

INSPECTION REPORT

TWO MILE ASH MIDDLE SCHOOL

Milton Keynes

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 110525

Headteacher: Mr J Hudson OBE

Reporting inspector: Terry Elston
20704

Dates of inspection: October 30th to 31st 2000

Inspection number: 224848

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First and middle
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	8-12 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The High Street Two Mile Ash Milton Keynes
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body, Two Mile Ash Middle School
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Hubbard
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Two Mile Ash Middle School educates boys and girls aged between eight and 12. This is a very large school, with 681 full-time pupils on roll, and a few more girls than boys. The surrounding area is a mixture of privately-owned, rented and council accommodation. Over half the pupils come from outside the school's catchment area. The school is significantly oversubscribed, and operates a waiting list. Nearly four per cent of the pupils speak English as an additional language, and this is above the national average. About five per cent of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is also above average. At less than five per cent, the proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is low. The school has almost 17 per cent of pupils on its register of special educational needs, which is broadly the national average. Eleven pupils have a statement of special educational need; this is higher than is found nationally, and includes eight pupils in the designated unit for pupils with specific learning disabilities. Overall, pupils enter the school at standards slightly below the level of the national average from over 30 'feeder' schools. There is, however, a significant variation between the attainment of pupils from different schools, from a minority with above average skills to many with significantly weaker attainment in English and mathematics. Two Mile Ash is the lead school in the National Outstanding Primary Schools' School-Centred Initial Teacher Training Consortium.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Two Mile Ash is an outstanding school, which makes the very best of the talents of its pupils and staff. The incisive leadership by the headteacher, and the high standards he sets, are evident in all the school's work. The very strong support he gets from the parents, governing body and senior staff, alongside the high quality of the teaching, explain how pupils reach the high standards of attainment and behaviour that make this school so popular. These strengths, coupled with the school's sustained improvement from year to year, show that the school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- By the time they leave, pupils have made very good progress, and achieve high standards, particularly in English, mathematics and science
- The leadership of the school by the headteacher and senior staff is very effective, and inspires pupils and teachers to strive for the highest standards in all of their work
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good, because teachers are well prepared, have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and lessons are made exciting
- The assessment of pupils' progress is very thorough, and the school uses this information very well to plan further work to extend all groups of pupils
- The school's partnership with parents is very good, and has a powerful effect on pupils' learning
- Pupils are very mature, and their attitudes to work and behaviour are excellent

What could be improved

- The way the finances are organised, because there is a lack of clarity about how the school intends to use its funds to maintain or raise standards, and there are no procedures in place to measure the cost effectiveness of its spending

This area for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made an excellent improvement since the last inspection in October 1996 and it has a similar capacity to continue to improve. In terms of the key issues, teachers' expectations of pupils, and the assessment of their progress, are greatly improved, and both are now strengths of the school. Co-ordinators have appropriate time allocated to them, and their role is now very effective in the way it enables them to plan and monitor the way their subject is taught. The statutory requirements for daily acts of collective worship, and the appraisal of teachers' performance are met. The quality of teaching has improved significantly as a result of more effective monitoring by the headteacher and senior staff, and well-focused training. Looking at pupils' standards of attainment, their work in all the core subjects of English, mathematics and science shows a significant improvement, both in the proportion of pupils reaching average standards, and those exceeding them.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	C	A	A	B
mathematics	A	A	B	B
science	A	A*	A*	A

Key

very high A*

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The table shows that, in science, pupils did extremely well, and their scores were very high, and in the top five per cent nationally. Importantly, pupils performed well compared with those from similar schools, attaining above average scores in English and mathematics, and well above average scores in science. The school has set high targets for pupils to aim for in English and mathematics for the past two years, and pupils have done well to meet them in both subjects. Girls and boys perform equally well. This inspection's findings confirm these high standards in all three subjects by Year 6. Pupils in Year 7 continue to be successful, and profit from teachers' high expectations of the oldest pupils in the school. Their reading and writing are of a high standard, and they speak confidently in all situations. Their mathematical skills are very well established, and pupils use their knowledge well in complex investigations. Pupils' scientific skills and knowledge are particularly strong, and they plan their own investigations with great confidence. From below average standards when they enter the school in Year 4 pupils make a considerable improvement. Those with special educational needs attain at, come close to, national levels in the national assessment tests, and high attaining pupils achieve very high standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are excellent. Pupils are very proud of their school, show a great enthusiasm for their work, and delight in their considerable successes.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent, both in class and outside in the playground. Pupils listen very carefully to their teacher, respond instantly to instructions and take great care to remember school rules.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good. They are keen to take responsibility, work independently when required and are quick to show initiative. Relationships are excellent between all members of the school community.
Attendance	Very good, and far better than found nationally. This has a very positive effect on pupils' progress.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 8-11 years	aged 12 years
29 lessons seen overall	Very good	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 and learning is very good throughout the school. All lessons observed during the inspection were at least good, and nearly half were very good or excellent. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour, and this results in pupils learning new skills quickly in a calm but busy working atmosphere. Teachers teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy particularly well, and this is why standards are so high. Teachers' planning is very good, and stretches the highest attaining pupils, whilst supporting those with special educational needs. Consequently, a high proportion of pupils exceed the national standards in all subjects in the national assessment tests, and pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their targets.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is very well organised, and gives pupils a rich variety of experiences, whilst focusing appropriately on the tasks necessary to develop their literacy and numeracy skills to the full. There is a very good selection of extracurricular activities to interest all groups of

	pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is very well organised. Pupils have clear targets set for them, and their good progress is monitored carefully. Pupils with statements do well, and benefit from good support in lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good provision, which supports pupils well, and enables them to gain confidence quickly in their use and understanding of English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good overall. Good spiritual provision in assemblies and lessons, gives pupils the chance to reflect on issues, and develop a clear understanding of the place of God in their lives. Very good moral provision teaches pupils how to behave, and develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. The school provides very many opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills, and learn to work productively with one another. There is good provision for cultural development, particularly in supporting pupils' knowledge of art, music and literature. There are some examples of non-Western culture, but not enough displays and teaching to develop pupils' awareness to the full.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils very well. Pupils' progress and personal development are monitored carefully, and this helps teachers provide the best support for pupils' academic and social development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership from the headteacher inspires pupils and staff to aim for the highest standards in their work. The school runs very smoothly, with all associated with it working together very well. The headteacher receives very good support from the deputy headteachers and senior staff. They perform their duties effectively and, with the headteacher, form a very strong management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors support the school well, and all statutory requirements are met. They give well-informed advice, but leave much of the decisions about the school's future direction to the headteacher.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school analyses the performance of pupils and staff very well. Pupils' results in the national assessment tests are examined carefully to see where improvements can be made. The quality of teaching is monitored systematically, and teachers benefit from good guidance as to how they can improve the quality of their teaching and pupils' learning.
The strategic use of resources	Specific grants are used well to, for example, support the learning of pupils with special educational needs. There is a good supply of educational support staff, who provide cost-effective help to pupils with special educational needs. The school's development plan is clear about its targets, and how much they will cost, but it says too little about

	<p>how the school will maintain, or continue to improve, pupils' standards. Whilst the administration of the school's funds is very good, there is not enough consideration of how the effectiveness of spending decisions will be measured in terms of raised standards. In this way, the school is not applying the principles of best value.</p>
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent leadership by the headteacher • High standards of work achieved by pupils • Outstanding behaviour • Very good range of extracurricular activities • The high quality of teaching throughout the school • The way the school keeps on improving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few parents feel that their child's special educational needs are not well met

The inspection team endorses parents' positive comments. The school does meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs well, and organises this provision effectively. Parents are consulted regularly about their child's progress, and are given good reports on the degree of progress made.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

By the time they leave, pupils have made very good progress, and achieve high standards, particularly in English, mathematics and science

1. The school's initial assessments of pupils in Year 4 on entry to the school, and the inspectors' analysis of pupils' work, show that over half are significantly below the levels expected in reading, writing and number work, and nearly all are at nationally expected levels in science. By the time they leave, their attainment is above average in mathematics, well above average in all aspects of English, and very high in science. These judgements are consistent with the results of the current Year 7 pupils in the latest national assessment tests, and represent very good progress in all three subjects. The school has met, or exceeded, its very challenging targets in both English and mathematics this year. Pupils' overall performance in the national tests is rising year by year, and at a rate higher than schools nationally.

2. In Year 4, pupils' speaking and listening skills are average. They listen carefully, and their responses show a sound understanding of what is said to them. Pupils' reading is below average at this stage. Whilst a few read independently and accurately, many pupils struggle with complex or unusual words because they have not developed a good enough knowledge of phonics to read without support. They often miss the main points of stories, and take a long time to locate information from reference texts. Pupils' writing is also below average in Year 4. Few use imaginative language, and their spelling and punctuation are weak. Pupils' handwriting is uneven, and letters are often poorly formed. Nevertheless, because the quality of teaching is so good, and the literacy lessons are so effective, the analysis of the current Year 4 pupils' work shows significant progress in the short time that they have been at this school.

3. By the time pupils have reached Year 6, their performance in the national assessment tests in English shows how much progress they have made. This year, 92 per cent of pupils attained the national standard of Level 4, 44 per cent the higher Level 5, and one pupil achieved the very high Level 6. In comparative terms, this means that pupils are well above national standards, and above the average of those in similar schools. Moreover, standards are rising year by year in English.

4. Pupils continue to improve in Year 7, and their standards in English by the time they leave are still well above average. They speak clearly and confidently, even when addressing large groups in formal situations. Pupils read with great expression, and are skilled at picking out the main points of stories. They have a very good understanding of characters in a story, and explain their role in the plot perceptively. They skim and scan text quickly to extract information from books and computer reference programs, and use this skill effectively to raise their attainment in many other subjects. Pupils' writing by Year 7 is particularly well developed. They fill their stories with vivid images, having a very perceptive feeling for phrases, which will grab the reader's interest. One pupil, for example, writes *'...and in his mind's eye, the shy, timid youngster saw gruesome ghosts, ghouls and goblins. To his ears, creaking doors sounded like the terrified screams of tortured souls...'* Pupils use punctuation very effectively and accurately. This, together with their neat, well-formed handwriting, makes their work easy to read, and adds to the reader's enjoyment. Pupils' confidence and skills in literacy lessons spill out to other subjects, and enhance their attainment across the curriculum. One particularly gifted pupil, for example, enlivens his science work with phrases such as *'...and one great value of old seismograms is that we can make quantitative comparisons of earthquakes in 1906 and 1989...'*

5. In mathematics, the picture is much the same. Pupils enter Year 4 with very basic numeracy skills, and few add or subtract even single digit numbers confidently in their head. When asked to add ten to eight, for example, pupils stare down at their fingers and start counting. They are slow to see patterns of numbers, and few understand that, when a sequence has been established, that this is likely to continue. By Year 5, the high quality of the teaching in the numeracy lessons is having a good effect on pupils' learning, and their attainment is average by now. They subtract 136 from 200 quickly in their head, and have a sufficiently good knowledge of place value to multiply and divide decimals by 100. By the time pupils take the national assessment tests in Year 6, their progress has accelerated further, and their attainment is above average, both in terms of national standards and those of pupils in similar schools.

6. By Year 7, pupils' attainment is still above average, and their use and application of their mathematical skills are particularly good. They solve problems quickly, and have the skills to check the reasonableness of their results. In some of their best work, pupils investigated how the number of paving stones around a pond grew as the path became wider. They worked systematically, testing out hypotheses, until they saw the pattern. At this point, they were required to come up with a formula to express their findings, and they did this with confidence and accuracy. Pupils' number skills are well above average. They multiply and divide three digits with two digits easily, and have a very good understanding of fractions and decimals. Pupils are comfortable drawing shapes using co-ordinates in four quadrants, translating and rotating these shapes accurately when required. They have a very good grasp of length and capacity, and make good estimates of a wide range of measures. Pupils have a very good knowledge of the properties of triangles and polygons, and solve problems by using their knowledge of angles in intersecting and parallel lines. They collect and use data very well, use frequency tables to organise their findings, and represent them on accurate graphs, sometimes using computers. Their knowledge of probability is well developed, and all pupils are clear about the probability scale from zero to one.

7. In science, pupils' attainment in Year 4 is average. They conduct sound experiments, with a good understanding of how to make their tests on, for example, the effects of different forces, fair. They have a fair understanding of how plants grow, and the effects light, heat and water have on rates of growth. Pupils' knowledge of the human body is average, and they write knowledgeably about how an animal's characteristics suit its environment. By Year 5, pupils' attainment is above average. The very good quality of the curriculum planning, and high expectations of teachers, have combined to give pupils a good scientific knowledge, and the skills to conduct their own investigations to develop their understanding further. By the time they take the science national assessment tests in Year 6, the level of pupils' attainment is very high, and amongst the top five per cent in the country. Their performance is also well above that of pupils from similar schools.

8. By the time they leave, pupils' attainment is still very high in science. Their work on the earth in its solar system is of high quality. Pupils have a clear understanding of how the sun affects climate, explain why leap years are necessary and talk knowledgeably about solar and lunar eclipses. They use very good, accurate, graphs to show the correlation between the time it takes for a planet to complete its orbit and its distance from the sun. Pupils' experimental work is excellent, in the way they identify key factors to be investigated, plan their own experiments taking all factors into consideration and draw informed conclusions. Pupils have a very good understanding of the life cycles of plants and animals, and know the parts played by photosynthesis and respiration. Their knowledge of materials and their properties is very good. Pupils understand clearly how condensation and evaporation occur, and how materials change under heat and cold. Their knowledge of light and forces is equally good. Pupils investigate skilfully how light travels in straight lines, and the effect an object's colour has on the way light travels through it. In their recording, they make very good use of

their literacy skills, as was illustrated by one pupil who was describing the extremes of conditions on different planets by finishing with ‘...*life will never be possible on the swift-footed messenger of Mercury*’.

9. In English, mathematics and science, all groups of pupils make very good progress, because teachers’ planning, and the organisation of ability sets, ensure that all work at tasks which are challenging, but achievable. The highest achieving pupils are attaining appropriately high standards, beginning in Year 4 only slightly above average, and leaving the school with very high standards. An illustration of this progress can be found in the Year 6 national assessment tests, where, this year, the proportion of pupils exceeding national standards was 45 per cent in English, 44 per cent in mathematics and 72 per cent in science. These figures show that the proportion of pupils exceeding national expectations was well above the national average in English and mathematics, and very high in science. Compared with pupils from similar schools, the figures are also impressive, being well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. Pupils with special educational needs, including the significant number with statements, and specific learning difficulties, also do very well. Many enter the school with poor basic skills, and nearly all are attaining, or approaching, national standards by the time they leave.

The leadership of the school by the headteacher and senior staff is very effective, and inspires pupils and teachers to strive for the highest standards in all of their work

10. A fundamental reason why standards of attainment, behaviour and relationships are so high at this school is the very good quality of its leadership. The excellent ethos of the school centres around the expectation that everyone should work together to achieve the highest standards in all they do. This creates a remarkable team spirit at Two Mile Ash, where everyone shows a great pride in the school’s achievements. The headteacher’s outstanding influence here is crucial, and is borne out by the high regard that parents, pupils and staff have of the qualities of his leadership and management. The school’s Mission Statement promises that ‘With commitment and consideration for all, we will pursue reason and strive for happiness and success’, and this lies at the heart of the headteacher’s philosophy. His vision is illustrated by his statement that “..the more our children achieve, the greater our expectations...” In practical terms, this involves all staff in a continual search for ways to become more effective, and improve the school’s performance still further. In this way, the whole school became involved in the Action Plan following the previous OFSTED inspection, and this helps to account for the very good progress made in addressing the issues.

11. The monitoring of pupils’ standards is of high quality. It includes, for example, the school using graphs to examine in great detail the performance and progress of different groups of pupils, including boys and girls, highest and lowest achieving pupils, pupils with English as an additional language, to see which underachieve, and why. Once areas of weakness are detected, the headteacher selects carefully the member of staff who will take charge of the action needed, makes sure they are empowered to do the job well and makes it clear what part each member of staff will play in the process. The impact of these analyses, and the positive action taken to address any issues uncovered, can be measured by the standards pupils attain in the national assessment tests, and the sustained improvement they make from year to year. More precisely, when it was found that boys’ writing was relatively weak, the literacy co-ordinator led the staff to look at ways to teach writing skills in a more dynamic way, and the changes arising from this work led to a big improvement in the quality of boys’ writing.

12. The monitoring of teaching is just as thorough. The headteacher and senior staff monitor lessons in a systematic way, making sure that the teachers gain as much from the process as possible. Feedback after a lesson observation focuses on specific strengths and weaknesses, and guides the

teacher towards areas of training which will improve his or her work. Inexperienced teachers are supported very well by this system, and quickly develop the skills necessary to become valuable and valued members of the team. The effectiveness of this monitoring and support can be judged by the very good teaching found throughout the school in this inspection, and the fact that the quality of teaching in all lessons was at least good.

13. The headteacher benefits from very good support from the three deputy headteachers, and other senior staff. All have appropriate responsibilities, and are given enough time to fulfil their management duties. A strength of this team is its commitment to excellence. All share a common vision with the headteacher, looking for ways to improve what is already very good. Recent successes led by this team include improvements in the pastoral care of pupils, great steps forward in the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress and enhancing the school's position at the forefront of initial teacher training. The deputies are keen to improve their own performance, and all are studying for a post graduate management qualification.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good, because teachers are well-prepared, have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and lessons are made exciting

14. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and explains why pupils do so well. During the inspection, 29 lessons or parts of lessons were seen. The quality of teaching was excellent in two lessons, very good in 12 and good in the other 15 lessons. Parents believe that the quality of teaching is a strength of the school, and the judgements of the inspection confirm this view. The figures show a significant improvement from the previous OFSTED inspection when less than one quarter of lessons was very good, and one in 12 unsatisfactory.

15. The key to the successful teaching is in teachers' planning. This is thorough, and profits from the useful joint planning meetings in each year group, and the part played in these meetings by subject specialists. These factors result in well informed plans, which are clear about what the lesson will teach specific groups of pupils, and how their progress will be measured. Teachers show a very good knowledge of the subjects they teach, and this gives pupils the confidence to ask questions to gain a deeper understanding of the subject. Their direct teaching works well, particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons, and this ensures that pupils learn basic skills effectively. Pupils are told clearly what they should have learned by the end of the lesson, and this helps them focus on specific skills. This is particularly important in Year 4, where pupils' mastery of reading, writing and number is weakest. Here, teachers assess pupils' standards carefully, and use the knowledge gained to focus on areas of particular need. In this way, pupils' strengths are built upon, and their weaknesses addressed in a systematic manner. The effectiveness of this teaching is illustrated by the improvement in pupils' knowledge and basic skills by Year 5, where their basic skills have improved significantly, and their overall attainment is above average in literacy and numeracy. It is here where teachers are able to broaden pupils' learning, requiring them to question results in science, investigate patterns in mathematics and experiment with expressive language in English. This creates a feeling of excitement in lessons, and pupils can hardly wait to show off their newly learned skills in independent work.

16. All teachers have high expectations of pupils, and this represents a big improvement on the findings of the previous OFSTED inspection, when their expectations were sometimes too low. Teachers produce lessons which are always challenging, but, because their assessments gained through testing, or during plenary sessions, are accurate, all pupils can succeed at their own level. The ability sets work very well in this respect, because the highest achieving groups are taught to focus on applying their advanced skills, whilst teachers of the lower achieving groups make sure that they understand the more fundamental concepts without expecting too little of them. All lessons move at a fast pace, accelerating in Years 6 and 7, with teachers keeping pupils focused by reminding them of

the time limits. This works well, and explains why, by Year 7, the highest achieving pupils are well above the national average, and those with special educational needs are at, or are close to, nationally expected levels.

17. Teachers maintain pupils' enthusiasm and concentration by providing interesting lessons, which make the best use of stimulating resources, and give opportunities for pupils to be creative in their work. They use questions carefully to ensure that all pupils are thinking hard about the topic. To make this even more effective, teachers pitch questions at appropriate levels to different groups of pupils, so that those with special educational needs make equally valid contributions to the lesson as gifted pupils. In an excellent science lesson which exemplifies these strengths, pupils had to investigate how one factor can change the shape of a shadow. The teacher told pupils clearly about the objectives of the lesson, and then made very good use of earlier assessments by recapitulating on previous work that pupils were unsure of. This was followed by a mixture of direct, well-informed teaching of how light travels, and excellent questioning which teased out pupils' knowledge of light and shade. The teacher gave pupils responsibility for directing the investigation by asking "but what questions should we ask ourselves first?" and this got them all planning experiments in their head. The teacher treated the pupils as young scientists, and they responded as such, throwing themselves into their experiments, and delighting at their findings. In the plenary session, it was clear that pupils had learned valuable scientific knowledge, almost without knowing that they had been working.

18. In all lessons, there is an air of calm. Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are so high, and clearly expressed, that no-one calls out, no-one shouts and pupils are able to use every minute of lessons to learn.

The assessment of pupils' progress is very thorough, and the school uses this information very well to plan further work to extend all groups of pupils

19. At the time of the previous OFSTED inspection, the school's assessment procedures were too generalised, and lacked a clear relationship with the National Curriculum. Since then, a senior member of staff has taken charge of assessment, and has brought about significant improvements. The school began by looking at teachers' planning, and clarifying their ideas on what the objectives, in terms of pupils' learning, actually were in each lesson. This worked well, because teachers were then able to measure pupils' progress with precision. Subject co-ordinators worked with staff to improve their knowledge of the levels of the National Curriculum, and this gave teachers a good idea of where pupils were in terms of pupils nationally. Each teacher's assessments were then compared with those of other staff to ensure that the school was assessing consistently, and this is now certainly the case.

20. The current picture sees pupils undergoing a rigorous assessment of their basic skills when they start in Year 4. This is good practice, and gives teachers a clear idea of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. From then on, pupils are given clear targets towards which they and the teacher can aim. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully by measuring their performance in lessons, using statutory and non-statutory national assessment tests and testing in reading and number twice each year. These rigorous systems give teachers clear ideas on:

- the rate of pupils' progress;
- how they measure against pupils nationally;
- how they compare with pupils from similar schools; and
- how effective their teaching has been.

Parents are well-informed about their child's progress, and the school gives clear guidance on how further improvements can be made.

21. The school uses the results of these assessments very well, and they play a fundamental role in the raising of pupils' standards. The ability sets, created by the rigorous analysis of assessments, work very well, and help to raise the attainment of all pupils, from those with special educational needs to the most gifted. Assessments show pupils' progress through the school in great detail, and track the gains made by individual pupils, as well as those of different ability, ethnic origin and gender. These enable the school to see the value added by its teaching, and, importantly, where more effective teaching or resources are needed. In this way, for example, weaknesses in the way boys were taught writing were detected, and when these shortcomings were addressed, the quality of boys' writing improved dramatically. To complete the picture, teachers' assessments also provide comprehensive details of pupils' personal and social development, and these are especially useful when teachers start the new school year with a different class.

The school's partnership with parents is very good, and has a powerful effect on pupils' learning

22. A significant strength of the school lies in its very strong relationship with parents, and the effect this has on pupils' progress. The questionnaire sent to parents shows clearly that nearly all feel well-informed about their child's progress, are comfortable approaching the school with questions or concerns and believe strongly that the school works closely with them. The results of this questionnaire mirror those found in the school's own survey of parents' views. At the parents' meeting, in letters sent to the inspection team and in discussions during the inspection, parents enthused with words such as 'outstanding', 'excellent' and 'remarkable' when talking about pupils' standards, the school's links with parents and the way they are made part of their child's learning. When, for example, pupils are struggling with an aspect of their work, parents are informed about the problem, and advised as to how they can support the work done in school. Teachers and senior staff take great pains to make themselves available to parents, and this helps address any issues before they become a major problem. The headteacher gives parents a card with his personal telephone number, and this ensures that, in an emergency, parents can benefit from his support. This high level of involvement makes parents feel very much a part of the school's work, and plays a significant role in pupils' pace of learning through the school.

23. The school does much to keep parents informed about new school initiatives, as well as those arising from statutory requirements, in regular consultative meetings. These are well-attended, and parents speak highly of the quality of the presentations, and the beneficial effect they have on their capacity to help their child. Parents feel that the termly parents' meetings are a considerable success, because they provide very good opportunities for them to discuss with teachers how well their child is progressing, and enable teachers, pupils and parents to agree on future targets. Parents are able to support pupils in their homework as a result of the school's effective measures to inform them of the work to be covered and the time it should take. The 'Home Study' book sent home from school provides a very good way for parents to comment on the level and consistency of homework set, and gives teachers valuable feedback to help them plan further tasks.

24. As part of the school's policy to keep parents well-informed, the school produces regular newsletters. These detail important school events, and ensure that all parents are aware of new school developments. The school's prospectus is excellent. It sets out clearly the school's aims and high expectations, and gives clear guidance on school procedures and policy.

Pupils are very mature, and their attitudes to work and behaviour are excellent

25. To walk around this school is a remarkable experience. Pupils are courteous, interested in what others have to say and proud to show visitors around their school. In class, they show great respect

when teachers and other pupils are speaking, and delight in other pupils' successes. When speaking to adults, they are confident and self-assured. Parents, in their responses to the questionnaire, and in discussions with inspectors, speak very highly of the way their children grow in maturity at this school. An example of this maturity can be seen in the school council, where representatives from each year group discuss issues suggested by others in the school. The president of the council starts by reading the minutes of the last meeting, and shows the rest of the committee the agenda. Pupils' contributions to the points are tape-recorded to ensure that the minutes are accurate. The debates are excellent, as pupils argue for and against issues such as whether to change the timetable for the use of the adventure playground.

26. Pupils have a great desire to learn. In class, they hurry to prepare themselves for work, and sit eagerly and bright-eyed as the teacher begins the lesson. When the teacher starts speaking, all pupils listen carefully, and respond appropriately. In group work, the teacher just has to tell pupils what is required, and they rush to start the task. The teacher rarely has to remind pupils to concentrate, because they are quickly engrossed in their work. In one mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher asked pupils to investigate the probability of two coins landing 'heads' or 'tails' in groups. Within a minute, all groups were working feverishly, tossing coins and recording their results without any sign of distraction. They discussed different possibilities with each other until they reached agreement, and tested out their theories. The quality of the relationships in this class, and pupils' desire to work to the limits of their abilities, meant that all made very good progress, achieved the lesson's objective and had great fun.

27. Pupils' behaviour is excellent because that is what is expected of them. As soon as they enter Year 4, pupils have to learn how to meet the school's high expectations of them. They learn to walk around the school sensibly, speak quietly, not to call out and listen carefully to the teacher and each other. They soon realise that only their best behaviour will be good enough. Consequently, teachers can trust pupils to work independently, hold discussions in the knowledge that pupils will respect each other's views and have fun with them without fear of losing control. This makes lessons enjoyable and very productive. Their behaviour is equally good in the playground, where small groups stand chatting, or play games sensibly.

28. All pupils delight in their success. They show a great pride in their 'Passports', which they carry with them throughout their time at this school. These treasured documents hold all the 'merits' earned by a pupil, signed by a teacher, and their value is summed up by one pupil who explained "...*they work very well, because it's a good way of tracking your success...*".

29. WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The way the finances are organised, because there is a lack of clarity about how the school intends to use its funds to maintain or raise standards, and there are no procedures in place to measure the cost effectiveness of its spending

30. The school's development plan is full of important targets, which are placed in appropriate order of priority, and costed with reasonable accuracy. Nowhere in this plan, however, does it say how the school intends to raise further pupils' standards, or even to maintain present levels. This sits uneasily with the headteacher's statement that the school '*...faces enormous difficulties in improving these (national assessment test) results, and maintaining these very high standards will be a challenge in itself*'. Subject co-ordinators have their own development plans, and, whilst these are very good, they do not have the authority of a whole school plan, and nor do they have any suggestion of how much developments will cost.

31. When developments do come about, such as the creation of a computer resource room costing £60,000, the school puts no measures in place to evaluate the cost effectiveness of the project in terms of improving the standards reached by the pupils.

32. WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To maintain the school's excellent rate of improvement, the headteacher, governing body and staff should forge a closer link between the school's finances and pupils' standards of attainment by:

- including, in the school's development planning, the strategies and resources necessary to maintain or improve pupils' standards, and
- ensuring that major spending decisions are accompanied by a clear statement about how they will raise standards, and how this improvement will be measured.

33. PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	41	52	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	Y4 – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	681
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	34
Special educational needs	Y4 - Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	115
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	26
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	90	84	174

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	86	78	88
	Girls	74	75	82
	Total	160	153	170
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	92(88)	88(85)	98(96)
	National	75(70)	72(69)	85(78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	81	85	87
	Girls	72	70	78
	Total	153	155	165
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88(87)	89(85)	95(95)
	National	70(68)	72(69)	79(75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	7
Black – other	2
Indian	8
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	10
White	642
Any other minority ethnic group	5

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y4 – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	29.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	32

Education support staff: Y4 – Y7

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	231

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	1350269
Total expenditure	1302580
Expenditure per pupil	1952
Balance brought forward from previous year	66141
Balance carried forward to next year	113830

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	681
Number of questionnaires returned	172

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	37	1	1	3
My child is making good progress in school.	56	39	1	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	40	0	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	53	33	8	1	5
The teaching is good.	57	38	0	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	34	6	0	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	34	2	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	34	0	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	56	35	3	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	60	35	1	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	35	1	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62	33	2	0	4