

INSPECTION REPORT

HERNE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Petersfield

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 115940

Headteacher: Mr. R. Carter

Reporting inspector: Mrs. G. Crew
22837

Dates of inspection: 19th – 20th September 2000

Inspection number: 224825

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Love Lane Petersfield Hants
Postcode:	GU31 4BP
Telephone number:	01730 263746
Fax number:	01730 268448
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. J. Robinson
Date of previous inspection:	3 rd February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	
Mrs. G. Crew 22837	Registered inspector
Mrs. M. Malin 19567	Lay inspector
Mr. C. Wonfor 17546	Team inspector
Mrs. J. Andrews 30065	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International

Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 3YB

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

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Herne Junior school admits children from local infant schools in Petersfield and the surrounding area. Pupils start school the year in which they are eight and transfer to the next stage of education at eleven. The school's catchment area is predominately owner-occupied housing. The number on roll, 473, has increased from 418 since the last inspection due to the popularity of the school in the local community and growth of the town. Attainment on intake into Year 3 is broadly in line with national expectations overall. There are 41 pupils eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average and 6 pupils for whom English is a second language. There are 103 pupils on the school's special needs register, which is broadly in line with the national average, with three pupils having a statement of educational need. The school also keeps a register of pupils who have been assessed as being able in order that their needs can be met.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many outstanding features. Standards pupils' attain, by the end of Key Stage 2, are well above average for their age when compared nationally. Teaching is very good. This results in very effective learning; pupils are challenged and make very good progress whatever their previous attainment. The contribution of the headteacher, governing body and key staff in managing the school is excellent. The headteacher's drive is purposeful and focused on continually raising standards. A very able deputy supports him very competently. They ensure that the school aims are brought to life in all that happens in the school. Excellent planning and monitoring of performance means that the most effective action is taken to continually improve. The school considers the principles of best value in all aspects of development and expenditure, therefore making outstanding use of all resources available for the benefit of pupils. The school provides a lively, stimulating learning environment that promotes pupils' intellectual, creative and physical development. The school is constantly striving to improve standards further and provides excellent value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are high in all subjects and pupils do very well in the national tests by the time they leave the school.
- Leadership and management are outstanding.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Excellent learning opportunities are provided through the curriculum and range of activities outside lessons.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Outstanding relationships contribute to an enthusiasm to learn, an eagerness to succeed and a willingness to concentrate hard, which contributes to excellent personal development.
- Staff accurately assess pupils' achievement and use the information very effectively to make sure that the pupils make the best progress they can.

What could be improved

- Programmes of staff development to maintain team building and to further develop roles and responsibilities.
- Space for pupils to work and play.
- These issues have already been identified by the school and are priorities in the development plan.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection in 1997. The key

issues raised at the time of the last inspection have been addressed very successfully. Planning has been improved. Setting has been introduced in mathematics so that pupils' needs are catered for more precisely and this is being trailed in English. Additional classes have been established for pupils who need a boost and for able pupils. Very good procedures for assessing what it is the pupils know and can do, for tracking their progress and monitoring achievement are in place. These are used to very good effect to plan the next stage of learning. Subject co-ordinators role in monitoring standards has been developed and continues to be improving. Provision of learning support assistants has increased; thus enabling pupils who require additional support to have this within the class base whenever appropriate. In addition, liaison between teachers of pupils with special educational needs and class teachers has improved. All of these improvements, along with identification of suitable priorities and excellent use of funds to support these, have improved in standards. However, growth of numbers on roll is placing pressure on maintaining standards and levels of safety.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	A	B	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	A	B	A	A	
science	A	A	B	B	

Throughout the school pupils achieve consistently high standards in all subjects, doing exceptionally well by the time they leave in English and mathematics. All pupils achieve very well in terms of their earlier attainment and work in lessons is demanding. Taking the pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science together over the last three years they have attained well above the national average and the average for similar schools. The number of pupils achieving the higher level of attainment, level 5, has also been well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. The school has set appropriate targets for improving standards. These targets were met in mathematics and exceeded in English in the Year 2000 tests and assessments. Work seen during the inspection confirms that high standards are being maintained in all subjects, including information and communication technology and religious education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to their work are excellent. They are very highly motivated and keen to succeed. They are always attentive and responsive and show a real delight in being at school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is excellent overall. Pupils are always polite to their teachers and to each other. They concentrate well and get on with their work and each other sensibly and independently.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils' personal development is excellent. They co-operate well at all times. They take responsibility for many tasks in classrooms and around the school. The 'Young governors' role in contributing to school development is outstanding. Relationships between pupils and adults are excellent.
Attendance	Attendance is very good. Pupils enjoy school. Lessons start promptly and no time is wasted.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very Good

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

The quality of teaching is a strength. Teaching was never less than satisfactory, good in 28 per cent of lessons, very good in 48 per cent and excellent in 4 per cent. Teachers plan lessons very well and target work precisely so that pupils of all abilities build on their prior attainment and make very good progress by the end of the key stage. Lessons are interesting and provide activities that inspire and motivate the pupils well. Particular attention is given to supporting pupils with special educational needs and presenting challenging work for the brightest pupils. The teaching of literacy is very well established and pupils are achieving well as a result, particularly in the use of their literacy skills to support learning in other subjects. The numeracy strategy has been effectively introduced. Pupils use and apply their knowledge well to solve a range of problems in numeracy lessons and in other subjects, such as science and design and technology. Significant strengths of teaching that underpin effective learning are the ways in which teachers ask key questions that encourage pupils and challenge their thinking, the care that is given to adapting work to meet the pupils' individual needs and the expectation that all pupils will achieve high levels. In addition, teachers expect pupils to behave well and they instil excellent attitudes to work. Pupils' responses are valued and this raises their self-esteem. These features of teaching mean pupils are helped to learn because they concentrate well, work and research independently and listen carefully to their teachers and each other.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent. The school provides an outstanding range of learning opportunities through a rich curriculum and an excellent range of visits and visitors.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils are supported very well in lessons and when withdrawn into small groups. Individual education plans are of a high quality and set relevant and achievable targets that are reviewed regularly.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. There is a strong emphasis on developing excellent moral and social attitudes. Spiritual awareness and self-knowledge are strong features in the daily life of the school. Pupils have a broad knowledge of their cultural heritage and cultural development is promoted very well through subjects, such as music and art.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good provision. There are very good procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety. All pupils are supported very well in their personal development. The assessment procedures are very good. Data available is being used most effectively to track progress and target work for all pupils.
Partnership with parents and carers	The parents' views of the school and the effectiveness of links with them is very good overall. The impact of parent's involvement on the work of the school is also very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher is very experienced and has a depth of insight and vision for the future of the school that are rare. The headteacher, the deputy and all other staff share an ethos for the school, which is rooted in the commitment to improving the quality of provision and standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent, they provide a very clear direction for the school. They are very keen to support the school in the best possible way and to act as a critical friend.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The reflective way in which the key managers and staff monitor and evaluate strengths and weaknesses in their work and identify priorities is an object lesson in how to judge performance and achieve optimum progress.
The strategic use of resources	Resources available to the school are used exceptionally well and always with a view to how their use will influence learning opportunities. Financial administration is excellent and the principles of best value are carefully considered and applied to all aspects of the school's work.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children like school.• The school has high expectations of the children.• Children are helped to become mature and responsible.• The teaching is good.• The school is well led and managed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some parents do not feel the school works closely with them or that they are well informed about how their children are getting on.• A small number of parents feel that there is too much homework, others that there is not enough.• The range of activities outside lessons.

Inspection evidence confirms the positive views of the parents. Evidence gathered during the inspection disagrees with the negative views held by the cross-section of parents who attended the meeting and responded to the questionnaire. Inspectors judge that the school is very successful in its work with parents and they are well informed about pupils' progress. Homework, and its use to support pupils' learning, is very good. The range of activities available outside lessons is also very good. Visits, visitors and extra-curricular clubs and activities have a very positive effect on pupils' learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards are high in all subjects and pupils do very well in the national tests by the time they leave the school

1. The pupils consistently achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science in their National Curriculum tests. Through the work of its collegiate teams, groups of staff who work together to develop a subject, the school is constantly striving to improve and adapt strategies of teaching and learning in all subjects of the curriculum in order to meet the needs of the pupils in the school.

2. The literacy collegiate team, led by the co-ordinator, has reviewed the national framework for teaching literacy and the results from both national and internal tests and assessments. As a result, they felt that spelling, grammar and writing were the particular issues on which they should focus for further improvement in standards. These aspects have been developed in their own literacy strategy; enabling pupils to spell better, improve their grammar and write at a greater length using their knowledge and understanding. For example, in a lesson linked to the classic poem 'The Listeners' by Walter de la Mere pupils could describe why the poet had used colons and semi-colons in the text. They differentiated between prose and verse and used words like spooky and mysterious when reflecting the phases used in the poem. Through careful planning, the school has a programme for English that is varied, stimulating and matches the needs that they have identified and excites the pupils. Pupils are grouped together by ability within the classes for literacy lessons. This ensures that all pupils are presented with work that builds on what they already know and can do and they work at or near to their potential.

3. Pupils love reading and the majority can tackle unfamiliar words when they meet them. For example, pupils used dictionaries to look up words new to them like 'corrugated'. Pupils in a Year 5 class were reminded that they should use the other strategies known to them when the teacher said "use me as your last resource". This helps them to be independent learners. They show a good awareness of how to read aloud with expression in order to help others to understand and enjoy the meaning of a passage or story. Older pupils read very confidently from a range of different sources including stories, poems and factual information. This enables them to write for different purposes. For example, pupils in Year 5 wrote imaginative conversation after reading an extract from the novel 'Tumbleweed' by Dick King-Smith. In discussion with inspectors, pupils talked about how much they enjoyed reading and commented knowledgeably about the fiction they have read. They explained how they use the excellent library resource to discover the information they need in their history and geography lessons. Throughout the school, pupils take the opportunities for researching information, either using reference books or the computer, with great enthusiasm and growing skill.

4. Writing skills develop very well across the school and are well above average by the end of Key Stage 2, in English and in the other areas of the curriculum. Pupils learn to draft and edit their work, frequently using their skills in information technology to assist them. They learn to organise their work into coherent paragraphs. The majority of children spell and punctuate their work accurately. All pupils quickly learn to appreciate the purpose of narrative and non-narrative forms of writing and experiment with different grammatical structures. The level of descriptive writing in a Year 5 lesson, based on facial expressions that indicate mood or character, was of a high quality. Pupils enjoyed experimenting with words to describe indignation, arrogance and annoyance for example. In their writing they demonstrated that

they have a wide range of vocabulary and are confident to use alternative phrases to describe detail of facial expression. Throughout the school, pupils are encouraged develop an interest in words by using personal word logs, dictionaries and thesauri. The school has worked in liaison with the main feeder infant school to develop handwriting skills. All pupils begin the school in Year 3 using a joined script. This is further promoted through dedicated handwriting lessons and all pupils write neatly in ink, with well-formed, joined letters. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils have developed individual style and flare in their writing while maintaining a clear and legible script. Throughout the school, pupils take great care with the presentation of their work and this is a strength.

5. The school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy well. Pupils relish the challenge of mental arithmetic sessions at the beginning of lessons, and have made very good progress in learning how to solve difficult calculations. In a Year 3 class lesson, pupils, given two minutes to find as many ways as they could of adding and subtracting given numbers did so with confidence and were able to tell the rest of the class what strategy they had used. They confidently drew on their knowledge of pattern and demonstrated a good awareness of doubling and halving numbers. In Year 4, pupils explained the more complex relationships between adding and subtracting using the correct subject vocabulary. The highest attaining pupils extended this further and linked this to work on multiplication and division. Year 6 pupils were working on rotational symmetry. They confidently explained the properties of equilateral triangles and knew the sum of angles. They discussed lines of symmetry and could work out the order of rotation of 2 dimensional shapes. They explained the rotation of a regular shape as being equal to the number of sides and that the shape would move through 360 degrees in one rotation. In the majority of numeracy lessons pupils were set according to prior attainment in order that work could closely match their needs. Within most sets pupils are further grouped by ability and they achieve very well as a result. The highest attaining set in Year 6 is taught as one group. While attainment is above expected levels for pupils of this age, they would benefit from further grouping so that work could be more closely matched to individual needs. Pupils would then have the opportunity to maximise their potential by the end of the year.

6. Standards in science are above those expected for similar aged pupils at the end of Key Stage 2. The school has rightly identified the need to focus in greater depth on investigation and experimentation in order to improve standards further. Parents report that they have noticed the greater emphasis on experimentation and feel that this has had a positive effect on developing pupils' independent learning skills. The majority of lessons are based on pupil investigation. A good example was observed in a Year 6 lesson on electricity. As it was early in the new school year, pupils were required to draw on knowledge acquired in Year 4 to investigate which materials were conductors or insulators. In their groups, they experimented with great care. They had a good understanding of what makes a fair test and interpreted and evaluated their findings well. They understood what elements in the investigation needed to change and when. The way in which pupils presented their findings, in order to make the results understood easily, was good. Science is used very well to promote pupils' understanding of personal development. For example, pupils in Year 5 used their scientific knowledge to classify food types. They identified which foods contained particular nutrients, which foods were good sources of energy and which contained the necessary proteins for healthy growth. As a result of this work, they could say which foods were healthy and which were not. They used data they had collated from homework to suggest a balanced diet and assess whether they thought they personally achieved this.

7. The excellent range of opportunities the school provides for pupils enables them to achieve high standards in all other subjects. For example, in a Year 3 religious education lesson the pupils were very confident to use drawing skills to record the fruit and vegetables they had discussed as God's gifts at harvest time. They drew detail very well and were able to evaluate their work with confidence. In a Year 5 geography lesson pupils used secondary sources of information to describe and explain the differences in the construction of housing in Petersfield and St Lucia. They could compare and contrast features. Many had a very clear understanding of how to make comparisons and knowledge of the impact of human and physical processes. Coverage of this topic also developed the pupils' understanding of their own culture and that of other countries. Work in religious education further extends pupils' understanding of the diversity of the world in which they live. Pupils in Year 4 identified places of worship that were important to different religions. The way in which they recognised the importance of religion in peoples lives, and that special places encourage people to reflect, showed a high level of maturity. Pupils were able to describe a church they had visited identifying key characteristics. They used the knowledge gained during the visit to discuss the importance of places of worship for ceremonies and the effect of these on people's lives. Work in this lesson demonstrated how visits linked to the planned curriculum help to deepen pupils' understanding of the subjects they study. Information and communication technology is effectively used as a tool to promote pupils' learning across all subjects and standards are above expectations overall.

8. The visits out of school, and also the contribution that visitors to the school make in enriching pupils' experiences, offer a very good contribution to pupils' breadth of knowledge and level of understanding. For example, the residential visit to Ironbridge prompted art and design work of an exceptionally high quality as pupils could draw on first-hand experiences to inspire them. The commitment given by staff and pupils to the club activities and extra lessons, for example music tuition and 'booster' classes, is a strong indicator of how the school values all experiences as an opportunity for learning. This contributes to the high standards achieved.

Leadership and management are outstanding

9. The overall leadership and management of the school are excellent. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, is a very good communicator and an excellent manager. The deputy headteacher shares this vision and give strong support, especially in the promotion of pupils' pastoral care. There is rigorous monitoring, evaluation and development. The school identifies weaknesses and takes appropriate steps to overcome them thus focusing on and supporting continuous improvement. All staff and governors are involved in this process and they know how good standards are and how effective teaching contributes to this.

10. The headteachers' main focus is to maintain and improve standards and continue to realise the potential of all pupils whatever their individual skills. His vision for the school is firmly reflected in the aims that are brought to life in the day to day running of the school. However, there is a concern that this will be increasingly difficult to maintain with the growing numbers of pupils on role. The impact of the headteachers' leadership and management, and the work of the deputy headteacher, is reflected in the commitment of staff and governors. They work most effectively as a team and this is continually improving as staff develop designated roles and responsibilities. Parents and pupils respond well and are involved in all that the school sets out to achieve.

11. The school development plan reflects excellent strategic thinking. The current plan is exemplary, as it identifies all relevant priorities and shows progress in all areas addressing the curriculum, organisation, management and premises. The plan is founded on the excellent strategic use of resources. All resources are used for the benefit of the pupils and for improving the quality of education and standards achieved. This aspect of management is securely linked to the principles of best value, which are applied to all aspects of the school's work. Excellent procedures for monitoring and evaluation of performance are built into planning. All staff and school managers are involved at different levels. As a result, the school is aware of strengths and weaknesses and constantly reviews its progress towards the achievement of priorities.

12. Self-evaluation is a strong feature within the school. Staff and governors are reflective and analytical when discussing effectiveness. This is demonstrated by the way in which staff co-operate together and use each other's expertise through the work of the collegiate teams. In these groups staff discuss what the school is doing well and what improvements are necessary. They then lead the way forward in developing and implementing initiatives to address any weaknesses. A good example of this is the way in which the school is working to improve the quality of provision and raise standards in spelling and science. Standards and expectations of teachers are high, but there is a shared expectation that things can always be better. Highly effective discussion between staff increases the impact on further improving practice and the school has as a priority further improvement in communication across the school to further enhance current practice.

13. The work of the governing body is outstanding overall and their involvement in establishing the strategic direction of the school is extremely effective. Governors share in shaping the direction of the school with the headteacher and his deputy. They are very knowledgeable, supportive and involved. They fulfil their specific statutory duties and hold the school, particularly the headteacher, to account for the standards and quality of education achieved. They offer suitable challenge to ensure that initiatives have been carefully considered before action is taken. Governors have a very good balance of personal skills and experience as governors, which help them to very competently support school developments. They have established very good committees, each with agreed terms of reference and informed chairpersons. Through formal and informal links governors find out for themselves what is going on in the school and are regularly involved in school life. As a result, they have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body has responded very well to the issues of the previous inspection.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good

14. The overall quality of teaching is a strength. Teaching was never less than satisfactory; good in 28 per cent of lessons, very good in 48 per cent and excellent in 4 per cent. Teachers' planning is very thorough with every possible detail covered. They plan across parallel classes to ensure consistency of what is taught and this helps to maintain the high standards achieved throughout the school. Lessons are sequenced to ensure full coverage of a topic or a programme of study. Plans include clear learning objectives, and teachers always tell the pupils what they are going to learn. Grouping is considered very carefully. Within planning teachers identify the targeted level of work for each group and this ensures that activities are always planned to match the attainment level of all pupils. This ensures that pupils are working on or near their capacity, building on what they already know and can do and they achieve very well. For example, in a Year 3 literacy lesson work for the session had the same focus for all pupils, but the content was targeted between National Curriculum levels 2 and 4. The activities for each group were adapted accordingly. Each group was able to work independently and concentrate well to complete the tasks. Those pupils who needed to consolidate their learning were able to do so, while others were

challenged to practise more recently learnt skills. Two aspects of teaching that underpin pupils' effective learning are the extraordinary care that is given to presenting work to pupils at a level that challenges and the high expectations teachers have of pupils' performance. These features can be seen in all lessons. This results in a consistency of approach and contributes to an ethos that is rooted in a commitment to achieving high standards.

15. Teachers are very enthusiastic and reflect seriously on the quality of their performance and how they might improve pupils' learning opportunities. This is most frequently undertaken at year group meetings when teachers discuss the outcomes of lessons to ensure consistency across classes. It is clear where assessment of pupils' learning and evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of a lesson, either for an individual teacher or a year group, influences future planning and the setting of targets for learning. Teachers know the pupils very well, and their plans are based on accurate assessments of pupils' specific needs and stages of development. This results in very effective learning for pupils of all abilities. In a Year 5 literacy lesson, where teaching observed was excellent, the pupils' books were marked with very helpful and encouraging comments between the teacher and the children. This was an exemplary indication of the way in which the teacher had used her assessment of the pupils' work to further motivate them.

16. In all classes, teachers have a very good knowledge of the subjects they teach at the level that is appropriate for the age range of pupils in the school. They draw on their knowledge of how pupils learn when presenting them with new information. This enables pupils to acquire knowledge and skills and develop their understanding very well. Teachers take time in lessons to explain to pupils how work they will be doing relates to work they have done before. They explain new work in a way that makes sense to pupils. For example, in a Year 3 literacy lesson the teacher identified that the purpose of the lesson was to improve the quality of their written work. She explained that one way in which they could achieve this was by using a dictionary to help them spell and to find the meaning of words and that this would help to make their work more accurate and interesting. Pupils knew what was expected of them, understood the purpose of the tasks they were expected to complete and made very good gains in their learning.

17. Teachers challenge pupils continually by asking relevant and probing questions. For example, in a geography lesson the very good level of questioning helped the teacher to gain an understanding of the way in which pupils used their knowledge of different localities to explain why plant life might be different. Teaching makes demands on the pupils, but teachers maintain the sense of fun and enjoyment in learning and give praise to encourage pupils to give of their best. High expectations and challenge require pupils to put effort into their work and they work at a good pace, even when they are not explicitly told to do so. They concentrate on their tasks and have positive attitudes, which contribute to good achievement. For example, in a numeracy lesson for lower attaining pupils in Year 4 the teacher introduced the notion of placing numbers of different values into 'number houses' that made up a 'number street'. Pupils then had fun manipulating the numbers mentally because the task had been presented to them in a humorous way. Once the teacher had established that pupils were gaining confidence she explained how to transfer their skills to a writing task. After giving the pupils a clear demonstration she asked "are you all happy to have a go?" to which the response was a resounding "yes!" Pupils were confident to tackle the task independently and were not worried about making a mistake. As a result, pupils shared their work confidently at the end of the lesson and spontaneously applauded the right answers.

18. Very good routines have been developed and teachers generally pace the time available in a lesson very well. This allows pupils to get through the required amount of work. During group or paired activities in literacy and numeracy lessons, pupils manage their own time most competently and work well enough to achieve what is expected and make very good progress. Pupils are given many opportunities to work in a variety of ways. They work well independently and also work collaboratively within groups when it is appropriate to do so to very good effect. Teachers prepare lessons most carefully and have equipment to hand so that they can demonstrate to pupils, or for pupils to use to help them with their work. In a lesson on electricity, for example, the teacher used the equipment that was available to demonstrate how the experiment could be extended to use more variables. By doing this, the teacher was able to spot difficulties that may have arisen for pupils in achieving accuracy and ensure that these were ironed out before the pupils got on with their group work. As a result, attainment was above expectations.

19. The teaching of literacy is very well established and the teaching of numeracy is effective. The national strategies have been adopted as the basis for planning and are adapted to meet the specific needs of individuals or groups of pupils. The curriculum for both subjects is taught with a very good depth of understanding of the key skills that pupils are required to know and understand. The organisation of lessons allows teachers to work with the majority of pupils at some time. Explanations are well structured and pupils are grouped by ability to promote higher standards. Teachers analyse pupils' particular needs and provide them with brisk, focused activities designed to meet their needs, which promotes effective learning. The strengths of higher attaining pupils are recognised and they are generally challenged by the tasks they are set. Teachers use a rich variety of materials to support their teaching and they present it to the pupils well. Practical activities and investigations are used in literacy and numeracy lessons to allow pupils to apply and extend their learning in a range of ways. During all elements of lessons, teachers use questioning very well to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding and to challenge thinking.

20. Pupils with special educational needs receive good extra teaching help. The warmth of relationships with pupils ensures that they make good progress. Teaching assistants carry out their individual roles effectively in these lessons. They are well versed in the objectives of lessons or group activities; they use their initiative well and spend their time profitably to support learning.

21. Teachers create a purposeful working atmosphere in classrooms. This reflects their high expectations of academic performance and standards of behaviour. Excellent relationships also contribute to developing the mutual respect that is evident. Teachers organise work and group pupils very effectively overall so that they are involved in the task they are doing and they pay attention to completing their work. When individual pupils achieve the given tasks more quickly than expected teachers have material on hand that will extend learning further. This may include additional research or the opportunity to pursue individual lines of enquiry. Teachers encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour and the generally mature levels of self-discipline shown by the majority of pupils ensures that very good work habits are established. The high expectations placed on the presentation of work encourages all pupils to be fully involved in their own learning and to set personal standards.

22. The school has a very good policy for giving pupils work to do at home that places more demands on them as they move through the school or as pupils' individual needs dictate. Teachers make good use of homework and it is planned to integrate with classwork. For example, in a mathematics lesson for Year 4 pupils homework was signalled very early so that pupils could be sure what they needed to know from the lesson that would help them to do their work at home. Homework encourages pupils to learn independently and as it is regularly and constructively marked it has an impact on pupils' learning in future lessons and

the levels of attainment achieved.

Excellent learning opportunities are provided through the curriculum and range of activities outside lessons

23. The school offers an exceptionally broad and well balanced curriculum that provides opportunities for pupils to make very good progress in their academic work and in their all round personal and social development. The statutory curriculum is very successfully maintained. There is a strong emphasis on developing creativity and independence, while effectively introducing national initiatives, such as the literacy and numeracy strategies. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught for an appropriate amount of time and the school has developed themed links so that many subjects are frequently taught through a main focus. For example, a topic may have a main thrust that is science biased, but the teachers will also plan for appropriate aspects of geography and history to be threaded into teaching. The teachers' awareness of cross-curricular possibilities in lessons is a strength and results in pupils improving their knowledge and skills and deepening their understanding in a number of subjects simultaneously.

24. The school's strategies for teaching literacy are highly effective and they are effective for teaching numeracy. The requirement to plan a programme linked to the national strategy for teaching literacy has been in place longer than that for numeracy and the school has already identified the need to further improve the teaching of mathematics. The effectiveness of both the literacy and numeracy strategies have helped the school focus on developing pupils' skills in these areas and this has enabled pupils to have an improved approach to other curricular areas. Very good examples are seen of pupils using their literacy and numeracy skills to enhance their work in other areas, for example using research skills in history to access information and record it creatively.

25. Staff currently use computers very well to teach pupils the value of using technology as a tool for learning in all subjects, and for ensuring that they encounter opportunities relevant to their needs in the modern world. All of the pupils, but most especially the younger ones, have a growing confidence in making very good use of technological skills and making the computer work for them to enhance their learning. The scheme of work for information technology has been revised in readiness for the development of a computer suite and the school is excited at the prospect of extending the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

26. The outstanding range of learning opportunities across the curriculum provide pupils with knowledge and insights into values and beliefs that help them to reflect on their experiences, and those of others, in a way that develops pupils' personal development, including spirituality. This occurs during lessons such as science, history, geography and through the study of music and literature. In addition, time is also set aside for pupils to discuss moral and social issues that affect them, the wider community or, as the pupils progress through the school, national or world issues. Through these important times in the school week, which may include assemblies, pupils begin to develop self-knowledge, an understanding of what is right and wrong, of principles that govern society and of what it means to live in a community. Pupils are taught to appreciate their own cultural traditions through the imaginative delivery of lessons, visits and visitors. For example, through the residential visit to Ironbridge pupils learn about past traditions and how these have influenced the present. Written and creative work is displayed most attractively in class bases and in other areas of the school, which gives the pupils overwhelming sense of pride in their achievements and further helps to promote their personal development. The school helps pupils to recognise their successes and develop confidence and positive self-esteem.

27. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is offered by the school, including activities run by parents. For example, the Bible club. All pupils have the opportunity to attend clubs at some time in their school career and the range on offer across the academic year caters for pupils' interests either in sport, science or the arts. Many pupils have the opportunity to develop their musical talents during club activities and through the provision of instrumental tuition. Pupils are encouraged to perform to each other and in public. They participate in assemblies, music festivals and in community celebrations. Pupils are encouraged to participate in inter-school matches. This contributes to their social and personal development as well as their understanding of team spirit and enjoyment of sport. In addition to activities that are available outside lessons, the school pays particularly good attention to linking visits and visitors to the programmes of academic work planned. Visits within the immediate locality take place, as well as some further afield, including residential visits for the older pupils and the impact they have on enriching pupils' knowledge and understanding is outstanding.

28. Pupils are given scope to develop their particular skills or talents through the opportunities provide in and outside of lessons. Overall, the range of learning opportunities planned by the school is exceptional and contributes to pupils' intellectual, creative and physical development in an outstanding way.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Outstanding relationships contribute to an enthusiasm to learn, an eagerness to succeed and a willingness to concentrate hard, which contributes to excellent personal development

29. Staff enjoy teaching and plan experiences that make learning challenging and exciting. Pupils respond to this very enthusiastically, enjoy their work and tackle activities with true determination. Pupils' attitudes to learning are based on a mature understanding of the aims of individual lessons, their knowledge of their own learning and a very good knowledge of their own strengths and areas for improvement. Adults constantly reinforce the importance of learning and pupils are strongly influenced by this. Pupils concentrate very hard and seek to do their best in all areas of study. They are most conscientious and diligent, whilst maintaining a balanced good-humoured approach to their work. Pupils understand the significance of paying attention in lessons, which contributes to their strong motivation and the depth of understanding. This is exemplified in the way in which the older pupils listen to and accept different viewpoints. Pupils show remarkable confidence and discuss their work in a mature manner and present it in beautiful displays.

30. Positive attitudes reflect pupils' keenness and eagerness to come to school. Younger pupils, who have just started in Year 3, already say they love coming to school. They are enthusiastic about numeracy lessons, when they say they 'play with numbers', and enjoy literacy lessons when they use their knowledge of letter sounds to 'make new words'. Older pupils are equally eager to learn and zealous in their approach to activities. Pupils are often reluctant to stop work at the end of a lesson and persevere even when they find the work very challenging. All pupils showed exceptional levels of attention, both in class discussions and group activities. They act responsibly and demonstrate high levels of initiative. They understand and appreciate their own targets for improvement. One pupil said "it is important to know what you need to do to make your work even better so that you can move onto the next level". The oldest pupils discuss how important it is for good work to be shared and celebrated, although this is becoming increasingly difficult to do as a whole school due to pressures on space in the hall. Pupils feel the incentive to do their very best is encouraged throughout the school.

31. Throughout the inspection, pupils' behaviour both in lessons, around the school and in the playground was excellent. Pupils are polite and considerate to each other and adults at all

times. The youngest pupils are quickly learning what is expected of them from the staff and these expectations are known and understood by all. The school has very good procedures for promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour. Pupils new to the school, who may find it more difficult to behave in the expected way, are given very good programmes of personal support so that they can learn to conform. All pupils know the 'rules'. Staff are very good at managing the few instances of unacceptable behaviour and are fair and consistent in their approach. The majority of pupils are very aware that all the school staff and their parents have the same expectations of them and are clear about the way they will be guided to understand why their behaviour lapses, if this should occur. As a result of this, pupils develop very good values and beliefs in line with the aims of the school. Pupils have a good sense of justice and fair play and understand that mishaps in the playground usually occur accidentally rather than intentionally. However, the school has noted more incidents of accidents as the number of pupils using the play areas increases. They show concern and care for each other's feelings, supporting each other without competitiveness. A good example of this was observed in a Year 3 lesson when one child with physical difficulties was encouraged by the others in her class to join in. This was done naturally and easily with no embarrassment or condescension. Pupils help and support each other in lessons and this has a very positive effect on behaviour. A good example was seen in Year 6 when they worked in pairs to produce electrical circuits sharing their ideas and individual expertise without argument.

32. Relationships within the school are excellent and this is of crucial importance in forming pupils' attitudes to their work and play. The adults who work, or help, in the school provide powerful role models. This is exemplified in the way in which they work together collaboratively as a team and this gives good encouragement to pupils to do likewise. Adults encourage pupils to work together and use their initiative, but also provide opportunities for pupils to learn to compete fairly. They model values that reflect the aims of the school, for example courtesy and respect, and as a result, pupils' response to adults and other pupils is outstanding. Staff know the pupils very well and offer sensitive advice and support. They also encourage pupils to understand the feelings and beliefs of others and the differences between people in a constructive way that contributes to pupils' personal development. As a result, every adult and child, who contributes to the school, knows exactly what it means to be part of the community. Pupils understand that adults in school work hard on their behalf and, as result of the exceptional relationships, know that their contribution to the school whether it is academic, creative or sporting will be welcomed and valued.

33. The personal development of each pupil is given a high priority within the school. The headteacher and the staff have a personal interest in every pupil. They quickly learn about pupils' interests and try to extend their skills or talents. Pupils' personal development is fostered by their involvement in the daily routines of the school. They help each other and adults. They notice what needs to be done in their class base or around the school and do it. Pupils can plan and organise their work when required and their confidence and independence grows as they move through the school. Throughout the school, pupils are thoughtful and reflective, and personal development flourishes in the secure learning environment that the school creates. The level of independence demonstrated by pupils permeates the life of the school and promotes the pupils' understanding of their own learning as well as teaching them to develop research and study skills. Parents particularly welcome the school's approach to nurturing this level of independence.

34. From the earliest time in school, pupils show good levels of responsibility. Pupils are given the opportunities to act independently from the time they start at the school, and respond very well. Very good teamwork is evident as all pupils work together in their responsibilities, for example preparing the school for assembly, and in team games. By the time they are in the upper school the response to being given responsibility is excellent.

When given tasks to perform pupils carry them out sensibly and with a great sense of pride that they have been given the privilege. A most exceptional example of the responsibility that the school places on pupils is the involvement in day to day running of the school and in longer term development is the 'young governors'. Through a chosen representative, each class can discuss their ideas for school developments. These are subsequently reported back to the key managers of the school so that pupils' ideas can be incorporated into future planning. All meetings have a proper agenda and are appropriately minuted and they report back to the school's main governing body, who take the contribution of the 'young governors' very seriously when planning future school initiatives.

Staff accurately assess pupils' achievements and use this information very effectively to make sure that the pupils make the best progress they can

35. Assessments used throughout the year are very carefully administered and are now being analysed to ensure that lessons are appropriately challenging and effective. As a result, lesson plans identify attainment levels and key questions that need to be considered when teaching so that the pupils are able to make very good progress. During the year a number of assessed activities are carried out so that pupils' progress is mapped out and targets for improving attainment can be set. As the year progresses, individual teachers carry out intermediate tests and assessments of how well pupils are doing and the groupings may be modified as a result. This creates a flexibility that ensures that each pupil is working at an appropriate level and making optimum progress.

36. The assessment co-ordinator, special educational needs co-ordinator and co-ordinator for higher attaining pupils manage these aspects of the school's provision very well. This means that the provision for pupils with special educational needs and the higher attaining pupils is very good. There is a comprehensive policy for special educational needs, covering all the statutory requirements. The quality of pupils' individual education plans is very good and programmes of work very well planned due to the assessment of their particular needs.

37. The school puts the information gathered to very good use, including for reporting to parents. The area where the use of information gathered is having the greatest impact is in monitoring standards. Year group leaders, the deputy headteacher and headteacher regularly discuss how individual pupils in their classes or sets are working. This aspect of teachers work, together with the profiles of attainment that are building up, give the school valuable information about how well they are doing. As a result of this aspect of its work, the school has an objective view of the standards attained, whether pupils' achieve as well as they could and the progress individual pupils have made during their time at school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Programmes of staff development to maintain team building and further develop roles and responsibilities

38. Herne is a school that is very reflective in its outlook. In order to maintain the continuous drive forward in current initiatives key managers have identified the need for staff development, linked to development and financial planning, so that all staff are given the appropriate professional development to enable them to do their job efficiently and effectively. Inspection evidence shows that this is an appropriate identification of need in order to develop teamwork further, particularly to include non-teaching staff and to carry out planned developments, for example, in information and communication technology.

39. Key managers are aware that in a school the size of Herne it would be very easy for communication between the teams to be restricted. To address this, the school has begun to develop the communication skills of staff and to put opportunities in place to ensure cross fertilisation of initiatives across the school. This has been addressed to some extent over the last year and as a result the structure of staff meetings has been refined. This has improved the day to day knowledge of what is happening in the school. However, staff development is necessary to ensure that teams understand the importance of their roles, and the roles of others and so that communication between teams is effective and has an impact on the standards pupils achieve.

Space for pupils to work and play

40. For a significant number of years the governing body of the school have been monitoring the growing numbers of pupils on the roll of the school. Their outstanding capacity for strategic planning has led to the governing body setting aside a contingency fund to enable them to add further teaching areas to the school building. In recent years two further classes have been added and further building work is due to commence, which will free-up two additional teaching areas and an information and communication technology suite.

41. Despite careful planning, the school managers are rightly concerned that additional major building works are required in order to allow for the number of pupils currently on roll to be served as efficiently and effectively as possible and for further growth. Pupils have been enrolled into the school due to the pressure for school places in the area. As a result, aspects of the building are not adequate for the current numbers in school. For example, the school hall that doubles as a dining facility. Excellent organisation allows this area to be used effectively at present, but further growth will make it increasingly difficult to plan efficient use of the hall at dinner times. At present, it is impossible to sit all pupils in the hall comfortably for occasions such as worship. As a result, the school is forced to find alternative ways of organising this and this has a disrupting effect on promoting the ethos of the school and standards of personal development. Furthermore, it is increasingly difficult to invite parents in to school to join in and celebrate their children's achievements or during assemblies, as there is no space for them. In addition to these aspects, the cloakroom areas are positioned between the class bases. This limits space for classes of increased size to use. The way in which staff organise the routine for hanging coats and movement in and out of the cloakrooms is excellent, but it is an extra duty for staff to oversee due to the limited space and safety concerns. The school has also recognised that the use of the hard play areas has been effected by the growth of pupil numbers. While they wish to maintain the ethos of all pupils working and playing together, it is becoming hazardous to allow all pupils out at the same time and they have noted an increase in accidental incidents occurring as a result of the increasingly cramped conditions.

42. The headteacher, deputy headteacher, governors and staff discuss the growth of the school regularly. While they wish to provide education for the children in the local area, they recognise that further growth needs to be thought through very carefully in order for the school to maintain standards it currently attains and achieve its aims, whilst maintaining the excellent ethos and standards achieved.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

43. In order to improve further the high standards achieved by the school, the headteacher, governing body and staff should:

- (1) Programme staff development to:
 - link training to the needs of particular staff teams and individuals;
 - provide training to further improve communication.
(Paragraphs: 10, 12, 38, 39)

- (2) Provide sufficient space for pupils to work and play by:
 - liaising with the local education authority with regard to predicted pupil numbers and the current capacity of the school;
 - developing strategic plans for future building in partnership with the local authority so that the current ethos of the school and standards achieved are not adversely affected.
(Paragraphs: 10, 30, 31, 41)

The issues for the school to consider have already been identified as priorities in the school development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	25
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	29

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	48	28	20	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	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	473
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	41

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	103

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.01
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	58	55	113

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	49	51	55
	Girls	45	38	43
	Total	94	89	98
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (78)	79 (72)	87 (88)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	46	49	48
	Girls	44	39	44
	Total	90	88	92
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (79)	78 (67)	82 (80)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	1
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	473

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: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30
Average class size	30

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	207

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
	£
Total income	735 648
Total expenditure	736 563
Expenditure per pupil	1 648
Balance brought forward from previous year	56 049
Balance carried forward to next year	55 134

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	472
Number of questionnaires returned	220

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	42	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	49	2	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	50	5	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	55	6	2	5
The teaching is good.	46	48	1	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	44	12	0	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	43	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	41	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	35	46	11	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	46	47	2	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	46	1	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	45	11	0	10