

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST JOHN FISHER CATHOLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Wyken, Coventry

LEA area: Coventry

Unique reference number: 103713

Headteacher: Mr K Fowler

Reporting inspector: Mrs Mary Speakman
21581

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 4th February 2003

Inspection number: 246311

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 – 11

Gender of pupils: Boys and girls

School address: Kineton Road
Wyken
Coventry

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Fr Robert Wright

Date of previous inspection: February 1998

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St John Fisher Catholic (Voluntary Aided) Primary School is in the district of Wyken to the north-east of the centre of Coventry. The school admits pupils from the Roman Catholic parish of St John Fisher. There are 397 pupils aged from four to eleven on roll, which is large for a primary school. Thirty-two pupils (just over eight per cent) are identified as being entitled to free school meals. This is below average. Fourteen per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is also below average. Currently there are no pupils with a statement of special educational need. The majority of pupils with special educational needs require additional help with literacy and numeracy. Other more specific needs include pupils who have emotional and behaviour difficulties, speech and communication difficulties and physical problems. The great majority of pupils come from a white British heritage and the few pupils from other heritages are mainly from other European backgrounds. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language do so fluently. Most children who enter the school in reception have had some pre-school learning experience at one of the local playgroups. Their attainment on entry is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with a strong Roman Catholic ethos. It provides all of its pupils with a positive climate for learning. By the age of eleven pupils attain standards that are well above average in English and mathematics. The quality of teaching overall is good. The school is very well led and managed and gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve very well in the juniors and at the age of eleven attain standards in English and mathematics that are well above the average.
- Teaching is very good throughout the junior department.
- Provision for pupils' personal development is excellent. This is instrumental in promoting pupils' very positive attitudes towards school and each other.
- The headteacher provides very effective leadership and the school is managed most effectively.

What could be improved

- In the reception classes, the teaching methods and the work provided for children in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development are not always appropriate for the age-group.
- In the infant department there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write independently.

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 its last inspection in February 1998. Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) has improved and this has resulted in the raising of standards in this subject. Links with the local business community have been extended and the pupils' learning is enhanced greatly by these links. The structure of the school development plan has been revised and this document is an effective tool for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of school improvement. The outdoor provision for children in reception has been improved, but there is a need for further development in this area.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	B	A	A	A
Mathematics	C	B	A*	A*
Science	C	A	A	A*

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The results achieved in national tests for eleven year olds, taken overall, have risen in each of the past five years. In the most recent tests (summer 2002) the school's results were well above the national average in English and science and in the top five per cent for mathematics. The pupils performed very well compared with similar schools. These high standards are consistent with the work of pupils currently in Year 6. Pupils write fluently and accurately. They enjoy fiction and poetry and talk perceptively about their favourite authors. In their mathematics lessons the pupils demonstrate quick recall of multiplication tables and good understanding of factors, multiples, positive and negative numbers. Most pupils are working well above the usual level for their age-group and even the lower attaining pupils often match average standards. The pupils are making good use of ICT to support their learning across the curriculum. Pupils are achieving very well throughout their junior years. Standards are high because of the very good quality of teaching, the hard work and positive attitudes of the pupils and the strength of subject management in English and mathematics. Grouping the pupils by ability for mathematics lessons is also contributing to high achievement in this subject. The school sets itself ambitious but achievable targets.

National tests at the age of seven present a far more variable picture. In 2002, the results were below the national average in writing and mathematics and well below in reading. Boys did particularly badly in reading and writing. However, this year-group includes more pupils than usual with special educational needs. Standards in the present Year 2 class are average for the age-group. The pupils listen attentively and express themselves clearly. Higher attaining pupils write fluently and imaginatively, using dictionaries to support their work, but less capable pupils are achieving at a lower level. The pupils' handwriting is neat and they are beginning to join their script. Most pupils read fluently, with good expression and understanding. In mathematics the pupils add and subtract confidently to 20, use the correct mathematical language and have a secure recall of basic number facts. They can distinguish between odd and even numbers and count in twos, threes and fives to 100. Although their knowledge of science is sound, the pupils are not gaining enough experience of practical work and investigations in Years 1 and 2. Taking into account their attainment on entry, the pupils make satisfactory progress in the reception and infant classes. However, the youngest and least mature children in reception are not achieving as well as they might because activities are not sufficiently well matched to their stage of development.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic about lessons; they respond well to the challenges they are set and work extremely hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour is impeccable. Pupils work and play together with a high level of consideration for each other's needs and views.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are very positive. As they become older they grow in confidence and fulfil their roles and responsibilities within the school community effectively.

Attendance	Attendance is very good.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	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.

Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is satisfactory in the reception and infant classes, and very good in the juniors. This is a strength of the school and contributes to the rapid progress the pupils make in Years 3 to 6. When teaching is at its best, there are very high expectations of the pupils to which they respond with enthusiasm. Lessons are carefully prepared, with work very well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. The teaching is stimulating, exciting and well paced, and as a result the pupils work conscientiously, producing a good volume and quality of work. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, with many touches of humour.

Although teaching is not as consistently strong in the infant classes, it is invariably sound and includes some good lessons. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not as high as in the juniors, but even so teaching provides a secure foundation of basic knowledge and skills. Teachers offer clear explanations and manage their classes well. As in the juniors, management of the pupils' behaviour and relationships are strengths. In the reception classes, planning and teaching methods are not entirely appropriate for the age-group. The children need more opportunities for learning through well-structured practical activities and talking.

The school caters well for higher attaining pupils, enabling them to fulfil their potential. Those with special educational needs are very well supported and make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The junior curriculum is very good. The infant curriculum is satisfactory overall. Aspects of the provision for reception children do not take sufficient account of the particular learning needs of the children in this age-group. There is very good provision for mathematics, ICT and activities outside lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils benefit from the high level of expertise and the efficient management of the co-ordinator. Pupils' needs are identified early and they are supported effectively in lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils who speak English as an additional language have similar skills in English to their classmates and make the same progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Excellent. Prayer is a regular and relevant part of pupils' everyday experience. All staff promote respect and care of others and set very high standards of behaviour and relationships. Cultural development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. This is a very caring school with effective procedures in place for child protection and pupils' personal and educational support.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The very strong leadership given by the headteacher ensures that staff have opportunities to develop their own expertise and that of their colleagues and to lead improvements effectively in their areas of responsibility.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are most supportive of the school, and are appropriately involved in the school's planning for improvement. There are very efficient systems in place for the control of financial matters.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school's management team has a realistic view of its strengths and knows what needs to be done to improve further. Plans for development are detailed, the action taken is appropriate and improvement in most areas takes place rapidly.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are used very effectively to support the school's priorities for development.
The extent to which the principles of best value are applied.	Very good. The headteacher and governors have a very good understanding of the principles of best value. The school compares its performance with others and has thorough procedures to get good value from its expenditure.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects the children to work hard and do their best. • Behaviour is very good. • The school is well led and managed. • The school helps children to become mature and responsible individuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents feel that they could be kept better informed about how their child is getting on.

The parents hold the school in very high regard and inspectors fully endorse their positive views. There are regular opportunities for teachers to discuss pupils' progress with parents and annual reports are satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils achieve very well in the juniors and at the age of eleven attain standards in English and mathematics that are well above the average.

1 The pupils make rapid progress and achieve very well throughout their junior years. Standards are high at this key stage for three main reasons. Firstly, teaching is of a very high quality. Staff have high expectations of the pupils and work hard to ensure that lessons are interesting, relevant and well matched to each child's level of understanding. Secondly, there is a first-rate working atmosphere. The pupils apply themselves very conscientiously and bring thoroughly positive attitudes to their learning, so no time is wasted. Finally, both English and mathematics, as well as a number of other subjects, are very effectively managed so that everyone works hard to achieve and sustain high standards. Setting the pupils by ability for mathematics lessons is an additional factor that contributes to high achievement in this subject.

2 The results achieved in national tests for eleven year olds, taken overall, have risen in each of the past five years. The trend of improvement is much more marked than in most other schools. In the most recent tests (summer 2002) the school's results were well above the national average in English and science and in the top five per cent for mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, the pupils were well above average in English and within the top five per cent in mathematics and science. One factor is that the boys are doing much better than usual. Although girls perform slightly better in English, the gap is much less than in most other schools. Boys' performance is very strong in mathematics and science.

3 The high standards suggested by the school's test results are consistent with the work of pupils in the present Year 6. These pupils are developing good insights into the structure and use of language. For example, they identify features that distinguish formal from informal styles and point out how a given text presents a balanced argument. During the inspection older pupils were asked to formulate a rule for syllables, and readily worked out for themselves that syllables always contain a vowel sound.

4 Reading is fluent and expressive, and the pupils are not daunted by unfamiliar or difficult vocabulary. In one lesson a group read extracts from *Oliver Twist* with their teacher. They showed a good understanding of this challenging text and realised that elements of the style were characteristic of the period. They tackled words such as 'imperiously' and 'involuntarily' competently, looking up in their dictionaries terms they did not understand. The pupils worked with obvious enjoyment, showing a developing curiosity and interest in language. Both boys and girls enjoy reading fiction, especially fantasy such as the 'Harry Potter' stories; they discuss key themes perceptively and talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors. Most like poetry, too, although one or two pupils find it 'difficult'. The pupils borrow books regularly, from both the school and public libraries.

5 Both in their English lessons and in other subjects across the curriculum, the pupils write fluently and accurately. Even the lower attaining pupils reach, or are approaching, an average standard in most cases and many average and above average pupils are working at a higher level. Technical skills are of a high standard. The pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and have well-formed handwriting. Their spelling is accurate, even when using ambitious vocabulary, and they punctuate correctly. Extended writing, often seen in work in geography and history, is effectively paragraphed. The pupils have a good grasp of a formal reporting style, as when they write up their investigations in science. Many pupils use words well, sometimes showing a good ability to write succinctly and humorously:

'The hungry beast lurks in the kitchen, waiting to be fed.
His stomach rumbles and grumbles!'

6 In mathematics, Year 6 pupils are working well above the usual level for their age-group and, as in English, even the lower attaining pupils often match average standards. In their regular mental tests and quick sessions of oral mathematics, the pupils show a quick recall of number facts and almost all know their multiplication tables by heart. Written work is clearly set out and well presented. Most pupils calculate quickly and accurately, using different strategies for solving problems, which they explain clearly. Some have found long division hard, but their exercise books show that these difficulties are gradually being overcome. They cope well with multiplication and division of decimals, using 'short' methods, have a good understanding of factors and multiples and work confidently with positive and negative numbers. Their work in mathematics has covered a wide range, including work on shape, angles, symmetry, probability and interpreting data. Their work in mathematics is regularly related to practical, real-life situations: for example, the pupils recently constructed a line graph to show how rupees convert to pounds sterling.

7 Although, in a short inspection, it is not possible to judge standards in each area of the curriculum, it is clear that standards are also high in areas beyond English and mathematics. Examples of work of a good or very good standard were observed on display, for example in science, geography, history and art. Singing in assembly and in the choir is of good quality. The pupils are making effective use of ICT to support their learning in many areas of the curriculum.

Teaching is very good throughout the junior department.

8 Teaching in the junior classes is a strength of the school and contributes to the rapid progress the pupils make in Years 3 to 6. During the inspection, 11 lessons were observed at the junior stage, including a 'booster' language group for pupils experiencing problems with their writing; teaching and learning were judged to be very good in almost every case.

9 Teachers are professionally confident, know their subjects well and come to lessons thoroughly prepared. In a very good ICT lesson, for example, the teacher used a projector attached to a computer to give a first-rate demonstration of how to create irregular shapes from regular ones, using the techniques of selecting, dragging, dropping, copying, pasting and changing colour. The pupils were quick to absorb the new information and were so effectively briefed that they worked confidently and independently for the rest of the session. In other lessons teachers made highly effective use of the overhead projector, video recordings and whiteboard to present various topics in an imaginative way.

10 Planning is detailed, thorough and well designed to build on previous learning, with work carefully matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. As part of a lesson on adjectives, lower attaining pupils in Year 3 completed the relatively simple exercise of choosing a fitting adjective to expand a given phrase, whereas the higher attainers were challenged to classify adjectives according to different descriptive functions. This lesson contributed very well to the development of the pupils' writing by focusing on adventurous vocabulary. Many teachers are skilled at questioning to assess exactly what the pupils already know and have understood about the topic in question. They are also careful to check the pupils' understanding of vocabulary, as in a Year 5 literacy session, when Hilaire Belloc's 'Matilda' (from *Cautionary Tales*) was enjoyed by the class. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher directed quick-fire questions to different ability groups that were very well matched to their capabilities. In particular, higher attainers were challenged to develop their reasoning skills.

11 In each of the junior year-groups, every effort is made to ensure that lower attaining pupils are fully included in all activities and keep up with the rest of the class. In one lesson the lower attaining groups had an additional session with the class teacher to check and consolidate their learning whilst the higher attainers got on with their tasks. Although these pupils are often set slightly easier work, this is invariably challenging for them. They are helped very effectively by both class teachers and learning support assistants, as are those identified as having special educational needs. During the inspection, a 'booster' language session with five pupils with special educational needs was particularly successful because specific problems with their writing had been accurately pin-pointed beforehand.

12 Much of the teaching is stimulating, exciting and well paced. In a lesson on weather forecasting and climate, pupils in Year 4 pooled their knowledge about climate and weather symbols before watching a recording of the previous day's weather forecast. They then created their own forecasts, making the weather conditions as interesting and varied as possible. Good links were made with numeracy, when the pupils discussed positive and negative temperature readings, and literacy, as the pupils adopted the style of television weather presenters. The pupils responded to the high quality of teaching with complete involvement. A literacy session in Year 3 focused on rhyme. Here the teacher had a lively and humorous style that filled the pupils with enthusiasm. This lesson enabled the pupils to discover a wide range of interesting rhymes, extend their vocabulary and take delight in the sheer variety of language.

13 When teaching is at its best, there are very high expectations of the pupils, especially in terms of their behaviour. As a result, the pupils develop very good work habits and attitudes to learning. In many lessons a very good working atmosphere is established from the start and no time is wasted. When working individually, the pupils set about their tasks purposefully and conscientiously, producing a good volume of work and taking care with handwriting and presentation. In practical and group work, the pupils respond to teachers' expectations with common sense and maturity. In a successful science session, for instance, pupils in Year 4 collaborated very sensibly when adding solid materials to water and experimenting with sieves and filter paper. The teacher did not over-direct the class, allowing the pupils to discover for themselves the best way to fold the filter paper.

14 Marking is usually thorough and detailed. Teachers' written comments provide helpful guidance, so that the pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils in Year 6 say that they very much appreciate teachers' comments, although occasionally they do not understand quite what is meant.

15 Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, not only in the junior classes but throughout the school. Teachers have a warm manner with their classes and there are many touches of humour in the course of the day, which ensures that the pupils remain engaged with their activities. Pupils' individual contributions are invariably respected and valued; this helps to develop their confidence and supports their personal development.

16 There are very few areas for improvement. Learning support assistants make a strong contribution to learning during group sessions, but some are relatively passive when the class teacher is speaking. On occasions there is scope for assistants to be more active, for example in observing and assessing the pupils during these sessions.

Provision for pupils' personal development is excellent. This is instrumental in promoting pupils' very positive attitudes towards school and each other.

17 This is a school where individuals are nurtured and where personal development, including spiritual development, is given very high priority. The school's Catholic values are actively shared and promoted by all members of staff, helping to create a secure, caring environment where the pupils flourish. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved still further since the last inspection and is now excellent. As a result the pupils' attitudes to school and their relationships with one another are very good.

18 Provision for the pupils' spiritual development is a significant strength. Prayer and reflection are an integral part of the pupils' lives in school, both in class and in daily acts of collective worship. Older pupils are confident to lead prayers, which they do with a sense of reverence. Music is an integral part of worship, helping to create a peaceful atmosphere at the start and finish of assemblies, and the pupils sing whole-heartedly and expressively. During the inspection a dramatic presentation about the changing seasons provided a strong focus for worship. The pupils involved spoke their parts very clearly, helping to make this a thought-provoking start to the school day. Another assembly was concerned with the moral theme of self-respect and 'walking tall', helping to build the pupils' sense of self-worth. Mass is celebrated both in school and in church, and the parish priests visit on a regular basis. One is leading a study of St Luke's Gospel with a group of gifted and talented children.

19 Very good relationships between adults and pupils create the right conditions for personal development and ensure that the pupils' attitudes to school are very positive indeed. In a session given to personal, social and health education, for example, pupils in Year 1 reflected on what made playtimes happy. Following the teacher's lead, these young pupils contributed their individual ideas confidently and listened to one another with respect and self-discipline. Those who were at first inclined to be more reticent were gently encouraged to join in, helping to build up their confidence.

20 Teachers have very high expectations that the pupils will behave responsibly, yet the management of behaviour in class is unobtrusive and based on good understanding of the pupils. In one of the infant classes, for example, a child was asked to sit close to the teacher because he was having 'a bad day'; but this was not seen as a punishment, simply as a way of enabling him to work better. Positive incentives such as stickers for the younger pupils are used judiciously to encourage good behaviour, whilst the older pupils are developing a clear sense of responsibility and an understanding of the effects of their actions on others. Pupils in Year 6 are well aware of the effects of bullying and know what to do on the rare occasions when problems arise.

21 Provision for social development is very good. From the first, pupils are eager to undertake routine tasks such as returning the register to the office, and behave impeccably when undertaking such errands. The pupils have a well-developed sense of social responsibility, as demonstrated in their active involvement in raising money for charity and in their awareness of environmental issues. Visiting children from a neighbouring school for pupils with severe learning difficulties are welcomed one day a week. The school council has been established relatively recently, but has already been active in improving the school environment, for example by introducing drinking fountains and acquiring outdoor play equipment. Council members are impressively mature and articulate, showing that they have whole-school interests at heart.

22 The school does much to extend the pupils' horizons. Residential visits to Alton Castle (Year 5) and Plas Dol-y-Moch (Year 6) fill the pupils with enthusiasm as well as contributing much to their learning. These give opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities such as orienteering and for geographical studies such as visiting a slate mine. These experiences are vividly recalled by the pupils. Shorter educational visits and visitors enrich the curriculum throughout the school. For example, pupils in the infant age-group greatly enjoyed a puppet show, whilst older pupils went to see a production of *The Nutcracker*. Industrial links such as those with Massey Ferguson, together with visits to local industry partnership centres, give pupils insights into the working world of trade, industry and commerce. During inspection week, junior pupils had an informative presentation from the head of a local college specialising in building and construction, to which they listened with intense interest.

23 A wide range of extra-curricular activities opportunities is available to pupils from Year 2 onwards, including an after-school numeracy club for older pupils, drop-in computer clubs at lunchtime and a range of sporting activities. The school has a first-rate choir, which includes boys as well as girls amongst its members. There are opportunities for some pupils to learn a musical instrument and the school has an orchestra, which is very effectively run by a visiting music tutor. All these activities are very well supported by pupils, and appreciated by their parents.

24 At the time of the last inspection there was a criticism that the school was not doing enough to prepare pupils for life in a culturally diverse community. This issue has been effectively addressed. The study of major world faiths is included in the syllabus for religious education, and festivals such as the Chinese New Year and Diwali are celebrated. Older pupils are soon to visit a local Gurdwara as part of their religious studies. The pupils perform Irish dancing for pupils at a neighbouring school, who in return provide a demonstration of Indian dancing. They keep in touch via email with 'pen pals' in Slovenia and California. Overall, the school is now doing a great deal to ensure that the pupils develop a broad view of cultural traditions, both in contemporary Britain and the wider world.

The headteacher provides very effective leadership and the school is managed most effectively.

25 The headteacher provides the school with strong and highly effective leadership. He shares a clear vision with staff, governors, parents and pupils, rooted in Christian and Catholic values, so that there is a shared view about what the school stands for. This results in a commitment to high standards, both in the pupils' academic work and in their behaviour and personal development. Individual pupils, including those with special educational needs, are all valued as members of the school community whatever their circumstances or background.

26 The school is managed very effectively and in this the headteacher is well supported by his senior staff, subject co-ordinators and curriculum groups, which involve all members of the teaching staff. The school has strengthened its arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning, and has good systems in place for analysing the results of tests and assessments. As a result, the management team has a realistic view of the school's strengths and areas for development and has identified what needs to be done to improve further. Planning for development, which was criticised at the time of the last inspection, is now detailed and relevant. Since that time the school has demonstrated a very good capacity to tackle issues purposefully and to implement improvements promptly. The planned use of resources is now very good, with funds used to good effect to support agreed priorities for development. Governors are kept well informed and support the school

effectively. With good relationships, they are confident to question and challenge when necessary.

27 The headteacher delegates well and, with clear and up-to-date job descriptions in place, members of staff understand just what is expected of them. Current arrangements for performance management are proving highly effective in developing teachers' professional skills and thus raising standards, especially in Key Stage 2. Staff have good opportunities to develop their own expertise and that of their colleagues, and to initiate developments and make improvements in their areas of responsibility. With strong teamwork, many key areas are well managed. In ICT, for example, the management of change has been highly effective. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is a strength: the co-ordinator communicates well with other pupils, parents and staff. There are also real strengths in the management of literacy and of numeracy, where the co-ordinator advises other schools in the city.

28 There has been a significant improvement in leadership and management since the last inspection, when both were judged to be merely satisfactory. This is consistent with other improvements, especially the year-on-year improvement in the results achieved by eleven year olds in the national tests.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

In the reception classes, the teaching methods and the work provided for children in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development are not always appropriate for the age-group.

29 The teaching of language and mathematics in the reception classes is sound, but is not meeting fully the needs of all the children in this age-group. Whilst a small number of higher attaining children are coping well, many others, especially the younger and least mature, are missing out on the kind of experiences that they need in order to learn as effectively as possible. This is particularly so in the case of children who have had little or no pre-school experience. The teaching of language and mathematics is conscientiously planned, but there is, overall, too great a focus on direct teaching, where the children are relatively passive, and tasks that are prescribed by an adult. There are not enough opportunities for the children to learn independently through well-structured play activities.

30 The full formal methodology associated with the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has been introduced earlier than recommended. Teachers have not used sufficient discretion in varying the format of the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson to suit the children. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the children were asked to listen and respond to the teacher 'on the carpet' for periods of up to half an hour, too long for this age-group. In one lesson, 15 minutes of direct teaching of phonics was followed immediately by work on a 'big book' text. Competent though the teaching was, it was pitched at too difficult a level for many of the children. As a result their attention wandered and they began to fidget. Some learned little.

31 Group activities are sometimes more successful than whole-class teaching, especially when an adult is available to talk to the children about what they are doing. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher effectively consolidated the children's understanding of vocabulary connected with weight and length as she worked with a small group. Meanwhile other children worked with a student to separate rice from pasta and then find out which was the heavier. This task interested the children involved and they made good progress. The groups working without adult input made less headway, however, because tasks were not

carefully enough matched to different ability levels and the purpose was not clear to the children. Some activities did not provide enough to interest and challenge the children for the whole of the time available and, as a result, some abandoned their tasks and began to play aimlessly at a low level.

32 Classroom support staff are very capable and make a valuable contribution to small group work. In particular they question the children effectively to extend their understanding and develop their use of language, for example by discussing the books they are sharing or helping with writing. However, not enough thought has been given to the contribution they make at times when the class teacher is speaking to the whole group, for example by sharing the teaching input, or observing and assessing targeted children. Their time is wasted when they have no clearly defined role during formal teaching sessions.

In the infant department there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write independently.

33 The school has already identified writing at the infant stage as an area for development, and this is supported by the findings of the inspection team. There are already many positive features. Technical skills are well taught. Handwriting is good and the pupils are beginning to join their script by Year 2. Spelling is systematically practised, and this is resulting in good standards of spelling. Good use is made of the pupils' 'news and story' books to provide opportunities to write narratives and record personal experiences. Above average pupils are beginning to produce some effective descriptive writing: for example in writing a story about 'The Horrible Giant', pupils wrote 'he had dribbled all down his chest' and 'his legs had hairs like thorns'.

34 There are, however, limited opportunities for independent writing in subjects other than English, and this is tending to restrict the range of the pupils' writing. In science, for example, the folders of pupils in Year 2 show identical work that has simply been copied, along with many worksheets requiring the pupils to fill in single words only, irrespective of ability. Opportunities for the pupils to write up factual accounts in their own words are regularly missed. In a Year 1 science lesson the pupils collected and classified objects made of different materials, but were not asked to record anything in writing, for example by making their own lists or labels. There is considerable scope for improving the range and breadth of the pupils' writing by considering how it might be developed right across the curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

35 This is already a highly effective school, with many strengths. However, the quality of provision is at its best in the junior classes, and there is scope for strengthening some aspects of teaching and learning in the reception and infant classes. With this in mind, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

Improve opportunities for children in the reception age-group to develop their language and mathematical skills by:

- providing better structured opportunities for the children to learn through practical activities and play;
- planning to ensure that all activities have clearly defined objectives for the children's learning and that they are suitable for different ability groups;
- providing more opportunities for the children to work independently and make choices;
- monitoring activities more rigorously to ensure that all children are learning;
- deploying classroom support staff more effectively;
- ensuring that direct teaching inputs are short and well focused.

Provide more opportunities for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to write independently, in line with existing priorities, especially by:

- planning opportunities for the pupils to write independently, when relevant, in each area of the curriculum.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	10	4	6	0	0	0
Percentage	0	50	20	30	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/a	379
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	32

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/a	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/a	54

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	22	23	45

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	15	20
	Girls	20	21	23
	Total	34	36	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (88)	80 (83)	96 (98)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	22	19
	Girls	22	23	23
	Total	36	45	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (83)	100 (97)	93 (98)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	33	27	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	31	30	31
	Girls	24	25	26
	Total	55	55	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	92 (96)	92 (81)	95 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	27	31	32
	Girls	24	25	25
	Total	51	56	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (86)	93 (89)	95 (91)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	300	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	19	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	6	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.6
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	153

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
	£
Total income	841,680
Total expenditure	840,934
Expenditure per pupil	2,231
Balance brought forward from previous year	22,576
Balance carried forward to next year	23,322

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	397
Number of questionnaires returned	163

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	52	45	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	39	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	70	29	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	39	9	1	1
The teaching is good.	66	29	3	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	40	15	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	29	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	25	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	44	46	7	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	64	32	2	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	32	1	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	44	10	2	9