

INSPECTION REPORT

PORTWAY INFANT SCHOOL

Allestree, Derby

LEA area: City of Derby

Unique reference number: 112740

Headteacher: Mrs Judith Honey

Reporting inspector: Mrs Judith Hicks
02063

Dates of inspection: 6th and 7th November 2000

Inspection number: 224111

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Woodlands Road Allestree Derby
Postcode:	DE22 2HE
Telephone number:	01332 550702
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Jo Pannett
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Portway Infant is an average sized school, catering for up to 240 pupils aged from 4 to 7. There are two intakes, in September and January each year, so that children born in the summer spend two rather than three terms in reception. For this reason there were only 215 on roll at the time of the inspection, which took place in the autumn term. Most pupils transfer to the neighbouring Portway Junior School at the end of Year 2. The school is located in a well-established suburb of Derby, and is popular and over-subscribed. The children come from good homes and most have attended a nursery or playgroup before they start school; as a result their skills and understanding are above average on entry to the reception classes. Almost all families are of white UK origin, and English is the language of the home. Smaller numbers than usual have special educational needs, but four children have learning difficulties serious enough to warrant a statement of special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with some important strengths. Lessons are very well planned to ensure that the pupils are challenged and that high standards are sustained. Effective management and strong educational leadership enable the school to succeed despite levels of funding well below national averages. For this reason the school is judged to provide very good value for money.

What the school does well

- High standards are achieved in reading, writing and mathematics and good standards in many other areas.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive.
- The quality of teaching is good overall, with some lessons of very high quality.
- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership and there is a good staff team.
- Parents give the school strong support.

What could be improved

- With many governors recently appointed, the governing body has not yet settled into its strategic role.
- Standards are not as high as they should be in information and communication technology (ICT).

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 just over four years ago, in June 1996. Key issues identified at that time have, by and large, been addressed satisfactorily. The exception is ICT, where standards remain barely average despite improved resources and appropriate plans for development. High standards have been maintained in all other areas of the curriculum, and there has been improvement in religious education and music. Despite a recent turnover of staff, the quality of teaching has improved further. This is partly because some strong appointments have been made, but also because an effective system for monitoring planning, teaching and pupils' work is well established. A well thought out programme of refurbishment and development of the accommodation and site has been initiated. This is having a particularly positive influence on provision for children in the reception classes.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	A	A	A	B
Writing	A	A	A	A
Mathematics	A	A	A	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

The school consistently scores well above average in national tests at the age of seven and also does well when compared with similar schools. In the past two years a good proportion of the pupils have reached, or come close to, the higher level 3 in all subjects. Boys do almost as well as girls, against national trends. High standards have been sustained since the last inspection. A slight dip in performance in reading and mathematics in summer 2000 was offset by improvement in the pupils' performance in writing. The school sets itself appropriate informal targets in consultation with the LEA, and is working on an improved approach to assessment and target-setting.

Inspection findings are similar to test results. Pupils in the present Year 2 are reading well above the level usually found for their age-group, and their speaking and listening skills are also very good. Writing is above average, but not quite as good as reading at this stage in the school year, despite exceptional work from some of the most capable pupils. Current work in mathematics is well above average in Year 2, with a good proportion of the pupils on target to reach the higher level 3 by the end of the school year. Good standards are achieved in many other subjects, including science, religious education and music, but, as already stated, are not as high as they should be in ICT. The pupils start school with above average levels of attainment and make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes to learning are very good. The pupils attend closely to what their teacher says and are keen to answer questions. They rise to the challenge when teaching is demanding, and enjoy practical tasks.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good in lessons, in assemblies and during breaks. The pupils are well-mannered and kind to one another.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between the pupils themselves and with adults are friendly and relaxed. The pupils are developing maturity and self-confidence, and when opportunities arise they show good levels of personal independence.
Attendance	Very good.

The pupils' enthusiasm and attitudes to school are very positive features.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5 – 7 years
Lessons seen overall	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 and learning are both good overall, with some very good teaching in each year-group. Nineteen lessons or part-lessons seen during the inspection were all at least satisfactory, with 42% good and a further 42% very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Both literacy and numeracy sessions were amongst the best lessons, with thoroughly secure teaching of basic skills. Mental arithmetic at the start of the numeracy hour is conducted at a lively pace so that the pupils are kept well on their toes. Phonic skills are thoroughly covered from the first, and there is good attention to spelling patterns. On the basis of last year's work, though, more attention to handwriting and letter formation is needed in Year 1. Effective use is made of games to reinforce what has been learned. Strengths of the more successful lessons include very thorough planning, challenging work for the abler pupils and effective use of time. Classroom support staff make a good contribution, especially helping pupils with special educational needs to keep up and make good progress. These pupils are well supported and often make significant gains in their learning. There are no general weaknesses, but it would do much to consolidate standards and improve learning still further if satisfactory but unexciting teaching in one or two classes were brought up to the high standard of the best.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Generally good. The school has maintained the breadth of the curriculum since the last inspection. Provision for the reception age-group is improving to meet new requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Well-organised provision, carefully matched to individual needs, ensures that these pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Collective worship and religious education lessons provide opportunities for reflection and contribute to the development of positive moral and social values. Cultural development is effectively fostered through visits, visitors, special events and performances.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The pupils are well looked after at all times, including the midday break. All adults help to create a secure, safe and welcoming school environment for the children.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides strong professional leadership, develops the staff and sets them clear targets. The deputy head and many key teachers are recently appointed, but all are tackling their current responsibilities with energy and enthusiasm. This is a promising team with good ideas and ambitions for the school.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Most governors are newly or recently appointed. Some committees support the work of the school very effectively, but the governing body is not yet actively enough involved in strategic planning and establishing long-term priorities. Statutory requirements have not in the past been met in their entirety.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There are good arrangements for monitoring lesson planning and the quality of teaching in literacy and numeracy sessions. A good start has been made in evaluating reception provision. National test results are analysed, but the progress of groups and individual pupils would benefit from more sophisticated tracking.
The strategic use of resources	The school does well to maintain high standards with limited resources and makes the most of all available sources of funding. Support staff are very effectively deployed to support learning. Excellent use is made of less than adequate accommodation (nine classes and only eight classrooms).

The headteacher, administrative staff and governors make every effort to obtain good value for money when purchasing goods and services. Steps are currently being taken to enable the school to weigh up all the options carefully when considering the purchase of support and training packages.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all the children enjoy coming to school. • The school expects the pupils to work hard and do their best. • Staff are approachable if parents have any questions or concerns. • The school helps children to become mature and responsible. • Teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scope of extra-curricular activities. • Information to parents about their child's progress. • A small number of parents raise concerns about how regularly children are heard to read.

The inspection team is in full agreement with the positive views expressed by parents. Inspectors judge that reservations expressed by a minority of parents are not on the whole well founded. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory, and in line with most other infant schools, especially when school performances and concerts are taken into account. Annual reports to parents are sound and meet minimum requirements, but would be improved by the inclusion of better defined targets. As far as reading is concerned, there may be a need to reiterate the message that reading is now taught actively in a whole-class or group context, with individual practice or 'hearing reading' a far lower priority. There are no indications of any decline in reading standards.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

High standards are achieved in reading, writing and mathematics, and there are good standards in many other areas

1 National tests in recent years show that since 1996 standards achieved at the end of Year 2 have been well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has also performed consistently better than the average for similar schools. One of Portway's strengths is the numbers who reach the higher level 3 in national assessments. In 1999, for example, getting on for half the pupils reached this standard in the reading tests. The comparable figure for 2000 was lower, because the year-group concerned included some pupils with special educational needs affecting their reading. There were improved results in the writing assessments, though, where around a quarter of the pupils reached level 3 against a national average of only 9%. Analysis of recent test results suggests two further positive features. Firstly, most of the pupils who do not reach level 3 are working steadily towards it, with some coming close to this level. Attainment at each level is thus very secure. Secondly, the gap in performance between boys and girls is less marked than usual, especially in reading. These outcomes are much the same as those reported at the time of the last inspection in 1996. There has been no significant improvement in test results since then, but it is fair to say that there has not been the same scope for improvement that is found in many other schools. The tests show that high standards in the key areas of reading, writing and mathematics have been successfully sustained over a period of years. Inspection findings confirm that this is still the position.

2 Attainment on entry to the reception classes is above average, with strengths in the children's social maturity, speaking, knowledge of books and print, mathematical language, counting and mental calculation. Many are likely to achieve national learning goals for the age-group well before the end of the school year. In a reception phonics session, for example, the children were almost all able to match initial sounds and the corresponding letters with real objects, and some were already hearing and identifying the final sounds in words correctly. A child who would not agree that *dish* started with the sound *d* explained by saying that the object was not really a *dish*, it was a *bowl*. In a mathematics session another group of reception children were quick to say that it was 'not fair' when the teacher pretended to measure a figure with an incorrectly aligned ruler. Several children could explain that the bottom of the ruler must be kept 'level with Kipper's feet'. Most reception children are good at counting and readily add or take away one or two in their heads. Areas where the reception children's attainment on entry is only average include pencil control, writing and drawing. First efforts in their workbooks show few children using writing as a means of communication and only one or two who have started to apply their phonic knowledge to help them write down simple words. Most of the children do, however, understand well that spoken words can be written down, and some dictate relatively complex captions for their drawings: 'I am lucky because I have got four people in my family'. When the children trace over an adult's writing, the results tend to be 'wobbly', with control no better than average for the age-group.

3 From an above average starting point in reception, last year's work books and folders suggest that the pupils make satisfactory progress through Year 1 in writing, and continue to forge ahead in mathematics. Handwriting requires more attention at this stage, though. Many Year 1 pupils, including some high attainers, form their letters incorrectly and mix capitals with lower case letters. The rate of progress accelerates in Year 2 and the pupils achieve well in the course of this year. This supports standards of literacy and numeracy that are well above average by the time the pupils transfer to junior school.

4 Most pupils read confidently by the time they reach Year 2. Technical skills are well developed, and the pupils take unfamiliar words in their stride. Their good grounding in phonics ensures that they both read and write accurately: in one literacy session, for example, the pupils showed their good understanding of the principle at work in words such as *mine*, *life* and *wide*. Most pupils read expressively, attending to speech marks and other punctuation. Understanding of the text is secure, and many pupils take obvious pleasure in books, discussing their favourite stories and authors. One child's favourite is Aesop's *Fables*. The pupils know their way around both fiction and non-fiction texts and have been taught how to use the contents page and index. Despite difficulty in accommodating the reference library, reading is effectively used to support learning in many areas of the curriculum. Simple reference texts about electricity were, for example, available for pupils to check facts towards the end of a science lesson.

5 The pupils have a good understanding of the conventions of different sorts of writing, including narrative, instructional writing, factual reporting, letters and poems. Story writing reflects a good range of literary models, including traditional tales and modern children's literature. Folders from last year's leavers show some work of a very high standard, such as a well-told story about *How the Rose got its Thorn*. In the best examples there is a mature use of vocabulary and concise structure: 'Very unhappy though we were, I had my little boat to catch fish to eat.' By the end of the key stage, punctuation is mainly correct and spelling good. Some writing from pupils now at an early stage in Year 2 is also of an exceptional standard, reflecting mature language skills and extensive vocabulary. In a set of instructions about how to make a sandwich, for example, one high attainer writes: 'First decide what kind of filling you would like in your sandwich and make sure it's available...Next take any combination of two things you like...'. Much work at this stage in Year 2 is already above average. The pupils have written imaginative stories based on Shirley Hughes' *Dogger*, in which they give persuasive accounts of being lost, whilst poems about dragons show a vivid and interesting choice of words. There is a confidence about many pupils' writing, even when it contains non-standard forms, as in 'Now I will tell you another thing what I did on my holiday'. On the other hand, some pupils are not writing fluently or at much length at the start of Year 2, partly because of awkward handwriting. On the evidence of the previous year, they catch up fast.

6 Attainment in mathematics is well above average by Year 2. Many pupils have a good recall of number facts, such as addition and subtraction facts within 20, and quick mental skills. The pupils have a very good understanding of place value for their age, and many use this to count backwards and forwards in tens or twenties well into the hundreds. Their sense of pattern and ability to visualise numbers and numerical relationships has been well developed. In one lesson, for example, the class built up a blank 100-square from scratch, making reasoned decisions about how to find the correct location for selected numbers such as 49 or 62. Pupils offered good explanations of how they had determined where to place the given numbers, showing clear mathematical reasoning. Group work for the abler pupils involved the completion of 'keyhole' sections of the number square on the basis of only one or two given numbers. Working in pairs the pupils rose to this challenge fast, some moving straight on to a similar exercise involving numbers greater than 100. Written work from the end of last year shows some demanding work for seven-year-olds, for example finding the halfway point between numbers such as 350 and 1250. By the end of the key stage, many of last year's Year 2 were solving simple money problems involving addition and subtraction within £5 and most were gaining good practical experience of working with standard measures. Investigations were under-represented in the pupils' books, but some sound work was completed that demanding logical reasoning.

7 On the basis of current topic folders, discussion with pupils and the observation of one lesson, standards of science are judged to be above average by Year 2. The pupils have

clear recall of work they have covered on healthy eating, can identify different groups of foods, such as cereals and pasta, fruit and vegetables, and can assign foods to these groups. They have grasped well how food and exercise contribute to human growth and health. The pupils have only just started a series of lessons on electricity, but already have a developing understanding of simple circuits. They are well able to use first-hand observation to develop their knowledge, but have limited experience of testing and investigations. This has been identified in the school development plan as an area requiring development this year.

8 On the basis of the necessarily limited sample seen in this short inspection, there were indications of good standards in many other areas of the curriculum, with the single exception of information and communication technology (ICT). In a reception lesson, the children recalled significant memories from the past and later put together a personal 'time line' of photographs and images that represented their lives so far. Pupils in Year 1 were undertaking ambitious work in design and technology. Although manipulative skills were only average, the pupils showed a very good ability to understand and talk about different forms of mechanism, using terms such as 'pivot', 'lever' and 'slide mechanism'. In a religious education lesson in Year 2, the pupils were perceptive and articulate about the importance of giving and sharing, relating their personal ideas to notions of gifts from God. Standards in music were relatively mediocre at the time of the last inspection. Only singing lessons were seen this time, but here consistently good standards were achieved. The pupils sang well in tune, expressively and with very clear articulation and phrasing. Around the school standards in art and design are high, with some work of exceptional quality in the reception year-group. Overall, it is clear that high standards are being maintained in most areas of the curriculum.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive

9 Attitudes to learning are very good and contribute to the good progress made in most classes and year-groups. Younger children starting reception are emotionally secure and confident, with social skills that are above average for the age-group. Within weeks of the start of full-time schooling almost all the children understand school routines and fit in with classroom conventions comfortably. In particular the children learn to listen well, maintaining good concentration through relatively lengthy direct teaching inputs. Because very little time is wasted in settling the children, and because they learn to listen actively, this contributes to the effectiveness and impact of lessons.

10 In reception the children learn to make independent choices, sometimes selecting from a number of play activities with confidence. They collaborate very well with others when involved in dramatic exchanges, as in the classroom post office or in the 'Three Bears' Cottage', and relate well to visitors such as a volunteer helping with work on the computer. The children learn to play games such as dominoes fairly, reinforcing mathematical skills, but also gaining experience of sharing and taking turns. In physical education sessions the children participate with good levels of concentration, running, skipping and 'freezing' on command. In groups of four they co-operate well for their age when setting out the mats and putting them away. These experiences all contribute very well to the development of the younger children's social, language and creative skills and prepare them for learning in subsequent years.

11 Older pupils also demonstrate very good attitudes in lessons and towards school life in general. They contribute in many ways to their own progress and success. Throughout Years 1 and 2, the pupils attend closely to what their teachers say for up to half an hour without becoming restless. They are active listeners, often asking sensible questions, regularly volunteering relevant information from their personal experience and at all times keen to make suggestions and share ideas. In a literacy session, for example, Year 2 pupils were quick to suggest rhymes and phrases for inclusion in a class poem. Pupils in the

youngest Year 1 group were encouraged to share practical problems encountered in a design and technology lesson, explaining what they had learned as a result of their difficulties or mistakes. One child in this group had found it hard to get the scale of a sketch right, for example, whilst another had experienced problems when he tried to cut out an inner circle without damaging the outer card. This session showed these young pupils to be confident enough to learn from their experiences.

12 The pupils are quick to rise to the challenge when teaching is demanding and work well in pairs or small groups. The pupils very much enjoy practical tasks, for example responding with eager anticipation when asked to take a torch to bits to see how it works. They respond very positively when teachers insist from time to time that they work independently, without adult help. Parents are right when they observe that their children are helped by the school to become more responsible and mature.

The quality of teaching is good overall, with some lessons of very high quality

13 Teaching is good overall, with significant strengths throughout the school. Nineteen lessons or part-lessons seen during the inspection were all at least satisfactory, with 42% good and a further 42% very good. During the inspection some very good teaching was seen in each year-group, with year-group co-ordinators and other teachers with major whole-school responsibilities setting a high standard. At least one very good lesson was seen in each of the core subjects and in two areas of learning at the Foundation Stage.

14 There is thoroughly secure teaching of basic skills. Mental arithmetic at the start of the numeracy hour is conducted at a lively pace so that the pupils are kept alert and engaged. Phonic skills are well covered from the first, and there is good attention to the specific teaching of spelling patterns. A good handwriting session was seen in Year 2, where the teacher provided an accurate model of writing, focusing on ascenders and descenders. Effective use is made of games to reinforce basic skills. In a very successful Year 1 lesson on addition, for example, groups of cubes were concealed beneath plant pots and added up in various combinations. Sometimes the answer was provided but another number was missing, and had to be deduced. This exercise helped to strengthen the pupils' mental retention, ability to visualise sets of numbers and mathematical reasoning. There is sound use of ICT across the curriculum as an extra tool to provide practice and reinforce learning.

15 Strengths of the teaching include very thorough and consistent planning, challenge for the abler pupils and group tasks carefully matched to different capabilities. This ensures that the pupils are busy but that none of them struggle with their work. In numeracy sessions the highest attaining pupils often work on the same general topic as the rest, but are expected to handle much larger numbers, up to 1,000 in Year 2. Planning shows thoughtful attention to the needs of individuals, with classroom support staff providing just the right degree of assistance to enable pupils to keep up and make good progress. In a handwriting session, for instance, a pupil with poor co-ordination was provided with a raised surface to make his copying task more achievable. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and as a result often make significant gains in their learning.

16 Because of the staggered intake into reception, there are marked differences in attainment between the older and younger pupils in each year-group. Staff do their best to ensure that the teaching programme covers the same ground in each class, with due allowance for younger and less mature pupils. There are equal opportunities for all pupils to make good progress and to achieve well. Increasingly reception staff are making appropriate provision for the youngest children by a well structured range of indoor and outdoor play activities with clear learning objectives. This is a developing area.

17 No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, and there are no general weaknesses across the school. Where lessons are satisfactory rather than good, they tend to lack the enthusiasm and pace of the best teaching. It would do much to consolidate standards and improve learning still further if competent but relatively unexciting teaching in one or two classes could be brought up to the consistently good standard of the rest.

18 Most staff have high expectations of all the pupils and have a clear purpose in mind for each session. The objectives for lessons are often shared with the class, with a reminder of what has gone before, so that the pupils know just where they are going most of the time. Thus Year 2 pupils have a good overview of what they are learning in science, whilst Year 1 pupils can say which skills they are developing in design and technology. Here skilled evaluation supports learning very effectively. Teachers are for the most part very secure in their own subject knowledge and skills. In music, even the youngest pupils have a quick vocal warm-up and the teacher provides a strong, tuneful model for their singing, enabling them to pick up accurately a tricky syncopated rhythm in one piece. In physical education there is good attention to warming up and the effects of exercise on the body, as well as an appropriate awareness of safety. Throughout the school staff are quick to develop key vocabulary for each lesson, so that the pupils confidently use terms such as 'diagonal', 'circuit', 'near-doubles' or, in reception, 'tiptoe' according to their age-group and as a natural part of their learning. Some are skilled at asking the right question to trigger or consolidate learning: 'What happens if you put the batteries in the other way round?' 'Why don't small babies sleep in beds?'

19 Class management is usually very good, and there are often strong and positive relationships with the children. The best teachers start their lessons in a smiling and confident way, giving everyone encouragement. In a Year 2 guided writing session there was a sense of fun and enjoyment as the class developed their own rhymed verse along the lines of a well-chosen example. In one case a highly successful literacy session was delivered in cramped conditions in the entrance hall, as happens regularly. With excellent management, the adverse conditions became unimportant. At best, teaching in the reception year-group is outstandingly lively and encouraging. In a history session, for example, the teacher made very good use of photographs illustrating the progress of her own life to capture the children's attention. She managed to draw the children's ideas out and value their contributions whilst tactfully keeping them to the point.

20 Most staff have the pupils well weighed up, so that work can be matched to their level of understanding and stage of development. The quality of marking varies considerably. There is some very effective annotation of reception children's work, giving insights into the precise stage of development and setting out what needs to be done next, but this is not consistent across the three reception classes. Similarly some, but not all, marking in Years 1 and 2 provides a thoughtful and encouraging response to the pupils' efforts. At best marking is specific about the focus for improvement, and a system of target-setting is being phased in. This is very helpful for the pupils, increasing their understanding of what they can do to raise the standard of their work.

The headteacher provides highly effective leadership for a good staff team

21 The quality of educational leadership and direction of the staff team is very good. This has enabled the school to ride out a difficult period during which there have been many changes, including the early retirement of experienced senior staff. The headteacher is a highly effective manager of people, and this has ensured that continuity has been maintained and the school has continued to run smoothly. Team-building is a strength and new staff have rapidly come to feel comfortable in their new professional environment. The induction of new staff, including those appointed to senior positions, has been undertaken thoughtfully,

with good attention to detail. This has been helped by the close team-work and joint planning within year-groups that are established features of the school. Very effective and well-organised administrative support has ensured the smooth running of the school from day to day. The culture of Portway Infant School is positive and optimistic, relationships are good and staff are united in their ambitions for the school and its pupils.

22 Eighteen months ago the school 're-achieved' its Investors in People award, originally gained in 1996. This was partly on the basis of very good arrangements for termly professional development interviews and negotiated target-setting for all staff, including non-teaching staff. Agreed targets feed into each term's update of the school development plan. This is a very positive aspect of the planning process, ensuring that the school moves ahead on a wide front with all staff involved and knowing just where they are going.

23 There is a first-rate whole-school policy statement for quality assurance, covering monitoring, classroom management and organisation, planning and the role of subject managers. This is working well in practice. All short and medium-term plans are monitored by the headteacher, with written feedback to the year-group on half-termly plans. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching throughout the school are well established, with subject managers for literacy and numeracy very effectively involved in these processes to support implementation of the national strategies. There is an experienced subject manager for literacy, who has a very clear idea of where the school's priorities lie. The newly appointed co-ordinator for the Foundation Stage and the subject manager for numeracy have already had good opportunities to observe work in other classrooms, thus putting them in a strong position to build on strengths and identify areas for development. A good start has been made in evaluating reception provision. There is sound analysis of national test results at the end of Key Stage 1, but the progress of groups and individual pupils would benefit from more sophisticated tracking.

24 Overview of the curriculum by year co-ordinators and subject leadership by managers is good overall. This includes the management of special educational needs, which is thorough and competent. Good progress has been made recently in drawing up a new policy and scheme of work for religious education, whilst areas for development in science have been accurately identified on the basis of teachers' assessments and planning. The deputy head and many key teachers recently appointed are all tackling their current responsibilities with energy and enthusiasm. In this they are building on the school's existing management strengths. This is a promising team with good ideas and high professional standards. With strong leadership, they are in a good position to take the school forward.

Parents give the school strong support

25 This is an over-subscribed and popular school, and almost all parents are very happy with their choice. There was a good response to parents' questionnaires distributed before the inspection, with more than a hundred families returning their forms and a number of positive written comments received by the team. Parents praise the expectations of hard work, the quality of teaching and the way in which the school helps the children to become mature and responsible. Parents by an overwhelming majority find the headteacher and staff to be approachable and helpful, with just one or two dissenting voices where individuals feel that their suggestions have not been given enough consideration. Almost all parents responding to the questionnaire agree or strongly agree that the school is well led and managed.

26 The two areas where questionnaires indicate some dissatisfaction are extra-curricular provision and arrangements for reporting on pupils' progress. Inspection findings do not bear out these concerns to any great extent. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory,

and in line with most other infant schools nationally. School performances and concerts are a strong feature. The school organises the usual number of meetings with parents, and annual reports to parents are judged to be sound. These meet minimum requirements, but would be improved by the inclusion of better defined targets.

27 The pre-inspection parents' meeting was attended by twenty-seven individuals, representing fewer than twenty families. Here the prevailing tone was also positive and supportive, with praise for the values represented by the school and appreciation of the commitment of the headteacher and staff to a wide range of school activities. Some concerns were expressed about reading, especially the regularity with which children's individual reading books are changed. There is scope for staff to consider parents' perceptions in this area. In particular, the school may need to reiterate the message that most reading skills are now taught actively in a whole-class or group context, with individual practice or 'hearing reading' a far lower priority. There was a slight dip in national test results for reading in summer 2000, but this was because the year-group concerned included a greater number of pupils with special educational needs than usual. Current reading standards remain high, and the inspection team found nothing to justify concern.

28 Parents are quick to involve themselves in their child's learning and welcome opportunities to help at home. For this reason they value the information provided about the topics planned each half-term and would, indeed, welcome more detail if this could be provided. Almost all families support their children well by sharing books with them, and helping them to learn spellings and number facts. Many support the school indirectly by book club purchases and collecting tokens. Some family members make a direct and valuable contribution by providing very effective assistance in classrooms. Individual parents sometimes contribute their skills directly. For example, a parent who is a chorister is helping to prepare Year 2 pupils for a concert performance in Derby Cathedral.

29 The Friends of Portway Infant School make a particularly significant contribution to the life of the school through their fund-raising efforts and enjoyable social events which often involve children as well as parents. Even including the funds raised by the Friends, the school has an income well below national averages, and voluntary fund-raising is of real importance, directly benefiting the pupils and extending their opportunities for learning. Friends have recently helped to develop a valuable outdoor activity area for the reception children. They have bought a computer and helped with resources in a number of areas of the curriculum. Their support is invaluable.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

With many governors recently appointed, the governing body has not yet settled into its strategic role

30 The governing body has experienced considerable difficulties recently. With a history of long-standing vacancies, the term of office of several governors came to an end recently. As a result many governors are new to the role, with the chair and other officers elected less than a month before the inspection. Almost all governors are parents, with under-representation of wider community interests. There are still three vacancies.

31 In these challenging circumstances individual governors, including the chair, have worked hard to do their best for the school. One of the strengths of the governing body is the steady support provided by the members of most committees. The premises committee has, in particular, overseen significant upgrading of the grounds and the start of a programme of refurbishment and redecoration indoors. Responsibilities for health and safety are fulfilled

thoroughly and competently. On the basis of last year's records, the finance committee also fulfils its brief to set the budget annually and to monitor expenditure carefully. With little room for manoeuvre, governors tend to adopt a cautious attitude, but even so last year's carry-forward was too slim for comfort. The personnel committee has recently been involved in making some good staff appointments.

32 The present governing body has inherited a difficult position that derives from governors' failure more than a year ago to set targets for the headteacher as required. This has been the root of a certain amount of friction that it is now essential to resolve through good will and positive actions on all sides. Other statutory duties, mainly minor, have not been completely fulfilled. In particular the annual report to parents does not include all the information that is required and governors have not been involved in setting targets for pupils' performance.

33 Governors have, for entirely understandable reasons, not yet settled fully into their strategic role. Many, especially the chair, have high aspirations for the school and a view of what needs to be done to improve their knowledge of the school. This is already sound, because the headteacher briefs governors and committee members fully, but there is an acknowledged need to build up arrangements for liaison with subject managers.

34 The school development plan has an unusual format, consisting simply of termly updates. This system has now been in place for some years and has worked acceptably in a period when funding has been tight and spending has necessarily been on a hand-to-mouth basis. One strength of the present arrangements is that termly priorities are linked with a well-organised system of target-setting for staff based on regular professional development interviews. This gives everyone achievable short-term tasks and promotes a sense of certainty and purpose. The disadvantages are that plans are entirely short-term, at a time when the school should be looking ahead for two or three years, especially in premises development, maintenance and replacement of major resources, and the cycle of policy review. Staff have a strong shared understanding of major whole-school priorities, and a good feel for the direction in which the school is moving. Governors are invited to attend sessions when the school development plan is updated, and some have done so. The 'big picture' is by no means clear from existing documentation, however, and the present format does not support clear understanding of major priorities on the part of governors new to the school. Individual targets are costed, but there is no secure written basis for budgetary planning to support initiatives. In these circumstances, governors are at risk of concerning themselves too much with detail and too little with future development.

Standards are not as high as they should be in information and communication technology (ICT)

35 Improving standards and resources in ICT were key issues at the time of the last inspection in 1996. At that time hardware and software resources were obsolescent and inadequate, and this was having an adverse effect on standards. Since then the school has drawn up a thoroughly competent plan for the development of ICT which was submitted in support of a successful bid for additional funding. The position has now reached a satisfactory point as far as resources are concerned, although provision is by no means generous. Each classroom, not each class, contains one computer, but some of these are refurbished machines that have only just had a hard disk installed. Classes share to ensure that all pupils have some access to an up-to-date computer. In addition, three new personal computers, each with a printer, have been installed in the hall. These have been networked, but have not yet been brought into full use. With the acquisition of new software to support many areas of the curriculum the school is now in a secure position to move forward in this area and to raise the present standards, which are barely satisfactory, to the above average

level of which the pupils are capable.

36 During the inspection there was appropriate use of ICT to support learning in many subject areas. Reception children matched shoes into pairs and put them on the caterpillar on screen and, with good help from a volunteer, created a simple location map. A Year 1 pupil used a graphics programme to illustrate work in religious education. Older pupils created effective poems, by writing directly onto screen, whilst others used programs to consolidate learning about the current science topic. Although all these activities were effective, only in one reception group was there a brisk turnover to ensure that as many pupils as possible had an opportunity to complete a given task. In some classes the computer is invariably used by individuals one at a time rather than in pairs, further limiting hands-on experience. For logistical reasons the mini-computer suite in the hall is under-used at present.

37 Many of the pupils have computers at home, and word processing skills are good. Year 2 pupils talk readily about their experiences of ICT in school and at home. They show a secure understanding of how to type in text, select and change the character of the script, correct errors, print out and save their work. They do not yet know how to incorporate graphics into their text. The pupils are aware that information is available on CD-ROM and via the Internet, but have no direct experience of accessing these facilities in school. For this reason they are not in a position to choose between different sources when seeking information. The pupils lack any experience of using ICT to organise their work and findings, and have no idea, for example, how to present information in the form of a computer-generated block graph. Control technology and simulations are also under-represented in the curriculum.

38 The school has already begun to develop ICT by planning a major programme of staff development, to be started in the current term. The most recent development plan update sets out some useful tasks, such as rewriting the ICT policy, but these are not sufficiently focused on the key tasks of improving learning opportunities and raising standards. The current system of assessment and record-keeping in ICT is *ad hoc*, and there is no whole-school overview of what the pupils already know and can do. In order to raise standards to an appropriate level, staff now need to raise the profile of the subject and draw up a second ICT development plan to ensure further progress.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

39 With the active support of the local education authority, the headteacher, staff and governors should now take the steps set out below.

Strengthen the strategic role of the governing body by:

- Defining roles and responsibilities to create an appropriate and well-balanced partnership between governors, the headteacher and other staff with management responsibilities.
- Reviewing existing arrangements for school development planning to ensure that governors have a vision for the future, long-term objectives and clear medium-term priorities that drive the budget-setting process.
- Ensuring that all statutory requirements are met in full.
(See paragraphs 30 – 34)

Raise standards in ICT by:

- Ensuring that pupils experience a broad, well-balanced ICT curriculum in each class on

the basis of a detailed scheme of work.

- Adopting a whole-school approach to record-keeping and assessment in ICT.
 - Monitoring provision throughout the school in order to raise standards.
 - Updating staff skills and bringing all equipment into full use, in line with existing plans.
- (See paragraphs 35 - 38)*

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	14

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	42	42	16	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (full-time equivalent for part-time pupils)	n/a	215
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	n/a	6

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	23

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	96
National comparative data	94.1

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	43	36	79

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	38	39	40
	Girls	34	36	34
	Total	72	75	74
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (95)	95 (94)	94 (98)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	38	40	40
	Girls	34	35	36
	Total	72	75	76
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (98)	95 (99)	96 (99)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	Number of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	211
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	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	27

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	72.5

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	344,575
Total expenditure	344,456
Expenditure per pupil	1,484
Balance brought forward from previous year	911
Balance carried forward to next year	1,030

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	215
Number of questionnaires returned	101

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	30	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	43	2	0	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	49	0	0	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	48	7	0	12
The teaching is good.	49	43	0	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	47	14	3	13
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	31	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	36	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	48	43	6	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	60	29	3	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	46	0	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	12	41	23	4	21