

INSPECTION REPORT

St Cuthbert's CE VC Infants School

Wells

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123778

Acting Headteacher: Ms S Fry

Reporting inspector: Stephen Dennett
13712

Dates of inspection: 9th - 11th October 2000

Inspection number: 224378

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

© Crown copyright 2000

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
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Keward Walk Wells Somerset
Postcode:	BA5 1TZ
Telephone number:	01749 672591
Fax number:	01749 670769
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Chamberlain
Date of previous inspection:	July 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	
Stephen Dennett 13712	Registered inspector
Keith Ross 19361	Lay inspector
Lynne Wright 22398	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Evenlode Associates Ltd
6 Abbey Close
Alcester
Warwickshire
B49 5QW

Tel: 01789 766099

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 Registrar
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
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· The quality of teaching is very good and standards are generally well above average, especially in literacy and numeracy.· The acting headteacher and key staff provide very good leadership for the school and the good teamwork has moved the school forward significantly since the previous inspection.· Provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent.· Pupils' attitudes and their personal development are very good.	
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Opportunities for pupils to apply their good information and communications technology skills to other subjects are limited.	
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	12
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	14

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school provides education for 209 pupils, aged 4 to 7. At the time of the inspection, 111 were boys and 98 were girls. Nearly all the pupils are from a white United Kingdom background. A very small minority of pupils from other backgrounds speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is 31, which is below average. However the number of pupils on the register has been rising annually since 1995. Less than 2 per cent of pupils have statements of special educational needs and again this is below average. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is well below average at 1.9 per cent, but as the school does not provide hot mid-day meals, this figure is not representative of the actual number eligible. The number of children below statutory school age is 59 and at the time of the inspection, these children were attending for the morning session only. Pupils generally come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds and their level of attainment on entry to the school is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school which provides very good value for money. Standards in English and mathematics are very high. The quality of teaching is very good. The staff work together very well as a team and the leadership provided by the acting headteacher and other key staff is very good. The very effective teamwork has contributed significantly to the very good standards seen throughout the school. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent and pupils with English as an additional language are supported very well. Pupils' attitudes to work and their personal development are very good and this has a very positive effect on the progress they make in their learning.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is very good and standards are generally well above average, especially in literacy and numeracy.
- The acting headteacher and key staff provide very good leadership for the school and the good teamwork has moved the school forward significantly since the previous inspection.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes and their personal development are very good.

What could be improved

- Opportunities for pupils to apply their good information and communications technology skills to other subjects are limited.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS PREVIOUS INSPECTION

There have been many very significant improvements in the work of the school since the previous inspection, when the quality of education was found to be good. All the issues raised at that time have been addressed very well. Standards in mathematics, which were similar to those found nationally at that time, are now well above average. Several important improvements have been made in the use of assessment information and the school now has precise systems for improving standards and setting targets. Planning has been improved significantly and the school is currently reviewing its schemes of work in the light of recent legislation. There have been further improvements in the already good provision for special educational needs.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
reading	B	A	A	A
writing	A	A	A	A
mathematics	A	A	B	B

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The above table shows that standards in reading and writing were well above average in 1999, both compared with national averages and with those found in similar schools. Standards in mathematics were above average.

The provisional results from the tests taken in 2000 and observations during the inspection show that pupils attain standards that are well above average in both reading and writing. Standards in mathematics are also well above average. Levels of attainment in science, as indicated by teachers' assessments and observations, are above average. Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) are above those found nationally, although opportunities to apply ICT skills in English, mathematics and science are limited. The school is aware of this and has plans to improve hardware and software provision during the current academic year.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school and their work are very good. They derive great pleasure from the work they do and are keen to participate in the activities offered.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in class and around the school is generally good. Pupils listen well to teachers' instructions and follow them promptly.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good. They work well independently and have very good relationships with each other and their teachers. They are keen to take responsibility and fulfil the tasks they are given with enthusiasm.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are very good and they are well above the national average. Most pupils arrive promptly to school and to lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 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.

The quality of teaching is very good overall. In lessons seen, all the teaching was at least good and in over a third, it was very good. The teaching of both literacy and numeracy is very good. The strategies used by teachers are very effective in raising pupils' attainment in these core areas of the curriculum. It is evident from the scrutiny of pupils' work and their rapid progress in learning that the quality of teaching is consistently very good and, as a consequence, standards in most subjects are above those expected nationally.

The very good teaching is characterised by effective planning which identifies very well what pupils need to learn. It also ensures that the work they have to do is very well matched to their individual needs. Teachers have very effective strategies for ensuring that pupils learn rapidly, using well-targeted questions to extend their knowledge and understanding. Pupils concentrate well and are becoming

responsible for their own learning. This has a very positive impact on the progress they make. The quiet and industrious atmosphere created in all classes contributes significantly to the very good ethos for learning that the school fosters. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, which has been engendered by the encouraging and supportive approach of all teachers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good curriculum. It is broad, balanced and contains a rich variety of learning experiences for pupils. The good quality special events and visits contribute significantly to pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent. The very well-informed special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that all pupils have detailed individual education plans which enable them to make good and sometimes very good progress. All staff support pupils very well, both in class lessons and individual tutorials.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Although there are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language, the provision made by the school is very good. Pupils are well supported by both staff and outside agencies.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal development is good. There are many opportunities for pupils to reflect and consider their own and others' views. The well-conceived 'circle times' (where pupils discuss a range of moral and social issues with their teacher) develop pupils' social skills and their understanding of moral issues effectively. Their cultural awareness is increased well through assemblies, geographical topics and religious education lessons.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Systems for ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare are appropriate and suitable child protection procedures are in place.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The acting headteacher provides very good leadership for the school and has a clear vision for the way forward. She is supported very well by the whole staff, who work together as a very effective team. The deputy headteacher, who acted as headteacher for two and a half terms, has also had a significant positive impact on the leadership and management of the school. Subject co-ordinators carry out their roles effectively and this has contributed greatly to the high standards attained by pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They have monitored teaching and learning first-hand and they use the information gained effectively in setting targets and drawing up the school's development plan.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has very effective systems for evaluating its performance. Senior staff monitor standards, teaching and learning well and the information gained is used effectively to bring about improvements. As a consequence, the school has continued to raise standards, especially in English and mathematics.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its resources, including the funding it receives. It is beginning to apply the principles of 'best value' effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school is very caring.• Teachers work hard and are effective in raising standards.• The school handles concerns raised by parents very well.• The good provision for special educational needs.• The supportive way in which the school handles national tests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The provision of mid-morning drinks.

Inspectors agree with the positive comments made by parents. The provision of mid-morning drinks is a matter which is outside the scope of this inspection.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The quality of teaching is very good and standards are generally well above average, especially in literacy and numeracy.

1. The strategies used by teachers are very effective in raising the levels of pupils' attainment. As a consequence, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have remained high for a number of years, and show signs of improving still further in the current academic year. Children come to school with levels of attainment which are broadly average, but quite quickly, they begin to make very good progress in learning. By the time they enter Year 1, the majority of pupils are achieving standards which are above average in writing, speaking and listening. At the end of Year 2, when pupils transfer to the junior school, their levels of attainment in speaking and listening, reading and writing are well above average.
2. The school has adapted the National Literacy Strategy very effectively and teachers use a very good balance of whole-class, group and individual teaching to ensure work is very well matched to the pupils' needs. The system for teaching handwriting, reading and spelling skills has raised standards significantly since its introduction in 1997. At that time, assessment indicated a weakness in spelling, but this has been fully addressed by the teaching and learning strategies the school has adopted. Standards in spelling are now above average overall.
3. Teachers have made good use of the National Numeracy Strategy and have adapted it effectively to their own use. The slight dip in standards in 1999 has been fully addressed and the 2000 test results, as well as pupils' current work, indicate that levels of attainment are high. Tasks and activities challenge pupils' mathematical thinking in enjoyable contexts, including mathematical games and puzzles. The school runs a mathematical games lending library and encourages pupils to take games home. This has a positive effect on the standards they achieve in mathematics. Teachers use technical terms carefully and correctly and ensure their pupils do the same. Pupils show high levels of independent thought in applying different strategies to problem solving and often explain their approach fluently.
4. Because the whole staff work together very effectively, there is a high degree of continuity and consistency between classes and year groups. Classroom assistants, special educational needs support assistants and parent volunteers all make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning. For example, in one ICT lesson, a support assistant was observed helping pupils program a floor 'robot'. Her very good use of questioning helped pupils learn to program the robot quickly and to reinforce their counting and adding skills. Very effective joint planning means all those involved in the education process are fully informed and prepared for lessons.
5. The good range of learning opportunities provided by the school is enhanced by the staff's commitment to providing rich learning experiences for pupils. There is a good balance between formal teaching and play-based learning. Work seen in art, design and technology was of a high standard and shows a broad selection of techniques and styles. Pupils plan their own designs and execute them well, using a wide variety of tools and media. For example, some pupils in Year 1 were observed creating attractive greetings cards. They carefully followed the designs they had already made in their design books, adapting them where necessary. They could explain well the reasons for the changes they had made. Standards in physical education indicate that pupils enjoy a good range of activities, including country dancing. The Poetry Days, Book, Art and Science Weeks and outside visits all contribute substantially to the very good education provided by the school.

The acting headteacher and key staff provide very good leadership for the school and the good teamwork has moved the school forward significantly since the previous inspection.

6. The school is very well led. The acting headteacher has a very clear vision for educational reform. The school has also been well led by the deputy headteacher in the previous headteacher's absence due to ill health. The most significant achievement of the leadership of the

school has been the forging of a very effective staff team, which works together very well. This has had a significant impact on standards, which are very high. Also, the school has managed a period of rapid change very well, ensuring that new initiatives are implemented quickly and effectively.

7. Co-ordinators have full management responsibilities for their subjects and monitor teaching and standards very well. For example the information and communications technology co-ordinator has a well worked-out action plan for the current school year, which should address the issues raised by her analysis of pupils' achievements in the subject. All the staff work together well to create a very good ethos for learning, through their caring attitudes and commitment to high standards. A particularly good feature of the management of the school is the way children under five are inducted into school, ensuring they make a smooth transition to full-time education.
8. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well, and is effective in acting as a 'critical friend' (questioning the school's decisions in a friendly and supportive way) to the acting headteacher and staff. It is fully involved in the management of the school, especially in monitoring standards and teaching through a series of well-conceived classroom observations. There are a number of committees which function effectively, keeping the whole governing body informed of developments in their area of responsibility. Initiatives are carefully considered, and the whole management team is involved in generating the school's development plan. Budget planning is detailed, and carefully linked to school improvement initiatives. The governors are working towards implementing the principles of 'best value', but are aware that this is an area of future development.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent.

9. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection where provision was judged to be good. All pupils are valued highly and their care and development are central to the school's aims. Under the excellent and well-informed leadership of the special educational needs co-ordinator, (SENCO), highly effective teamwork between all staff and parents means that pupils make good, and sometimes very good progress. The school has an effective partnership with specialist agencies, and the good and regular communication with them ensures that pupils get the best possible support.
10. Very effective links with the Opportunities Playgroup and the school's own wide range of assessment processes ensure that the school is quickly alerted to particular needs of pupils. This gives pupils a very good start to their learning. Very high quality individual education plans, written in close partnership between the SENCO and class teachers, enable the pupils to receive teaching that is well-targeted to their individual needs. These are reviewed constantly and amended as pupils achieve their targets, or need more help in particular areas. Every effort is made to ensure that the pupils have specific and consistent support, either individually or in small groups, and this helps them to play a full part in class activities. The school's success in teaching pupils with special educational needs is measured by the high proportion, about half, who require less intensive support by the time they transfer to the junior school.
11. In its strong commitment to meeting the learning needs of all pupils, class work is planned to interest, involve and challenge all groups. That this approach is successful is evident in the very high overall standards achieved, and the number of pupils that achieve above average standards in national tests for reading and writing.
12. Pupils identified as being exceptionally able in any curriculum area follow individual learning programmes that challenge and extend their thinking, maintaining their motivation and interest. Those pupils who speak little English on arrival receive very good support from visiting specialists. Very good liaison between these and the SENCO quickly establishes the precise nature of need and enables suitable support to be provided.
13. Excellent provision for special educational needs, together with effective teamwork and support, make a significant contribution to high standards throughout the school.

Pupils' attitudes and their personal development are very good.

14. Pupils have a very good attitude to school and to learning. They are happy to come to school and enter ready and keen to learn. Children in the reception classes, some of whom had only been in school for a few days at the time of the inspection, leave their carers readily to greet their friends and join in their play or planned classroom activities. This is largely due to the very good procedures for introducing children to the school and its routines. All pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the school community and are proud to be a part of it. They enjoy seeing their work, such as paintings and poems, displayed around the school.
15. In lessons the pupils start the work set quickly and positively, organising themselves efficiently, and with increasing independence. They work on their own or in groups with concentration and even the youngest children can concentrate for comparatively long periods of time. As they work, the pupils often talk spontaneously about what they are doing and how they are solving problems, such as how many 10p and 1p pieces there are in a purse. Year 1 pupils drawing food they liked and didn't like 'interviewed' each other about preferences as they worked, showing high levels of maturity in the way in which they listened and responded.
16. The pupils are enthusiastic in saying what they know and can do, and answer questions readily and fluently. One four-year-old child, new to the school, asked a visitor, "Shall I tell you how I did this?" They enjoy learning in practical and more formal situations equally. At the end of lessons they clear away competently and quickly, meeting their teachers' high expectations. Pupils with special educational needs have high self-esteem because they know they are valued. Many pupils notice if their peers are experiencing difficulties and gently offer help, either explaining what they have to do or helping them answer questions.
17. Underlying the pupils' very good personal development is a foundation of very good relationships. All staff treat the pupils with respect and courtesy, acting consistently and fairly. The positive examples encourage and teach the pupils to treat each other fairly and with respect. This gives the pupils confidence and contributes to their enjoyment in coming to school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Opportunities for pupils to apply their good information and communications technology skills to other subjects are limited.

18. Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) as a subject are good. However, the application of pupils' ICT skills in other subjects are limited. There are a number of factors which contribute to this judgement. Firstly, as there are currently no computers in classrooms, pupils do not have access to computers when they need them during class lessons. This limits their choice of learning tools when researching for projects, writing up their findings, and conducting investigations. Although there is an appropriate ICT suite, this is used mainly for direct teaching of the subject. Most of the computers are old and do not adequately support the demands of the current curriculum. There are some opportunities for small groups to use the suite to consolidate their skills, but the small amount of time given to casual access to computers is not sufficient to support pupils' learning in most subjects. The school is aware of the inadequacy of the equipment and software and has plans to improve provision during the current academic year.
19. While the well-informed ICT co-ordinator has a good action plan, which identifies relevant targets for improvement. The school has also identified appropriate opportunities for ICT at the foundation stage of learning. However, as significant portions of the ICT action plan have yet to be implemented, this has not yet had any impact on improving the use of pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum. Another limiting factor is the insufficient planning for ICT in English, mathematics and science, as well as other subjects of the curriculum. The school is aware of this weakness and has plans to include ICT sections as the new national curriculum orders are implemented. This should be done as a matter of urgency in order to fulfil statutory requirements. The staff are currently undertaking training to improve their subject knowledge and expertise, which is part of the school's strategy to raise standards in the use of ICT across the curriculum.

20. As it stands, planning for ICT, whilst having suitable links to some subjects of the curriculum, mainly uses these links to teach pupils ICT skills. It does not adequately train pupils to see that information technology can be used as a tool to support learning in other subjects. It is this very important factor that makes the use of ICT to support learning in English, mathematics and science a weakness at present.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

21. The governing body, acting headteacher and staff should improve provision for the use of information and communications technology skills in all relevant subjects and especially in English, mathematics and science by:
22. · ensuring each class has access to sufficient computers and software to support their learning in the specified subjects of the curriculum;
23. · improving planning for subjects by identifying opportunities for pupils to use information and communications technology as a regular part of the learning process.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	15
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	38	62	0	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 (FTE for part-time pupils)		209
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		14

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		34

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	42	36	78

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	38	42	39
	Girls	34	36	34
	Total	72	78	73
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (93)	100 (100)	94 (94)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	37	35	40
	Girls	32	33	31
	Total	69	68	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (94)	88 (94)	91 (96)
	National	82 (80)	86 (79)	87 (85)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	147
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	270

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.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
----------------	------

	£
Total income	427,165
Total expenditure	417,949
Expenditure per pupil	1,787
Balance brought forward from previous year	17,500
Balance carried forward to next year	2,423

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	198
Number of questionnaires returned	64

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	31	5	0	3
My child is making good progress in school.	53	36	8	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	41	2	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	55	5	3	6
The teaching is good.	59	38	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	42	8	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	25	2	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	42	3	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	53	42	3	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	62	33	0	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	36	0	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	38	17	0	11

There were very few written responses from parents. The majority of comments were supportive of the school. The only area where parents would like to see some improvement was in the provision of mid-day drinks for pupils.