purchasing products and services.

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 enjoy coming to school. ● Their children are making good progress. ● The school is helping them to become mature. ● Standards of behaviour are good. ● The quality of the teaching is good. ● The school expects their children to work hard. ● The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The quantity and consistency of homework. ● Information about their children's progress. ● The way the school works with parents. ● The range of extra-curricular activities. ● The challenge provided for more able pupils. ● The support provided for special needs. ● Better accommodation.

Although almost all parents said at the end of the parents' meeting that they were pleased with the school and would not wish their children to go elsewhere, many of the comments made during the meeting, and most of those expressed in writing, were critical of many aspects of the school. The inspection team, and the leadership of the school, would agree that, as in any school, there are areas where improvements could be made. However, the inspection team finds it hard to reconcile the very critical views of some parents with the fact that West Hill Primary School is a good school, which has a very positive ethos, and which enables pupils to achieve high academic standards. The team agrees with all of the positive comments expressed by the great majority of parents who returned the questionnaire but finds little justification for most of the concerns expressed by the substantial minority of parents who communicated in writing or voiced their concerns at the parents' meeting. Within the constraints imposed by the finances available for running the school, the limitations of the accommodation, the diversity of pupils' needs and the finite amount of time available to the school's staff, the committed and hard-working teachers and support staff are doing very well to provide the quality of education which pupils at West Hill enjoy. Parents receive informative written reports about their children's progress, have formal opportunities to consult staff and every opportunity to consult staff on an informal basis. The school is open, receptive and welcoming to parents and appreciates the voluntary help given by many parents within the classroom or running a good range of extra-curricular activities. Without being pushed to the

utmost limits, the more able pupils are given plenty of challenge and stimulus, and pupils who learn more slowly are given additional help. The inspection team suggests, however, that pupils should be given greater encouragement and more opportunity to exercise their own initiative in order to develop the ability to become truly independent learners. The team wholeheartedly endorses parents' concerns about the unsuitability of the accommodation for children in the Reception class. The school is actively pursuing plans to improve the situation.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils of all abilities make good progress throughout the school and achieve standards in English, mathematics and science which are well above the national average.

1. Most pupils who attend the school come from favoured and 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 builds well on these early foundations, ensuring that pupils make good progress throughout the school and that, in every year group, pupils' attainments are well above average for their ages.
2. In every year since the last inspection, the school's results in reading, writing and mathematics in tests at the end of Year 2 have been well above the national average and, for much of the time, the results have been amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country. The results in 2001 were not quite as high as in previous years, but were nevertheless better than those achieved immediately after the last inspection, and the overall trend is one of improvement. The results have also been well above average for schools whose pupils come from similar backgrounds.
3. A similar picture is apparent in national tests 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 and amongst the top five per cent of schools whose pupils come from similar backgrounds. Not only has the school maintained its position in relation to other schools, but its results have continued to improve, mirroring the national trend. In all three subjects, standards are higher now than they were at the time of the last inspection. Unlike the national picture, where girls perform better in English, boys and girls achieve equally good results.
4. The school places considerable emphasis on developing pupils' reading skills, particularly in the Reception and Years 1 and 2, and pupils achieve very high standards in this aspect of English. Pupils have frequent opportunities to read individually to teachers, teaching assistants and voluntary helpers, and careful records are kept of their progress. This additional practice, help and encouragement build on the good work undertaken by teachers during the whole-class and group-teaching sessions during the literacy hour so that, by the time pupils enter Year 3, most read with fluency and good understanding. In an English lesson in Year 2, for example, all of the individual pupils who were asked to read the class text did so with great competence and assurance. Parental support also has a significant impact on developing pupils' reading skills in these early stages, and the school encourages an active partnership with parents which helps pupils to make rapid progress.
5. Pupils continue to read regularly in Years 3 to 6, and staff and helpers continue to hear each pupil read on a number of occasions each week. Some helpers talk to children in greater depth about the books they are reading. By the time pupils leave school, most can read complex texts with good understanding. The reading diaries, which pupils are expected to maintain, indicate that most read a great deal, and that they are capable of tackling texts which would challenge much older pupils. One girl, for example, talked with maturity about her reading of 'Jane Eyre', but she also enjoyed more popular children's fiction. However, the reading diaries of some pupils reveal a rather unbalanced diet, and further guidance from staff could help pupils to choose a wider range of books and raise standards and pupils' appreciation of good literature even further.

6. As with reading, pupils' writing skills develop well as they move through the school. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to write and are encouraged to use reference books to help them with their spelling or their choice of appropriate vocabulary. One lower achieving pupil in Year 2, for example, was observed exercising great perseverance and concentration as he looked up words to complete his sentences. In Year 4, pupils produced some very good written descriptions of how they imagined Dorothy's house in the 'Wizard of Oz', in response to the stimulus provided at the start of the lesson by the teacher. Their vocabulary was wide and they expressed themselves well. In another lesson, pupils in Year 5 demonstrated their growing awareness of the way punctuation can alter the meaning of a sentence, as they used punctuation, connectives and adjectival phrases to rewrite a sequence of shorter sentences. Pupils in Year 6 produced some excellent anthropomorphic poems in the style of Elizabeth Jennings, in which they described through their poetry what life might be like for a variety of animals, as they suffered persecution by humans or others within the animal kingdom. The range of writing is wide, and ranges from poetry, imaginative stories and letters to investigation of the writer's treatment of characters in 'Bleak House', analysis of the features of style, structure and presentation in newspaper articles and the production of arguments for and against school uniform. Even though some pupils show weaknesses in their spelling and punctuation, and not enough is done to correct such errors when written work is produced for subjects other than English, most pupils show good imagination and the ability to write using richly varied language. Thus, nearly all pupils are well equipped to write for a variety of purposes by the time they leave the school. Visits from writers, such as the author Michael Morpurgo and poet Phil Bowen, act as important stimuli for the pupils and play a significant part in helping them to achieve high standards. The new headteacher's desire to introduce further initiatives to involve pupils in research projects and writing competitions shows that the school is continuing to think of further positive ways of developing pupils' literacy skills.
7. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good. Pupils listen well, both to their teachers and to views expressed by their classmates. They are articulate in their responses, and nearly all pupils have the confidence to join in discussion and express their opinions. Younger pupils are almost too keen, and do not always wait for their turn, but blurt out answers or contributions whilst others are speaking. Generally, such interruptions are a result of the pupils' enthusiasm; teachers deal with them well, with the result that pupils' ability to listen and await their turn improves as they move through the school, and they do not lose their readiness to respond to the teacher's questions.
8. Standards in mathematics are similarly high. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to try different approaches to solving problems and to explain their thinking. Good standards are also encouraged when pupils produce their written work, and attention to presentation and to details such as dating and titling their work helps to encourage a careful and ordered approach to mathematical problems. Good marking by the teachers, often with formative or encouraging comments, helps pupils to understand where they have gone wrong. The subject is well taught, and this helps the pupils to develop their understanding of number work, probability, measurement and problem solving. Work is clearly differentiated, so that the less able pupils receive additional help and the more able are given challenging extension work. As with English, interesting new initiatives, such as pupils helping to organise an art day for the school, and a mathematics evening for parents by devising different activities and challenges, promise not only to maintain pupils' interest but to deepen their understanding.
9. The school analyses pupils' progress well and, therefore, has a very clear picture of what pupils need to do to improve. Recently, some very careful analysis of how mathematics and information and communication technology are taught has provided valuable insights into how to improve teaching and learning even further. The meticulous analysis of the school's provision for mathematics, for example, not only outlines the many strengths in the teaching

of this subject, but also highlights areas of relative weakness, thus giving staff a clear agenda of aspects which need to be covered in further depth.

10. The samples of written work and the attainment of pupils during the lessons which were observed during the inspection also indicate high levels of achievement and show that pupils attain high standards in other subjects as well. Work on display in Year 3, for example, shows that pupils produce good quality work in design and technology. They have a good understanding of the various stages of making products, from initial design considerations through to making and then evaluating a finished product using bevel gears. Pupils are clearly very interested in the investigative work they do in science and learn through practical involvement. Pupils in Year 6, for example, talked enthusiastically about looking at soil samples to see what they were made of, and pupils in Year 5 were eager to find out why an experiment involving yeast had failed.
11. A wide variety of opportunities over and above the normal curriculum helps to raise standards in art and music. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 experience a residential week during which the focus is on art, drama and music. Instrumental tuition is offered, so that pupils have the opportunity to learn to play the violin, cello, guitar, flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone and piano. Orchestra and singing practices are held once a week. Good quality artwork enhances the learning environment. Pupils in Year 3, for example, produced some very good quality still-life pictures in the style of Cézanne and faces in the style of Picasso. In Year 6, history studies are used to inspire artwork, and imaginative pieces based on observations of ancient Egyptian tomb paintings complement some imaginative art in an impressionist style.

The school is a happy, friendly, but hard-working community. Staff cater well for most aspects of the pupils' personal development and set high expectations. The pupils respond by working hard and displaying very positive attitudes and very good behaviour.

12. The school's over-arching mission statement and aims, which have been the focus of recent discussions amongst staff, make clear that the school endeavours 'to nurture and support pupils of all abilities' and 'to promote an attitude of care, tolerance, trust and respect among the children, within the school and within the local and wider, global community'. Clear values and respect for other faiths and cultures are promoted through discussions in class and whole-school occasions such as assemblies. In the first assembly observed during the inspection, for example, there was a clear emphasis on helping pupils to reflect about how to think of other people and become caring and genuine in relationships with others.
13. Pupils from a very early age exhibit positive characteristics which contribute well to their learning. Children in the Reception class, for example, were very excited at the prospect of their English lesson at the start of the day. Although so many pupils wishing to contribute at the same time was potentially disruptive, the teacher dealt with the children in a calm and patient manner, so that their enthusiasm was not lost, but channelled in the right direction. In Year 2, the pupils' willingness to respond in a mathematics lesson by putting up their hands, and coming out to write on the board, meant that all were involved in the lesson, and the sea of smiling faces left the observer in no doubt that the pupils were enjoying the lesson. Similar enthusiastic responses were observed in Year 3, as pupils responded to the teacher's questions in a science lesson and then displayed very sensible attitudes as they carried out their investigation, resisting the temptation to mess around with the powder and other materials they had been given. By the time pupils reach Year 6, their responses are more measured, but the way they approach their work indicates a continuing enthusiasm, which is also conveyed well during conversation. These positive attitudes, which are nurtured well by all staff as pupils move through the school, make a very significant contribution to pupils' learning.

14. Pupils are fully aware of the school's high expectations with regard to behaviour, and they respond very well. The staff have recently reviewed the school's policy for behaviour and discipline in order to ensure that there is a uniform approach. At the start of each school year, each class draws up its own class rules. Discussion takes place as to why rules are needed and why they should be viewed as a positive help rather than a negative threat. These agreed rules are then displayed in the classroom and referred to as necessary. Pupils are fully aware of what will happen should they misbehave and feel that staff are fair in their dealings with them. The standard of behaviour in lessons is very good and is another important contributory factor in establishing a positive climate for learning. Pupils behave well outside lessons. They move around the building sensibly and display good manners at lunchtime. Although pupils are confined to too small an area during their break-times, they show considerable restraint and a good awareness of others. In their dealings with adults, they are polite, courteous, friendly and helpful.
15. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Adults treat pupils respectfully, and pupils respond in like manner. Observations of pupils' interactions with adults during their free time indicate warm and friendly relationships. Pupils engage in natural conversation, ask questions and volunteer to help. Relationships amongst pupils themselves are also very good. Older pupils admit to the occasional tiff, but are quick to add that the school is a friendly place and that these minor quarrels are dealt with quickly and amicably. Bullying is not perceived by the pupils to be a problem and they express confidence that the teachers would sort out any problems that might arise. No pupils have been excluded in recent times. The introduction of lessons for personal, social and health education is helping to raise pupils' awareness of many issues and to look carefully at their own actions and see how these affect others. In a discussion in Year 1, pupils showed that they already have well-developed concepts of what is fair. Recent initiatives, such as the formation of a school council, help pupils to become aware of democratic processes and give some the opportunity to take on additional responsibility. The council has, for example, discussed issues such as positive playtimes, looked at ways of improving them and drawn up rotas for the smooth running of playtime games. Pupils are very willing to take on additional responsibilities and, indeed, many volunteer to carry out tasks for their teachers during their breaks. Older pupils man the reception desk and answer the telephone at lunchtime; they have very clear guidelines for these tasks and enjoy the responsibility.
16. At the meeting before the inspection, some parents commented that pupils were joyless in the way they approached their work or school performances. There was little indication of this during the inspection. Indeed, the way pupils applied themselves to their work indicated quite the reverse. All of the pupils interviewed talked convincingly about their enjoyment of school. As visitors, immersed for two days in the day-to-day activities of the school, the inspection team came away with a very clear picture of a happy, friendly, hard-working community, whose ethos contributes significantly to the high standards achieved and prepares pupils well to become responsible citizens within society.

The quality of the teaching throughout the school is good, and there are some examples of outstanding teaching. The teachers plan thoroughly and are diligent, committed and caring.

17. The overall quality of the teaching is good. As a result, pupils learn well and are given the opportunity to maintain consistently high standards as they move through the school. Of the 17 lessons observed during the inspection, teaching in half was good and in a further quarter was very good or better. The teaching is consistently good throughout the school, and some particularly good teaching was observed in Years 3 and 5.
18. Very thorough planning provides a firm foundation for the teaching in all classes. A good mathematics lesson in Year 2 was successful because the teacher had planned carefully;

clear objectives were shared with the pupils so that they knew what they were doing and why, and a good range of resources helped them to accomplish the objectives. The use of small individual whiteboards during the introductory part of the lesson enabled the teacher to see clearly if any pupils were having difficulties, and money bags and coins lent reality to the tasks which pupils then had to carry out on their own. A science lesson in Year 3 was very good because of the teacher's thorough preparation, which built well on previous learning. Resources were well organised beforehand, so that no time was lost during the lesson. Similarly, the planning for an English lesson in Year 4 tied in well with previous work and helped pupils to develop use of adjectives and figurative language to describe different settings.

19. Some parents feel that the school does not provide enough challenge for the more able pupils, yet teachers are very conscious of the need to stretch pupils, and they work hard to ensure that they provide sufficient challenge. For example, in an excellent mathematics lesson in Year 5, the teacher had carefully assessed the difficulties pupils had encountered in the previous lesson and tailored the lesson to help pupils overcome them. Skilled questioning really helped pupils to focus on the problems and find solutions. In many lessons, skilful questioning by the teacher ensures that challenge exists at many different levels, so that all pupils are included in discussions. The needs of lower attaining pupils are also met through specifically targeted work, frequently supervised or facilitated by teaching assistants. The teachers have high expectations, with regard both to pupils' behaviour and the standards they are expected to achieve. A mathematics lesson in Year 4, for example, started at a cracking pace, so that pupils were left in no doubt that much was required of them during the lesson. The teachers also set high standards by the way they present pupils' work for display, although they do not give quite the same attention to pupils' own presentation skills.
20. 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. In all classes, the teachers capitalise on the pupils' willingness to be involved in discussion. In a good personal and social education lesson in Year 5, for example, the open, friendly and encouraging manner of the teacher encouraged pupils to contribute their thoughts and ideas. In Year 4, the teacher drew on boys and girls equally, encouraging them to explain their thinking. Simple techniques, like the use of small, individual whiteboards, are used effectively. In an English lesson in Year 5, for example, all pupils completed their answers to the task on their whiteboards. Because it was easy for pupils to erase mistakes, it encouraged them to be more inventive, but also enabled the teacher to see clearly what pupils had written as she moved round the class. The boards were then shown to other pupils and the teacher used highlighter pens to highlight good features or indicate where improvements could be made. In a very good science lesson in Year 3, pupils were motivated to learn because of their practical involvement as they added spoonfuls of powder to carefully measured jugs of water to test out their predictions about solutions.
21. In the best lessons, the teachers are quick to assess what pupils know and how their learning can be moved forward. In the English lesson in Year 5, for example, there was a constant emphasis in getting pupils to think about what they were doing and how they could improve their work. Pupils were asked to make critical comments about the work shown by other pupils, and the teacher then added her own comments to show them how they could improve. Photographic evidence of a physical education lesson showed pupils working together in pairs and then, in small groups, practising and performing a dolphin dance which was then videoed. Pupils' written comments made it very clear that, although they were somewhat embarrassed to see themselves on screen, they were able to see clearly what they needed to do to improve.

The headteacher and her deputy provide very good leadership. Their analysis of all aspects of the school is very thorough and they have a clear understanding of what works well and what needs to be improved.

22. The school's reputation and its tradition of high academic results were built under the long-serving leadership of the previous headteacher. The current leadership team is relatively new to the school, with the deputy headteacher joining the school twelve months and the headteacher six months before the inspection. The new headteacher and her deputy work very well together and are providing very good leadership. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and share a clear vision of how they would like to see the school develop and become even better.
23. The school is now much more focused on its mission statement and aims than it was before. Governors, teachers and support staff, including mealtime assistants, have all been party to reformulating and refocusing on the school's aims, which have also been shared with parents and pupils. The school's mission statement – to create a happy, secure and stimulating learning environment in which all members of the school community can grow in self-esteem and develop their potential as human beings – is being amply fulfilled. The focus of monitoring activities is to ensure that specific aims are being fulfilled and that the school's development planning identifies appropriate action to remedy any weaknesses.
24. The new headteacher has been careful to build on the existing good work of the school and to ensure that new initiatives complement current good practice. Priorities for development are closely linked to the school's improvement plan, as well as to priorities identified by previous monitoring visits undertaken by the local authority. Initiatives to introduce more visits, participation in external events and the wider involvement of pupils are already providing greater variety and stimulus, which enrich the curriculum.
25. Whilst the teaching has, for a good number of years, clearly been successful in achieving and maintaining high academic standards, the new headteacher has implemented a thorough and comprehensive programme to monitor the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and in every subject. Although somewhat apprehensive at first, staff have appreciated the opportunity to observe lessons, which has also helped them to refine their own practice. The programme not only involves the observation of lessons, but thorough scrutiny and evaluation of all available assessment data, teachers' planning, subject action plans and pupils' work. Pupils and parents have been and will be involved through questionnaires to canvass their opinions, and half-termly unaided writing tasks and mathematical investigations provide further information to assist staff with their future planning. The school has undertaken very perceptive and detailed analyses of its provision for mathematics and information and communication technology, which have been used to identify ways in which the school could improve what it has to offer to pupils. The analyses are rigorous and provide particularly useful information to help staff identify areas which next need to be improved.
26. Improvements have been made to the school's administrative procedures, resulting in a more efficient use of time and better organisation of the working environment, with a consequent impact on the smooth running of the school.
27. Of particular importance is the delegation of greater responsibility to staff, whose roles as subject co-ordinators are being developed in line with the national standards for subject leaders. Individual staff now feel much more involved in the running of the school and, after only a short time, already have a much better understanding of their subject areas than before. Staff have attended conferences for subject leaders and received additional training in areas of need, as identified through performance management procedures, the school improvement plan and individual subject audits. The assumption of greater responsibility has had a positive effect on the ethos within the school and the enjoyment which staff experience in their work.

28. The headteacher has accomplished much in her short time at the school, but the expectation is unsustainable over the long term that she should fulfil a heavy teaching load, with major classroom responsibilities for English and mathematics, as well as the manifold duties, pressures and responsibilities in her role as headteacher.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Accommodation provided for children in the Reception, as this limits the range of learning opportunities.

29. The present school was originally constructed as a five-class school for 147 pupils, but has grown, with little physical alteration, to its current size of 160+ pupils. In order to accommodate seven classes, avoiding mixed-age classes, the school now uses its former dining hall as a classroom, and houses the Reception class in a small conservatory, adjoining the rooms used to teach Year 1 and Year 4. The parent-teacher association provided funds to construct the conservatory some five years ago, and it was originally intended as a room for art, games and recreational use and as an overflow for Reception and Year 1 at the time. Although the conservatory has immediate access to an outside play area, there is no internal access to other parts of the school, other than through the two adjoining classrooms.
30. The physical drawbacks and limitations of the room impinge on pupils' learning. Children sitting in certain positions within the classroom are inconvenienced if someone needs to come into the classroom, as there is not enough room to open the door without one or two children moving from their seats. Lessons are disturbed in the adjoining classrooms if a child from the Reception needs to pass through to go to the toilet or into the library area. During the inspection, for example, a lesson in Year 1 was interrupted at regular intervals as children passed through for their turns for individual reading with the classroom assistant.
31. The small size of the room limits the teaching methods which can be used. There is little room, for example, for children to gather round for a whole-class session. It is difficult for adults to circulate within the classroom. It is not easy to organise group work, and there is no space for activity areas, which are commonly found in Reception classrooms. This severely curtails opportunities for children to learn how to make independent choices about which activities they wish to undertake, as only a very limited number of activities can be on offer at any one time. Children are, therefore, denied the wide range of activities which are simultaneously on offer in a well-equipped and well-run Reception classroom. The room is particularly restrictive for activities which promote pupils' creative and physical development, and for aspects of their personal, social and emotional development, which are normally promoted through imaginative play and role-playing areas.
32. The teacher copes well with the limitations imposed by the accommodation and, although not able to offer the variety and scope of learning activities which a larger and better-equipped room would facilitate, nevertheless helps children to make good progress in communication, language and literacy, in their mathematical development and in other aspects of their learning. Most children come from favoured and supportive home backgrounds and, generally, show a high degree of readiness when they start school in the September or January of the Reception year and, because of the patience and adaptability of the staff, virtually all children still manage to exceed the expectations for the Reception year in each area of learning by the time they start Year 1.
33. The school is well aware of the inadequacies of the current facilities and has looked at various alternative ways of dividing pupils into groups and organising classrooms. The decision to use the conservatory area for the Reception children has been made in the light of the best interests of the majority, and there is no doubt that pupils in Years 1 to 6 benefit from the

smaller class sizes and the homogeneity of teaching which single year groups provide, even though children in the Reception draw the short straw. Governors are currently actively pursuing the possibility of creating two new classrooms using modular buildings, which would then provide much better facilities for children in the Reception and a more suitable classroom for pupils in Year 4.

Provision for and standards achieved in information and communication technology.

34. Standards in information and communication technology are lower than in other subjects and not as high as they should be. The school has been very well supported by the parent-teacher association, which has purchased a new computer each year for the past few years, but is still not well equipped to teach the subject. The diversity of computers and the different range of software available on each machine make it difficult to co-ordinate activities for a whole class or even for smaller groups of pupils to undertake at the same time.
35. Because of the difficulties in organising the teaching of information and communication technology and a lack of subject expertise amongst the staff, the subject has not been taught as much as it should have been, and not all aspects of the curriculum have been covered in sufficient depth. Although some effective use is made of new technology, generally, not enough use is made of computers as tools for learning. The standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 2 are mostly in line with national expectations, but pupils at the end of Year 6 are not yet achieving the nationally expected standard in all aspects of the curriculum.
36. The school recognises that its provision for information and communication technology is a weakness and has undertaken a detailed and perceptive analysis of the current situation. This has identified areas in which teachers need to gain greater expertise and aspects which need to be taught in greater depth. Teachers now follow a recommended scheme of work which is providing a much better structure for teaching the subject, but the analysis has also highlighted the need to acquire new software in order to cover all aspects of the scheme adequately. Detailed plans have been drawn up to provide better equipment which will enable larger groups of pupils to be taught at the same time and will provide machines which run identical and appropriate software. Further training is planned for staff with specific emphases on assessment and planning, implementation of the scheme of work and developing the use of new technology to assist teaching and learning in other subjects. Subject co-ordinators have also identified the need to ensure that there is sufficient use of technology within their subject areas.
37. Much of the work undertaken by pupils relates to the more common and frequently used applications, such as word processing and graphics. Most pupils, throughout the school, display an appropriate level of skill in using a word processor to present their text. Pupils in Year 3, for example, have written about a special friend, combining text and graphics to produce a well-presented piece of writing. Pupils in Year 6 have produced their own targets on the computer, demonstrating the ability to set out text in different ways, import graphics and use text manipulation features to produce different styles of headings. Older pupils are starting to develop skills in other areas as more of the scheme of work is covered. They understand basic concepts of using a spreadsheet and are beginning to make greater use of the Internet for research purposes or to send emails to pupils in other schools. As yet, pupils have not undertaken enough work on control, data handling or the use of databases.
38. In recent times, staff have improved their own skills, and there is evidence of good use of new technology around the school, for example in the preparation of displays or for planning purposes. As part of the initial training undertaken by staff, some teachers have built up impressive portfolios of how they use technology for the preparation of materials, display and note taking. A digital camera is being used effectively to provide evidence of pupils' work, and video recordings have been used to good effect in physical education. However, there is still

quite a bit of work to be done to enable pupils to reach similar standards in information and communication technology to those achieved in other subjects and to provide them with the necessary skills to use new technology as a natural tool for learning in other subjects.

The range of opportunities for pupils to exercise their own initiative and independence.

39. Although pupils achieve high standards in their academic work, the teaching methods used in the past have not encouraged pupils to exercise their own initiative or to become truly independent learners. The teaching style has tended to be very didactic; many of the lessons observed during the inspection, for example, were very tightly controlled and gave pupils few opportunities for choice. Because pupils are good at following instructions and modelling their answers on the examples given by the teachers, and because they enjoy the activities provided, which are often challenging, they have learnt well. However, they have not developed sufficient ability to become critically aware and to make choices of their own.
40. Various factors in the way pupils respond within lessons indicate that the promotion of independence has not been a prime objective in the past. Unless the task is very clearly defined, pupils in some classes find it hard to work on their own without checking at frequent intervals whether what they are doing is right or acceptable. In a good lesson in Year 6, for example, in which the teacher had been getting pupils to examine Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky', pupils were asked to use the structure of the poem to construct their own nonsense verses. Whilst a few pupils set about the task with alacrity, many found it hard to make their own choices, constantly seeking approval from the teacher, slightly afraid to be adventurous and to branch out on their own, and not sure whether their suggestions would be acceptable. Some teachers have yet to organise their group activity sessions in a way that promotes independent learning skills, preferring to monitor the activity of every pupil in the class by circulating around the room, rather than concentrating on the most efficient use of time by teaching specific groups of pupils whilst others get on with their work independently. The result is that pupils get used to help being immediately available and do not have the incentive to work things out for themselves.
41. From the planning observed and from talking to pupils, there appear to be few opportunities in which pupils are encouraged to make their own choices or use their own initiative, for example, by pursuing open-ended research activities, having a greater input into designing and conducting their own investigative work in science, or taking responsibility for their own projects. During the inspection, pupils participated well in the school assembly, but there appear to be few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for producing an assembly themselves. Whilst discussion is encouraged and pupils are occasionally asked to work in pairs or small groups, this was not a common feature in the lessons observed, and the formal arrangement of seating in many classrooms restricts group activities in which pupils debate and discuss the merits of a particular approach and come to informed decisions on the basis of their discussions.
42. In some lessons, the teacher asked for pupils' ideas, but gave little credence to their answers. In one class, the pace of the lesson was too fast and pupils were not given the opportunity to finish having their say before the lesson continued with what the teacher wished the pupils to do. In another lesson, some sensible ideas were given by the pupils, but were then effectively dismissed as the class was asked to pursue the problem in the way the teacher had already determined. Whilst teachers are very good at presenting pupils' work very attractively in displays around the school, there does not appear to be a similar expectation that pupils should determine equally attractive ways of presenting their finished and collected work, for example, for a history project. Most of the pupils who attend the school enjoy very supportive home backgrounds, and this has an important impact on their readiness for school, their ability to read, write and calculate, and the availability of additional information and resources at home, but many pupils are not expected to take responsibility for themselves. A group of

pupils, for example, was observed at the end of an after-school activity, dumping their muddy football boots on a willing parent, but oblivious of their obligation to clean, put away and look after their own possessions.

43. Under the school's new leadership, there is a growing awareness of the importance of the need to encourage greater independence, and some teachers talk about the teaching methods and systems within the school as having been too rigid before. Science lessons are becoming much more investigative and open-ended. The establishment of a school council is a move in the right direction to encourage pupils to develop a sense of responsibility. The school's analysis of its provision for numeracy indicates that weaknesses in pupils' response in mathematics may have to do with pupils' lack of ability to work independently and to be prepared to persevere and concentrate on the task in hand. Some teachers are already encouraging pupils to be more critically self-aware. In a good lesson in Year 5, the teacher was encouraging pupils to be critical of the work they had done and then offer criticism of other pupils' work. The pupils found this very hard to do, but the teacher correctly persevered, as the ability to evaluate critically and see how improvements can be made is absolutely fundamental to enabling high achieving pupils to achieve even more highly.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

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

- i. Improve the accommodation and curriculum provided for children in the Reception class by *:
 - pursuing every possible means to secure more spacious and suitable accommodation which would enable each area of learning to be taught in a manner which is appropriate for the school's youngest children.

[paragraphs 29 – 33]

- ii. Raise standards in information and communication technology by *:
 - improving the school's resources for the subject;
 - ensuring that all aspects of the curriculum are taught in sufficient depth;
 - making much greater use of new technology in the teaching of all subjects.

[paragraphs 34 – 38]

- iii. Provide more opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to use and develop their own initiative and become more independent in their learning.

[paragraphs 39 – 43]

* These issues have already been identified as priorities in the school's development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	17
Number of formal discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils [In addition to this figure, there were many informal discussions with staff, other adults and pupils]	19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	3	9	4	0	0	0
Percentage	6	18	53	24	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than 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)	–	161
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	–	4

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	–	20

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	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.2
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	12	13	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	12
	Girls	13	12	13
	Total	25	24	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	96 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	12
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	25	25	25
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	17	11	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	14	16
	Girls	10	9	11
	Total	25	23	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 (93)	82 (93)	96 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	14	16
	Girls	9	9	11
	Total	23	23	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (93)	82 (93)	96 (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	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	140
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.5
Average class size	23

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	44

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	–
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	336,564
Total expenditure	339,371
Expenditure per pupil	2,071
Balance brought forward from previous year	16,961
Balance carried forward to next year	14,154

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	2.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.5
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	161
Number of questionnaires returned	57
Percentage of questionnaires returned	35%

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	44	0	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	49	40	5	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	49	2	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	44	19	5	0
The teaching is good.	49	46	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	33	25	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	26	12	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	26	4	4	2
The school works closely with parents.	37	40	18	5	0
The school is well led and managed.	40	46	4	0	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	37	4	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	53	19	0	0

Other issues raised by parents

Many of the parents who attended the parents' meeting were highly critical of aspects of the school, despite their assertions that they were pleased with the school and would not wish their children to go elsewhere. The main areas of concern focused on:

- The quantity of the homework and the consistency with which it is set.
- The amount of information about their children's progress and the frequency with which it is received.
- The way the school works with parents.
- The range of extra-curricular activities and the fact that few staff are involved in these activities.
- The challenge provided for more able pupils, particularly in reading in Key Stage 1.
- The support provided for children with special educational needs.
- The cramped nature of the accommodation, in particular, the classroom for children in the Reception and the over-crowded toilets.