

INSPECTION REPORT

**WHEATFIELDS INFANT AND NURSERY
SCHOOL**

St Albans

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117268

Headteacher: Mrs C Booth

Reporting inspector: Mr G R Logan
11810

Dates of inspection: 2 – 3 July 2002

Inspection number: 198829

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and nursery

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 7 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Downes Road
St Albans
Herts

Postcode: AL4 9NT

Telephone number: 01727 859978

Fax number: 01727 832807

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Ms Y Batliwala

Date of previous inspection: 24 November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
11810	Mr G R Logan	Registered inspector
9499	Mr P Daruwala	Lay inspector
1189	Mrs S Brown	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates,
Demeter House,
Station Road,
Cambridge
CB1 2RS
Tel: 01223 578500

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
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	10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	14
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	15
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	16

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wheatfields Infant and Nursery School is a community infant school in St Albans, with 263 pupils in the main school, 135 boys and 128 girls. In addition, there are 74 part-time pupils, 36 boys and 38 girls, in the nursery. Children enter the nursery in the September or January of the year in which they are four. Attainment on entry to reception is slightly above average, although there is a broad spread of attainment. Thirty three pupils in the main school and two in the nursery have special educational needs, mostly mild learning difficulties. One of those in the main school has a statement. These figures are well below the national average. Nine pupils are of Indian heritage and five are from other minority ethnic groups. Eleven of these pupils have English as an additional language, four of whom are in the early stages of learning English. This is a lower figure than in many schools. About one per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is well below the national average. Pupil mobility is very low, with just over three per cent of pupils leaving or joining the school, other than at the usual entry or leaving points. There has been a high level of staff change recently, partly as a result of retirements.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wheatfields Infant and Nursery is a good school which, in spite of some recent turbulence and staff changes, is very effective and has done well to maintain standards. It provides a good education for its pupils who achieve high standards in the main subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils generally make good progress across the school; however, this has been affected by variations in the quality of teaching. Although teaching is good overall, with very good teaching in the nursery and reception classes, the quality of teaching varies between classes in Year 1 and particularly in Year 2. The recently appointed headteacher provides very good leadership and has a clear view of the way forward. The school is managed very well. Pupils enjoy a rich curriculum and all of them are included in every aspect of the daily life of the school. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching and the curriculum are very good in the Foundation Stage.
- Pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and art and design.
- The curriculum provides a rich range of opportunities for pupils and the extra-curricular programme is excellent.
- Links between the school and its parents are very effective.
- The recently appointed headteacher is providing very good leadership for the school.

What could be improved

- The consistency of teaching, particularly in Years 1 and 2.
- The consistent use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997. At that time there were three issues to be tackled:

- Review the school development plan to ensure that it deals more effectively with long-term developments;
- Ensure that the prospectus complies fully with requirements;
- Review the governors' annual report to ensure that all required information is included.

All issues have been dealt with effectively. In addition, the quality of the curriculum has improved. There has been considerable focus on the development of the Foundation Stage provision. However, although the amount of very good or excellent teaching has increased, a significant proportion of teaching at present is no better than satisfactory. As a result, pupils' attitudes are very good though no longer outstanding, as in the previous report. The partnership with parents remains a strength. Although there has been minor variation from year to year, the standards in English, mathematics and science indicated at the last inspection have been broadly maintained. Progress overall has been satisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	A*	A	A	A
Writing	A*	A	A	B
Mathematics	A*	B	A	B

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

The test results for pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2001 were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics, compared to the national average. Standards were well above average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics when compared to those of pupils from similar schools. Standards in science were above average. There has been some fluctuation in standards in recent years, mainly in relation to the proportion of pupils achieving standards above those normally expected for their age. This has shown some decline since 1999, when results were in the top five per cent in the country. That said, the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected level in 2001 was still well above the national average in reading and science and above average in writing and mathematics. Although the school has not had secure tracking systems in place until recently, available data indicate that, in 2001, most pupils exceeded the predictions made at the time they entered reception and had therefore made good progress. Initial test results and evidence from the inspection suggest that current standards are similar to those achieved in 2001, with some improvement in higher level attainment in all subjects except science. Reading is stronger overall than writing, although the good opportunities for writing across the curriculum are a strength. At the time of the inspection, the quality of the work seen varied between classes in Year 2, largely reflecting the quality of teaching. Two of the three classes have had a change of teacher during the year. In the third class, where the teaching is most consistent and of high quality, pupils do very well. Standards are more consistent in Year 1. The school gives good opportunities for practical experience in science and standards in the creative arts, especially art and design, are high. While skills in ICT are satisfactory overall, opportunities for the use of ICT have not yet been developed consistently across the curriculum. Almost all children make good progress in the nursery and reception classes, with most achieving, and the higher attainers exceeding, the nationally expected standards in all areas by the time they enter Year 1. The good pace of learning is maintained in Year 1. At present, however, progress in Year 2 is not consistent enough to guarantee that the present high standards in test results can be maintained. Overall, however, pupils achieve well during their time in the school. No formal targets were set for the current year. Trends over time are broadly in line with national trends, other than in writing. As a result, the standards found at the last inspection have been broadly maintained. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, and those few in the early stages of learning English, make similar progress to other pupils and are well represented among the higher attainers in the national tests.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to learn and do well. This is a key reason why standards are good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The majority of pupils behave well. Good behaviour tends to slip in lessons where the teaching is weaker and there is insufficient challenge. There have been no exclusions in the last five years.

Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are sensitive to each other's needs and they are keen to help and support each other. In most lessons, relationships are very good, enabling pupils to work successfully.
Attendance	Good. Good levels of attendance have a positive effect on pupils' learning. There is no unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good

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

Teaching is good overall. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen during the inspection. However, there has been a significant amount of staff change recently and there is more variation in the teaching than at the last inspection. This is affecting both standards and pupils' attitudes. The headteacher is well aware of the inconsistencies and steps have been taken to ensure that the quality of teaching is raised. The most consistent teaching is in the nursery and reception classes where, in half the lessons, teaching was very good. Staff work very well together. This gives the youngest children a really good start to their education. In Year 1, just under three-quarters of lessons are good or better. However, all the very good and excellent teaching occurs in one class. Teaching is more variable in Year 2 - very good in one class, but only satisfactory in the other two. This reflects, in part, some very recent staff changes. With the very good start in Foundation Stage and in Year 1 and some good teaching in Year 2, pupils are helped to make good gains in their learning over time.

English and mathematics are well taught in most classes and almost all teachers are competent at developing their pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. From nursery, pupils are taught their letter sounds. They learn to identify unfamiliar words. Standards of reading are very good by the time pupils reach Year 2. Writing skills are also taught systematically. The oldest pupils write with confidence and a clear structure, using a wide range of vocabulary. Opportunities to write in other subjects of the curriculum are developed very effectively and this is a strength. However, overall standards vary with the quality of teaching. Basic mathematical skills are taught well. Pupils have a good grounding in number facts and are quick to recall them mentally. Most pupils are gaining confidence in working out problems and use their mathematical knowledge in subjects such as art and design and ICT. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported and make good progress in their learning. Higher attaining pupils, including those who are particularly gifted or talented, are accurately identified and are well challenged in some lessons. Most of them make good progress, but this slips where the teaching does not take account of their needs. Although there is no specific input for the very few pupils with English as an additional language, they are planned for and supported well and make similar progress to other pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. A broad, balanced, vibrant curriculum, imaginatively developed, which is rich in first-hand experiences. Extra-curricular opportunities are excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are identified early, receive good support and make good progress. Clear targets are identified.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Only a few pupils do not have English as their first language. There is no specific language input, but staff are well aware of pupils' needs. They make similarly good progress to other pupils.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good; for spiritual development it is good. This is a strong feature of the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school is a caring environment. Attendance and pupils' behaviour are monitored closely. There are good systems for monitoring pupils' academic progress (very good in the nursery and reception) and information is used well to plan future work. The school is in the early stages of setting individual targets for pupils.

Many parents help in school. The school provides detailed curriculum information for parents. A number of parents are still concerned about the instability of staffing; otherwise, complaints about the school are infrequent. Many appreciate the enhanced programme of extra-curricular activities.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and has made a good start in tackling weaker aspects. Established subject managers provide good leadership for their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body works closely with the headteacher to take the school forward. Statutory requirements are met. Much of their work is very thorough. They are beginning to develop more opportunities to acquire first-hand experience of teaching and learning in the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. She makes good use of performance data and is strongly focused on improving areas of concern.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Funding is used very well to promote learning and to improve standards. Governors and staff are increasingly aware of the importance of making the necessary comparisons to ensure that the school provides good value.

The recently-published school development plan sets a sharply-focused agenda. Appropriate key priorities have been identified. The school has made a very good start in developing self-evaluation strategies. It is very well resourced. The quality of accommodation is very good. The school is well staffed, although there has been some movement recently. Learning support staff make a very good contribution to pupils' learning.

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. • Children are making good progress. • The teaching is good. • Behaviour is good. • There are good links with parents. • The extra-curricular activities provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • The information they are given about their child's progress.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. The headteacher is working to ensure that pupil reports provide the necessary information about pupils' progress and that homework arrangements are consistent across the school and are made known to parents. Parents were also concerned about recent staff changes. At the time of the inspection, the school was fully staffed for the new school year.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Teaching and the curriculum are very good in the Foundation Stage

1. The provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is a strength of the school. This has recently been a focus for development culminating in the award of the local education authority's Quality Standard in 2002. Adults have high expectations of the children who, in turn, make good gains in learning as a result of the very good teaching and well-judged intervention by adults. Nursery nurses and classroom assistants play a significant role in the teaching of groups of children.
2. The nursery class provides a stimulating learning environment. For example, the 'animal hide' is a creative theme for a role-play area. Planning is very thorough, indicating clear objectives for learning, linked to the Early Learning Goals (expectations for most children to reach by the end of the reception year). Children have good opportunities to make choices for their daily programme. Personal development is a strength. The independence which is a significant characteristic of the most successful classes in Years 1 and 2 is well established in the nursery. Children persevere when developing new skills. They take turns and show respect for each other. They are highly motivated, confident and articulate when talking to other children in the group at registration. There is good evidence of the support for early writing skills, encompassing mark-making, writing names and some ambitious independent writing by a gifted child. The outdoor provision for both nursery and reception children is very good.
3. When children enter the reception classes, their attainment is, overall, just above average. Teaching in the reception classes is very good and the children make good progress. This is true for gifted and talented children, just as for those with special educational needs and the small number of minority ethnic children in the reception classes. Learning activities are well planned and delivered, so that children's skills are developed effectively. There is a very good pace to learning. Assessment is used very well to ensure that activities provide plenty of challenge. Staff have created an exciting learning environment in the reception area, including interactive displays which encourage the development of children's thinking and literacy skills. Children have many opportunities to make choices; for example, in the activities which they follow in the afternoon in the reception classes. This develops their confidence, self-esteem and independence and consequently has a very positive effect upon their learning.
4. Most children are likely to achieve or exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year and most are working confidently on activities from the National Literacy Strategy. They explore texts and the more confident children use dictionaries to search for words. Staff promote early writing skills well. The most able children structure their work well. They work together well in pairs to sequence pictures of the story they have just heard. Staff encourage children to talk confidently about characters in their books, or what they have done at school or at home. Social skills are successfully fostered in many activities across the curriculum.
5. Staff promote the learning of number very effectively, so that standards are above average by the end of the reception year. Children have a secure understanding of counting numbers to 50 or more. Higher attaining children can successfully add and subtract two numbers which add up to 20 or less. The more able add ten to other numbers. They accurately sequence the hours on a clock face. They plot simple graphs and charts of their choice of favourite shops.
6. The programme in the afternoon provides a very good range of activities, many of which focus on science. Tasks are interesting and challenging. All the children are curious about the world around them. Most of them are competent in using the computer. They use the mouse accurately to move the cursor around the screen. They use a paint program to create patterns. They learn about the celebrations and festivals of different cultures, create simple maps and sequence the life cycle of a frog. Staff encourage children to use magnifying glasses to examine minibeasts such as insects and worms and help them to make creative use of the outdoor environment.

7. A strength of the Foundation Stage is the extent to which staff work together. They know when to stand back and let the children explore for themselves and when to give support so that learning moves forward briskly. Children, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, make rapid gains in learning because of the high quality of the teaching, the very good planning and the very positive relationships between adults and children.

Pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and art and design

8. The high standards in Years 1 and 2 which were apparent at the last inspection have, overall, been effectively sustained in the intervening period. However, minor variations have occurred from year to year. In 2001, although standards overall were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics, there was a decrease in the proportion of pupils exceeding nationally expected levels in the tests at the end of Year 2, particularly in writing. Preliminary test results for 2002 indicate that there has been a further improvement in writing, although there is some variation in results between the three classes in Year 2. This variation reflects both pupils' age and maturity, and the quality of teaching in different classes. Consistently high standards in reading have been sustained through 2002, with about half the pupils achieving above average standards. In mathematics the proportion of higher level attainment has increased. In science there has been a decline in higher level attainment, largely as a result of the school applying more rigorous assessment criteria, developed in consultation with the junior school.
9. Standards in writing are well above average in Year 2. The most able pupils are confident writers who write clearly, using a wide range of vocabulary. They produce well structured stories. They use punctuation accurately and write in a neat joined style. There are very good opportunities for writing in other subjects across the curriculum and these are planned for well. Standards in reading are well above average. Most pupils read confidently and benefit from good access to books and good support for reading, both at school and at home.
10. Standards in mathematics are well above average, with one class in Year 2 achieving particularly high standards. Numeracy skills are well developed. Pupils have a lively recall of addition and subtraction and can sequence numbers accurately. In the best lessons, pupils are expected to justify and explain the strategy they have used when making calculations. In some classes, pupils have better opportunities for developing independence; for example, in recording calculations on their own rather than using the teacher's prepared worksheets.
11. There are strengths in the teaching of science. Standards are above average. Pupils have a good knowledge of living things and the world around them. The support for first-hand experience through observation, research, field-work and visits is very good. The development of opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills in science is also very good.
12. Of the other subjects in the curriculum, art and design is a particular strength. The range of opportunities offered to pupils and the skilled teaching underpin the high quality work produced. Impressive three-dimensional work using wood and textiles resulted from a recent artist-in-residence initiative, but there is also a range of other very good work on display.
13. Pupils with special educational needs, and the few with English as an additional language, make good progress in lessons and over time, in line with their classmates.
14. School records indicate that, in 2001, most children exceeded the predictions made when they entered reception, so that the progress made by pupils was good overall. However, until recently, the school's systems for tracking the progress of individual pupils have been limited. For example, no formal targets were set for the current Year 2 pupils, to enable a clear measure of their progress to be made. Tracking systems have now been implemented and priority is being given to setting group targets, and to training staff in individual target-setting. These initiatives should make it easier for staff to monitor pupils' progress more closely.

The curriculum provides a rich range of opportunities for pupils and the extra-curricular programme is excellent

15. One of the school's strengths is the exciting, broad and balanced curriculum it offers to its pupils, including those with special educational needs, those who are gifted and talented and those with English as an additional language. The curriculum provides equal opportunities for all pupils. They experience a rich and varied curriculum and their access to appropriate learning opportunities is closely monitored.
16. From the earliest days in school, children are immersed in activities that encourage them to want to learn. The natural curiosity of the nursery children is developed well; for example, when they learn about animals in their 'animal park', and when they observe imaginary wild animals from a 'hide'. They enjoy creative activities such as drawing, painting and model making. Children in the reception class have produced woven pictures, using a variety of textiles, and have made models of fish to add to an underwater scene. The outdoor environment has been imaginatively developed. Children have very good opportunities to run, jump and climb. The school has introduced the literacy hour and daily mathematics lessons sensitively and effectively, so that, by the end of the reception year, children recognise letter shapes, read simple, frequently used words and begin to understand the idea of adding and subtracting numbers.
17. The rich curriculum extends through the rest of the school. Literacy and numeracy sessions are stimulating and interesting, building well on pupils' earlier learning in a step-by-step way. Although ICT has been a weaker element in the curriculum, it is now better resourced and has begun to make a better contribution to pupils' learning; for example, in Year 1, ICT is used to produce symmetrical pictures to reinforce the mathematical idea of symmetry, and to record the growth of beans, as part of an activity in science. The effective use of computers to assist learning across the curriculum is an area which the school is keen to develop further.
18. A significant strength of the curriculum lies in the creative arts. Pupils throughout the school enjoy music and sing well in assemblies. Opportunities in art and design are very well developed. For example, on display in the hall is a large frieze based in Monet's 'Water Lillies', together with a group of three-dimensional constructions incorporating some elaborate weaving resulting from a recent artist-in-residence project. Much of this work is of a very high standard. Displays generally are aesthetically pleasing and encourage the children's involvement. Across the school, the range of media used and experiences offered is very wide. This includes, in Year 2, three-dimensional pieces inspired by Andy Goldsworthy, Mondrian style 'mathematical' pictures, representing fractions of a given shape, clay work and fabric paintings of minibeasts. The expertise of the co-ordinator for art and design has been a significant factor in achieving the very high quality art work evident across the school. Pupils are rightly proud of their efforts.
19. A further strength of the curriculum is the rich range of first-hand experiences which are offered to pupils. This is particularly evident in science where pupils have gone pond dipping, hunted for minibeasts and created an environment for butterflies. They grow beans and tomatoes in the classroom and have observed the development of sunflowers. There is an extensive programme of visits and visitors throughout the year. In Year 2 they have been on a minibeast 'safari' to the IACR Rothamsted Experimental Station and have visited St Albans Abbey to support work in religious education. The increased access to good quality ICT resources is enabling pupils to develop their research skills through the use of the Internet. This was seen both in mathematics and in science lessons during the inspection.
20. The headteacher is actively developing creative links between the schools which share the same site. Curriculum links with the junior school are now strong and there is a good level of co-operation between staff. Older pupils support the younger infants as reading mentors. Secondary schools pupils share their musical expertise and visit the infant school for work experience opportunities. Community links are developed well. There is a significant amount of community involvement, including business links and donations to support the funding of a proposed new classroom.
21. The extra-curricular programme is excellent for an infant school, enriching pupils' learning significantly. Pupils have access to an exceptionally wide range of after-school activities which involve them in music, gardening, drama, cooking, care for the environment, computing, German, football and tennis. These are well supported by pupils.

22. There is a comprehensive policy for pupils' personal, social and health education and this underpins the curriculum. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is very good overall. Provision for their spiritual development is good. There is an underlying serenity which permeates the school, and staff create moments for quiet reflection. Spirituality is developed well in subjects such as art and design and music and in pupils' individual writing, especially where the teaching is good. There is scope for the further development of teachers' understanding of how to incorporate a spiritual element throughout the curriculum. Moral development is very good. Pupils are very secure about what is right and wrong. They know the school and class rules well and obey them, demonstrating mature self-discipline. Social development is also very good. Pupils' personal development is very well extended through the curriculum as they work and play together. They have a good understanding of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils have a number of responsibilities, such as operating the overhead projector in assembly. The school encourages pupils to develop independence and this is a strong feature in some classes. Pupils work well independently and in small groups, resourcefully helping each other where necessary. Pupils' cultural development is promoted as an integral part of school life. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about other cultures and faiths through their work in geography and religious education. The curriculum includes drama, dance and music and art is a particular strength. This aspect is also supported well by the many visits made locally.

Links between the school and its parents are very effective

23. There is a very good partnership between the school and its parents who are very supportive of the school. They appreciate the opportunities provided for their children and the high standards achieved. Many parents directly help in school; others support the various functions and activities. There was a large turnout of parents for the class assembly during the inspection. Parents are very supportive of their children's learning at home and this is particularly evident; for example, in the good support for reading. Parents receive good quality information. Termly curriculum information is published on the school website. There are good links with parents whose children have special educational needs.
24. Parents have few complaints. They recognise the school's many strengths and can see a range of improvements since the current headteacher joined the school. However, they have found the recent changes of staff a matter for concern. The headteacher has worked hard to ensure that a permanent team of teachers is in place for the new school year.

The recently-appointed headteacher is providing very good leadership for the school

25. The headteacher joined the school at the beginning of the school year. She has a very clear vision of the way ahead. Her leadership is highly successful; she motivates, involves and challenges teachers and provides very good support for staff, governors, pupils and parents. She has a very strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, the gifted and talented and those with English as an additional language, have equal access to what the school has to offer. There is a strong sense of shared purpose in the school.
26. The staffing issues which have, to some extent, slowed pupils' progress in the current year have been resolved. This is providing the opportunity for the school to achieve greater consistency in the teaching and learning of the older pupils and to maintain the high standards. The school's aim is for all pupils to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable, in the context of a broad, rich curriculum. Everyone is valued and respected within the positive and caring ethos of the school.
27. Staff work together effectively as a well-managed team and this is a key factor in the school's success. There are good systems in place for the monitoring of teaching and learning and the headteacher has implemented systems to monitor assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. Individual target-setting for pupils and the checking of progress towards targets has been a weaker area and this is a priority which the school is addressing.

28. The school is managed very well. Teachers, nursery nurses and support staff are well trained. The system for setting performance targets is securely in place, ensuring that staff continue to build on the previous work of good quality. The school functions as an orderly place for learning. Issues in the previous report have been tackled successfully.
29. Governors have been developing their role, particularly since the appointment of the new headteacher. They have a good knowledge of the school which enables them to be effective at the committee level but they remain reliant on the headteacher for much of their information. Governors are now ready to gather information for themselves through regular visits to classrooms and a closer engagement with staff.
30. Finances are very well managed overall, although there is a focus in the new school development plan on raising awareness of both staff and governors in relation to the 'best value' principles that indicates room for improvement. There are ambitious plans for the raising of a significant amount of money to construct an additional classroom as a multipurpose resource.
31. The school is well resourced, with sufficient teachers and teaching assistants to meet the demands of the curriculum and the diverse needs of the pupils. The buildings, which are in good condition, are well maintained and there is an ongoing development programme to maintain the standard of the facilities. The grounds are spacious and amicably shared with the junior and secondary schools.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The consistency of teaching, particularly in Years 1 and 2

32. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is very good in the Foundation Stage where over four lessons in every five are good or better and half of those observed were very good. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good overall, but there is considerable variation between classes. Teaching in Year 1 is more consistent than in Year 2. Current Year 2 pupils encounter both the strongest and the weakest teaching in the school at present. This situation has arisen, at least in part, because of the significant level of staff changes.
33. Year 2 pupils in different classes are receiving teaching of widely varying quality at present. This is evident to some extent in the national test results, although there are other factors, such as pupils' ages, individual staff expertise and interests and the length of time spent with particular teachers, which have contributed to inconsistent performance between classes. Variations are evident in writing, with over one-third of pupils achieving level 3 in one class (the oldest pupils), while no pupils achieved level 3 in the class with the youngest pupils. Standards of spelling are higher in two classes than in the third. The proportion of higher level attainment in science is greater in one class than the others. However, there is no simple pattern of strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher recognises that stability of staffing, with high, shared expectations of standards and behaviour, is crucial to reducing variation in performance.
34. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is underpinned by very good planning and assessment and by very good teamwork between adults. Expectations are high, relationships are very good, children are managed well and staff have a purposeful and imaginative approach to supporting children's learning. They have a very good understanding of how young children learn. In the best practice in Years 1 and 2, many of these features are present. Pupils are managed well and the teachers' planning is very thorough. Staff have good subject knowledge; they challenge pupils, question them effectively and sustain a good pace in lessons. They provide opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own performance and that of others. Such teachers also encourage pupils to learn independently - and this is a strong feature in the best practice across the school.
35. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well across the school, often by the well-trained learning support staff. This is particularly evident in the 'nurture' group which has been established recently. The few pupils from minority ethnic groups who do not speak English as

their first language are supported well within teaching groups, although there is no specific language support.

36. Weaker lessons are characterised by slow pace, where teaching does not challenge able pupils. There is occasional insecure management of pupils' behaviour so that pupils drift off task, concentration is lost, attitudes deteriorate and learning suffers. However, even in the weaker lessons, the support staff, who invariably know the pupils well, have a clear view of what is required of them and ensure that their focus group is well supported and engaged. This reflects well on the good training opportunities provided for support staff and their close involvement in the planning of lessons and in the assessment of what pupils know and can do.
37. Securing consistency of quality in the teaching is the main issue which the school has to tackle. The indications are that this weakness can be speedily resolved.

The consistent use of information and communication technology across the curriculum

38. Information and communication technology (ICT) has been identified as a weaker element of the curriculum. This has, in part, reflected the practical difficulty for staff and pupils of working with a variety of different, and sometimes incompatible, computers. There has been very good progress in the current term in the replacement of old equipment and the introduction of a number of new, high quality machines. This provides the opportunity for the subject to move forward.
39. Overall, pupils have satisfactory skills in ICT. This is probably because many of the pupils have ready access to computers at home. The challenge now is to integrate the use of ICT more effectively across the curriculum. This is acknowledged as a key development area for the next school year.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

40. To improve standards and the quality of education provided by the school, the governors and senior managers should:-

(1) Achieve greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 by:

- Securing and consolidating a stable teaching force;
- Ensuring that all staff have a consistent approach to the management of behaviour;
- Ensuring that all staff have consistent expectations of the high standards to be achieved;
- Increasing staff knowledge and understanding of target-setting for individual pupils;
- Monitoring the quality of teaching rigorously.

(paragraphs: 14; 26-27; 32-37)

(2) Ensure that, where possible, all teachers include opportunities for the use of ICT when planning lessons.

(paragraphs: 17; 38-39)

(The senior management team has already identified both issues as key areas for improvement).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	19
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	7	7	5	1	0	0
Percentage	6	36	36	27	5	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 – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	37	263
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	33

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	2.8
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	55	35	90

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	51	51	54
	Girls	34	34	35
	Total	85	85	89
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (95)	94 (92)	99 (94)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	51	52	53
	Girls	34	34	35
	Total	85	86	88
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (95)	96 (97)	98 (99)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	9
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	160
Any other minority ethnic group	3

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– Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.7
Average class size	29.2

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	7.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	195

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	37.0
Total number of education support staff	2.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	61
Number of pupils per FTE adult	12.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
	£
Total income	575,832
Total expenditure	603,815
Expenditure per pupil	2,013
Balance brought forward from previous year	35,466
Balance carried forward to next year	7,483

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	300
Number of questionnaires returned	129

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	24	1	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	61	36	2	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	46	4	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	50	9	2	9
The teaching is good.	56	39	2	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	52	16	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	29	5	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	40	4	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	48	41	9	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	53	36	2	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	39	2	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	61	28	2	0	9

Other issues raised by parents

- Parents feel that pupils with special educational needs are looked after well. They feel that the overall ethos is strong and that the school is now more relaxed under new leadership.
- A number of parents are concerned about the high turnover of staff recently and the effect this has had on children's learning. They feel that there is inconsistency in the teaching and this has particularly affected the Year 2 pupils. They feel that the use of ICT in the school is a weaker feature, that there are inconsistencies in the setting of homework and that the quality of communication is variable.