

INSPECTION REPORT

CRAGG VALE JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL

Hebden Bridge

LEA area: Calderdale

Unique reference number: 107508

Headteacher: Carole L. Lobley

Reporting inspector: J. Ann Sharpe
18101

Dates of inspection: 7th – 8th October 2002

Inspection number: 246680

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Cragg Vale
Hebden Bridge
West Yorkshire

Postcode: HX7 5TG

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: David Oliver

Date of previous inspection: 16th March 1998

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The 62 pupils (33 girls and 29 boys) who attend this small, rural community school are between the ages of four and eleven and are taught in three classes of mixed age pupils. Pupils come from a variety of social backgrounds and live in or around the villages of Cragg Vale and Mytholmroyd. Almost all the pupils are white, and none speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. Ten pupils have identified special educational needs, including one statement, and this is below the national average. Pupils' special needs include learning, physical or behavioural difficulties. The attainment of four year olds when they start school varies from year to year, and this year's intake is average. There have been several changes of teaching staff since the headteacher was appointed in April 2001.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school currently gives the pupils a satisfactory quality of education. It is going through a difficult and challenging time owing to frequent changes of teachers. The headteacher and governors, however, are managing this temporary situation well. They make sure that the school keeps moving forward and that national test results continue to improve. Teaching is currently satisfactory, although Year 6 pupils have had a strong grounding in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils achieve well, overall, and standards by the age of eleven are better than in most schools. The high cost of educating each pupil represents satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- National test results have improved since the last inspection.
- Pupils in Year 6 reach a high standard of work in reading, in some aspects of writing and in mathematics.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is good.
- The headteacher steers the school in the right direction.
- Governors work hard to improve the quality of pupils' education.
- Very good links with the community help to improve the curriculum.

What could be improved

- The standard of pupils' writing is not as high as it could be.
- Pupils' work is not always pitched at the right level to move them forward.
- Pupils have too few chances to learn to use computers in all subjects.
- Pupils are not prepared well enough for their future lives in our multicultural society.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in March 1998, improvement has been satisfactory. National test results for eleven year olds have improved more than the national picture, and the school has responded soundly to several national and local educational initiatives. The standard of work, overall, has improved, although teaching is now similar to the last inspection. Most of the key issues and some minor issues in the last report have been put right, but pupils' writing is still

a weakness, and the school has not kept up with the pace of change as well as some other small schools. This is partly due to the staff changes since the appointment of the headteacher in April, 2001. The headteacher expects that the rate of improvement will increase when the staffing situation is more settled.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	*	*	A*	A*	well above average A above average B
Mathematics	*	*	A	C	average C below average D
Science	*	*	A*	A*	well below average E

*Too few pupils were tested in 2000 and 2001 to publish the results.

While the results of individual year groups need to be looked at with caution because of small numbers, the results in 2002 were in the highest five per cent in the country in English and science. This continued a rising trend, overall. Most pupils achieve well by the time they leave the school. The greatest achievement in the last year or so took place in Class 3, where there is strong evidence of good teaching last year for pupils in Years 5 and 6. The standard of work of the current Year 6 pupils is above average, overall, and, given their present situation with a temporary teacher, they are on track to maintain this standard, rather than improve on it. The standard of work of pupils in Year 2 is average, and they too are on track to maintain this standard by the end of the year. Year 6 pupils are very good readers, and most pupils of all ages are good at calculating in mathematics. Pupils' speaking skills are very good, but they are not as good at listening when teaching is not inspiring. Writing, including handwriting and presentation, is a weaker aspect of pupils' work, particularly that of boys. Pupils of all ages do not yet use information and communication technology (ICT) skills regularly in all subjects. Reception age children are on track to reach many of the national goals by the end of the year; their attainment is about average. Governors set targets for test results at the age of eleven, and the 2002 targets were exceeded.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils like coming to school and are enthusiastic about their work and activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Although some classrooms are cramped, pupils usually behave well in lessons. Out of class, their behaviour is good around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory, overall. While relationships are good and the older pupils are mature, they have few chances to show initiative in lessons or to take much responsibility for their own learning.
Attendance	Very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection because the headteacher has tackled the problem of unauthorised absences.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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, including in literacy and numeracy lessons, meet the needs of pupils satisfactorily. Good teaching last year in Class 3 helped pupils to learn quickly and to do very well in the national tests. The temporary arrangements currently in force are satisfactory, but teaching is weaker than last year owing to some teachers' unfamiliarity with the National Curriculum. Also, the teacher in Class 1 is still getting to grips with organising learning for reception age children alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2. Teachers do not always expect enough of their pupils, largely because they are not certain what they should expect. Consequently, pupils know little about how they need to improve over time. The high expectations of the older pupils to think very hard and to present their work to a high standard improved their learning in English and mathematics last year, showing what pupils in the school are capable of. Marking helped the older pupils to know how to do better, and this is being continued well by a relief teacher. Classroom assistants support teachers and pupils well. All staff are caring, and the good relationships they forge with their pupils make the pupils want to please adults. Teachers with specialist knowledge use it well to interest pupils in their own classes.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory, overall. The programme of work is broad, meets requirements and interests the pupils. More work is needed on planning the curriculum for personal, social, health and citizenship education. ICT is not yet a full and integral part of lessons in all subjects. Very good links with the community and other schools widen pupils' experience, especially in sport.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Teachers are quick to notice when pupils have difficulties in lessons, and the school provides extra help. Teachers are fairly new to writing individual programmes of work.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good provision for moral and social development helps pupils to know the difference between right and wrong and to get along well together. The unsatisfactory provision for cultural development means that pupils do not learn enough about the multicultural society in which they live.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory, overall. Staff care about the pupils and want them to do well. Teachers keep an eye on pupils' progress, but the new policy for assessing their attainment and planning work that is pitched at the right level to move them forward is not yet firmly embedded into all their teaching.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher works very hard with few staff to share all the responsibilities. She has kept the school moving forward and improving its national test results through the difficulties of staff changes. She strives for the best education for the pupils, recognising and acting when things need putting right. The headteacher is very well supported by the senior teacher.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors take their responsibilities seriously and meet them well. They support the headteacher and actively help in the quest to improve the school by using their individual and collective skills.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher and governors already know what needs to improve and have plans in place to take the school forward.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Governors are keen to make sure that money is spent wisely on the pupils' education. They are good at seeking the best value they can from spending, and are not afraid to challenge existing practices when they want something better for the school.

As in some other schools of this age and in this kind of locality, the accommodation is unsatisfactory. Two out of three classrooms are too small for the number of pupils, and the outdoor premises present considerable problems in relation to supervision, health and safety and outdoor education. The access is poor, and gaining access for the disabled will be a major challenge. Governors have prepared plans to show how they want to improve the accommodation in the future.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school and they are happy and friendly towards one another. • There is a family atmosphere where everyone knows everyone else well. • Behaviour in the school is good and children are taught the differences between right and wrong. • Literacy and numeracy hours have improved the way that basic skills are taught. • Teachers expect children to work hard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent changes of teachers hold children back. • Some children could make even better progress. • Not all think that the school is well managed. • Teachers should work more closely with parents. • Homework is inconsistent and there are too few extra-curricular activities. • The new Friday assemblies are unpopular. • There should be more multicultural education and chances for children to work on computers.

A good number of parents spoke highly of the school during the inspection. The questionnaire and comments of parents at the meeting, however, suggest some dissatisfaction. Inspectors mainly agree with parents about the strengths of the school. Parents are right to think that teaching staff changes have hindered their children's progress, but the school is now looking forward to greater stability. The homework policy has lapsed, but extra-curricular activities are now as good as in most other small schools. The headteacher and governors work hard to keep parents informed and involved in their children's education. They were right to change the pattern of assemblies to make better use of curriculum time. Parents are right to want more multicultural education and chances for children to use computers. Staff and governors strive to further their partnership with parents, and want to restore any confidence lost during recent unavoidable events.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

National test results have improved since the last inspection.

1. Owing to varying and sometimes very small year groups, national test results should be looked at with caution. Nevertheless, the overall trend of results for eleven year olds in English, mathematics and science tests together since 1997 is better than the national picture. There has been a lot of improvement since the last inspection in 1998, when all the results were either well below average or in the lowest five per cent in the country. The school received a national award for improved test results in March 2002. The results in 2001 suggest that the Year 6 pupils tested had made very good progress from their scores when they were tested at the age of seven. Pupils did particularly well in science tests, when all the pupils reached the level expected for their age (Level 4), and twice the national average reached Level 5. The 2002 results have continued this upward trend. The average scores have risen in all subjects, but particularly in English, which was the weakest subject in 2001. In mathematics, one pupil reached Level 6, and in English and science, a greater proportion of pupils reached Level 5 than in the previous year.

2. Results for seven year olds in reading, writing and mathematics have also improved since the last inspection. Only four pupils were tested in 2002, however, making comparisons of results very unreliable. Nevertheless, improvement is seen in all three areas since 1998, especially in reading, which went from well below the national average in 1998 to above the national average in 2001. In both reading and mathematics, about twice as many pupils as the national average reached a level higher than expected for their age (Level 3). The recent pleasing results for both seven and eleven year olds have been achieved against a background of an unsettling time in school with frequent staff changes. They indicate that pupils have had the benefit of good teaching of the basic skills of reading and mathematics. Pupils' performance is not as good in writing tests, especially that of boys, and the headteacher and governors already have plans to tackle this as part of their school improvement plan.

Pupils in Year 6 reach a high standard of work in reading, in some aspects of writing and in mathematics.

3. The standard of pupils' work by the time they reach Year 6 has improved since the last inspection, owing to good teaching. Pupils in Year 6 are very good readers who enjoy reading for pleasure and can use their reading skills to help them in lessons in other subjects. When reading aloud from fiction or non-fiction books, they are accurate, fluent and expressive. Pupils have a very good knowledge of the terms associated with books, such as 'blurb', 'prologue' and 'characters', and use these terms when talking in an in-depth way about their books. They know how to use a dictionary, thesaurus and index, and a higher attaining pupil explained articulately the difference between the index and contents pages. All the pupils who read with inspectors have mastered the basic skills of reading and show a good understanding of what they are reading. They explained, for example, what was happening in a story by making reference to what they had already read. They made sensible deductions and predictions; for example, a lower attaining pupil explained that a story might be set in America because it referred to a 'free-cab'. All had favourite authors, explained how to find a book in the school library, and said that they visit the library in Hebden Bridge in their own time so that they can enjoy more books at home.

4. The previous work of Year 6 pupils who recently left the school is of a very high standard of handwriting and presentation, including their writing in subjects, such as history

and geography. The teacher in Class 3 last year set high standards and pupils responded very well. The work of pupils of all levels of attainment was usually neatly and carefully set out, finished off properly, dated and underlined in a mature way. Handwriting, using pens, is clear, joined correctly and mature. Pupils wrote in a fairly wide variety of styles and for different purposes, such as newspaper reports, advertisements, poetry, letters, autobiography and instructions. Their teacher often set challenging tasks, as when pupils were asked to write about how an author can change the atmosphere in a story. Throughout the year, pupils extended their use of words to make their writing more interesting, as when they learned where to use the words 'furthermore' and 'additionally' when writing to argue the case against fox hunting. The teacher's marking helped pupils to know how to improve as well as praising them for their efforts.

5. Pupils' previous work in mathematics, especially the written calculations, is of a very high standard in Year 6. They can calculate accurately using the four rules of number in a wide variety of mathematical situations. These include problems involving shapes, money, measurement, distance, time, angles, fractions, decimals, co-ordinates, percentages, ratio and probability. As in their English books, pupils set their work out very neatly and carefully and take a pride in it. The higher attaining pupils work well ahead of most pupils nationally, and most lower attaining pupils attain the level expected for their age. Good teaching in the past is evident in pupils' books. The current Year 6 pupils speak with enthusiasm about their work last year in Class 3 and of their admiration of the teacher who has now left the school. They begin their work in Year 6 with well-established basic skills.

Pupils have positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is good.

6. Staff understand the importance of encouraging good attitudes and behaviour if they are to get the best out of their pupils. Teachers and classroom assistants are good role models for the pupils and talk to them in a friendly and respectful manner. Pupils respond well when teachers set them mental challenges, as when pupils in Class 2 thoroughly enjoyed having to think hard in their numeracy lesson. Systems for rewarding pupils who try hard and behave well, and for making sure that pupils know what is expected of them, result in a happy and purposeful atmosphere where pupils feel secure. Consequently, the pupils have maintained the good attitudes and behaviour found at the time of the last inspection, even through the unsettling time of frequent changes of teacher. Parents say that their children like coming to school, and this inspection finds that pupils are friendly, polite and interested in their work. Pupils' attendance has improved since the last inspection because the headteacher has tackled the problem of unauthorised absences. Attendance is now very good.

7. The good provision for pupils' social and moral development is the main reason why they respond well to the expectations of adults. Lessons for pupils in Class 3, for example, increase their understanding of important matters, such as co-operation. During the inspection, the teacher questioned pupils skilfully and sensitively about current world affairs, relating this to previous discussions about co-operation on a more personal level. Pupils responded with thoughtful answers, showing that they have a clear understanding of the differences between right and wrong. Homework gave pupils the opportunity to talk through their own ideas with parents. Pupils were keen to look after their visitors, for example by offering a seat in the cramped classrooms or by clearing away for them after dinner. When reading to inspectors, pupils were friendly, happy to answer questions and tried hard to show how well they can read. Pupils say that there is no bullying in the school and that everyone looks after everyone else.

8. Lessons get off to a prompt start because pupils know and follow the set routines for coming into class and completing the registers. Even the very youngest children in Class 1

already know that they must collect their name cards and go to the teacher when they arrive. In lessons, pupils usually behave well, and at playtimes they organise themselves into pairs or groups, with girls and boys playing together happily. The older pupils take turns to look after the younger ones, and everyone treats the equipment with care. The school puts a lot of emphasis on pupils' social development, and the frequent opportunities they have to take part in local and community events help them to learn to get along with others away from their own small school environment. Pupils put forward sensible ideas when governors consulted them about proposed improvements to the accommodation. Staff plan to continue to further pupils' positive attitudes by setting up a school council in the near future.

The headteacher steers the school in the right direction.

9. Since the headteacher was appointed in April 2001, she has had a lot of challenges to face up to. She has done well to keep the school moving forward and to maintain the trend of improving national test results. The school does not have a deputy headteacher, and there are very few teaching staff to share the many responsibilities associated with managing a school. A series of unavoidable teaching staff changes have made it difficult to agree the much needed or required new policies, and to make sure that existing policies are seen consistently in day-to-day practice. Procedures for managing the performance of teachers, for example, have had to be held back because one teacher is a relief teacher until December 2002, and another teacher has not yet completed the first year of teaching. Similarly, finalising a fair and suitable management structure with properly agreed job descriptions is only just becoming possible. In addition, there have been several difficult decisions to make with governors regarding school meals, spending the funding allocated for ICT training and equipment and managing a fairly large carry-forward budget from previous years. The caretaker is on sick leave, with relief cover unavailable in the mornings; the headteacher has carried out these duties voluntarily for over a year.

10. Against this background, the headteacher has gained a good understanding of what the school's strengths are and what staff and governors need to do to improve the school. She has secured the confidence and support of governors and staff, who are keen to play their part in making the necessary changes, and she is determined to regain parents' full confidence in the school. The key issues from this inspection are already either in the school improvement plan or acknowledged as issues for the future. The headteacher has a regular teaching timetable, as well as providing teaching for groups in literacy lessons and taking a large share of the supervision duties. During the inspection, for example, the service bus did not arrive as scheduled at the end of the school day, and the headteacher's supervision time extended to about an hour and a half until all pupils were safely delivered home or collected.

11. The headteacher takes her professional development seriously. She keeps abreast of national and local educational initiatives by attending courses and meetings and by working closely with local education authority representatives and other headteachers. She looks outside the school for examples of best practice, rather than acting hastily, and involves staff and governors in making decisions so that pupils' best interests are served. The headteacher does not underestimate the task ahead of her now, and anticipates that the more settled staffing situation from January 2003 will enable her to bring about the changes that she knows are needed if all pupils are to achieve as well as they can.

Governors work hard to improve the quality of pupils' education.

12. Governors support their school well and are closely involved in its quest for improvement. All governors are linked to subjects of the curriculum, year groups of pupils or important areas of work, such as special educational needs. They have set targets for the headteacher and carry out their role as 'critical friends' in an informed way. The school

improvement plan gives due emphasis to lifting standards through prudent and targeted use of all the resources available. Governors know, for example, that pupils' writing needs to improve, especially that of boys, and they have set funds aside this year for planned training of staff and for new teaching materials. Governors also use their individual and collective expertise to help the school to move forward. A governor with a background in ICT, for example, has saved the school a considerable amount of money and time by acting as advisor and technician. His skills have helped the school to solve technical problems and to be in a position to have up-to-date equipment up and running so that teachers can now begin to lift the standard of pupils' work. Similarly, a governor who is an architect has worked with staff and pupils to produce draft plans to put right some of the inadequacies of the accommodation. These include poor access to the building, poor toilet facilities and the lack of proper outdoor facilities, especially for the youngest children in the school. All these planned improvements are designed to enhance the quality of the day-to-day experiences of the pupils.

13. Governors have a forward-looking view of the budget and work hard to get the best value for the pupils. When the way that funding for school meals changed, for example, they did not continue with the existing contract because it meant taking funds away from pupils' education. Governors are knowledgeable and confident enough to tackle such difficult issues. They are aware that not all parents agree with some of the decisions they have to make. They consult parents, however, and the recent decision not to continue with the contract for school meals represents the views of the majority of parents. At other times, governors explain unpopular decisions well to parents, such as the change to Friday assemblies. They are well aware of the importance of listening to what parents have to say, but believe, rightly, that listening should never mean making decisions that do not serve the best educational interests of the majority of the pupils. Governors take action when spending does not represent best value for money, as when they found alternative methods of training staff in ICT because the courses they were attending did not meet their needs.

Very good links with the community help to improve the curriculum.

14. Staff and governors value their links with the community and with other educational institutions as a means of improving the quality of pupils' education. This is a small school in a rural area, and everyone works hard to make sure that it does not become isolated. Governors are very pleased that links have been extended since the last inspection, and teachers benefit greatly from the more recent links with other schools that have been forged. The school has strong links with a local beacon school and with the Calderdale Small Schools' Network. The headteacher takes advantage of the opportunities that these links provide to work closely with other headteachers. The teacher with responsibility for ICT has created a link with another small and similar school, with a view to comparing ideas about the most effective way to plan for teaching the National Curriculum for ICT in mixed age classes. Staff value the support of the local education authority advisory staff, and seek their practical help on matters related to teaching subjects, such as literacy and numeracy. Good links with other schools help in a wide variety of ways, such as borrowing stage and display equipment or using facilities for sport. A link with a centre of technological excellence means that the school can borrow specialist equipment to make sure that aspects of the ICT curriculum can be covered.

15. The curriculum is enhanced well by frequent visitors from the community, including staff from local high schools, fire and road safety services, the school nurse, a storyteller, a voluntary teacher, a local vicar, a historical re-enactment group, peripatetic music staff, the local mayor and many more. Similarly, pupils go outside the school on interesting visits, including a residential visit to Weardale for the older pupils and a visit to the magistrate's courtrooms in Halifax. Pupils can take part in a wide range of local sporting and social events,

such as maypole dancing, the village fete, a poetry competition, the local schools' kwik cricket competition and the under 11's football tournament. All these links with the community, and others, broaden the curriculum and make pupils' learning more exciting and meaningful.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The standard of pupils' writing is not as high as it could be.

16. A key issue following the last inspection was to raise standards in writing by improving handwriting and punctuation. Although work in the literacy hour has helped with this, writing is still a weaker area of pupils' progress and attainment in all classes. The school improvement plan shows that staff and governors recognise the continuing problem and have plans to do something about it. National test results for seven year olds in writing have improved since 1997, but they are still not as good as in reading or mathematics, especially in relation to higher attaining pupils. In 2001, writing results were below similar schools, overall, suggesting some underachievement. It was largely the poorer performance of boys that caused this weakness. The results of the 2002 English tests for eleven year olds were an improvement on the previous year, suggesting rising standards over time. The previous work of pupils in Year 6 who have now left the school indicates that handwriting and punctuation were not weaknesses last year. On the contrary, pupils' handwriting and presentation were of a very high standard, and there were few punctuation errors in their work. The teacher has now left the school, however, and a temporary teacher, although hard working and enthusiastic, does not have the same level of expertise in teaching the National Curriculum.

17. The problem of weak handwriting and presentation for many other pupils is still evident, largely because teachers do not expect enough of them, and because of other weaknesses in the teaching of handwriting. During the inspection, pupils with a good standard of handwriting had extra help in a small group from a classroom assistant, while other pupils in the same class struggled and continued with poor letter joins and poor presentation. Previous work in the books of pupils now in Year 5 is often very carelessly presented, untidy and rarely of the standard of handwriting and presentation expected for pupils of their age. There are few examples of clear improvement in handwriting because teachers have insisted on better work. Teachers allow pupils to use ink pens before they can write properly with pencils, and this makes work look even more untidy and does not encourage them to try harder.

18. Boys do not perform as well in writing tasks as girls do, and the school has plans to look more closely into this problem and to agree what needs to be done. A main problem is that most pupils do not know, when asked, how their writing needs to improve and what their personal 'target' is. Teachers are not clear enough either about where pupils are in terms of attaining the writing skills set out in the National Curriculum, and they often give all pupils in the class the same or similar writing tasks, regardless of which aspects of their writing need to improve next. During the inspection, pupils gave their teacher a strong reminder by saying, "We did this last year!", but the teacher could not explain what she expected of them this year because they had now moved on. In the school's efforts to improve writing skills, teachers often use published learning resources. While there are some good examples of writing as a result of this in pupils' previous work, they rarely improve their writing skills by focusing strongly on particular aspects of writing in subjects, such as history, geography and religious education. Also, pupils' writing is often outside their own experiences, and not the best stimulus for getting the most out of their efforts, especially those who find writing difficult. Pupils use computers for drafting and re-drafting their writing only very occasionally, and this restricts their overall attainment. Although it is close to the beginning of the school year, there

is not yet a strong sense of importance and enjoyment in writing communicated to pupils through displays or through celebrations of their efforts. Pupils need more encouragement to improve and a greater sense of pleasure and purpose from their writing.

19. Teachers want to improve their teaching of writing through work in the literacy hour, and the school improvement plan shows that they plan to do so. When teaching groups of pupils in Year 2, the headteacher helps them to improve by modelling writing for them before asking them to write by themselves. This method is more successful because it gives pupils confidence to start writing by themselves. Most pupils can respond to writing tasks better than they do at the moment, but they need higher expectations and more carefully planned opportunities if they are to do as well as they can.

Pupils' work is not always pitched at the right level to move them forward.

20. The headteacher has responsibility for checking that teachers follow the school's guidelines about assessing pupils in order to match their work closely to their current learning needs. A revised draft policy was completed in May 2002, but this has still to be agreed by governors, and the guidance is only partially seen in day-to-day practice. The headteacher knows that there is further work needed on using assessment information to guide curriculum and lesson planning, and this is reflected adequately in the school improvement plan.

21. The school meets requirements for carrying out national tests at the ages of seven and eleven and the baseline assessments when children start school. Teachers use several other helpful methods of finding out how well their pupils are doing. When planning lessons, teachers are aware of the differing age groups in their classes and know which pupils have special educational needs and which are the brighter pupils; last year a very bright pupil attained a level much higher than expected for eleven year olds in the national tests in mathematics. Teachers often place pupils in learning groups according to both age and ability, as in Class 2 when the teacher asked less able older pupils to work at the same table as brighter and younger pupils. They often plan easier or harder work to take account of these factors, but rarely plan with a clear enough indication of what pupils *need* to learn next in terms of the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the National Curriculum. This is because teachers do not have enough information about what their pupils have already learned so that they know what they must teach them next. Consequently, too often, all the pupils in the class have the same work, and teachers do not know what more they should expect of the older and brighter pupils to help them to reach the next level.

22. Teachers notice when pupils' progress is not as good as that of other pupils, and pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans to point the way forward in their learning. They often benefit from extra teaching time or the help of a classroom assistant. Teachers are fairly new to writing these plans, however, and they are rarely specific enough to indicate clearly what each pupil needs to learn next and how everyone will know when they have done so. Also, the plans for pupils with learning difficulties are not yet used as a basis for planning work in day-to-day lessons, and although pupils often have easier or modified work, this does not necessarily meet their most urgent learning needs.

23. Children of reception age are taught alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2. This means that the teacher has to merge the Foundation Curriculum with the National Curriculum when planning lessons. As in many other schools in similar circumstances, this is a difficult task, and the teacher has worked hard to find out how best to organise her teaching and pupils' learning. Although she is sometimes successful, particularly by making good use of a skilled classroom assistant, there are times when the children do not learn as much as they could because their work and activities do not build step by step on what they can already do. At

this early time in the school year, when children have only been attending a very short time, some find it hard to take part for such a long time in formal lessons, such as literacy and numeracy lessons. This is because they have not yet had enough opportunities to achieve the stepping stones that lead them towards attaining the nationally recommended early learning goals. During the inspection, one literacy lesson was unsatisfactory because children's behaviour deteriorated when they had to sit still and listen for too long, and they did not learn much.

24. The headteacher has started to track pupils' progress through the levels set by the National Curriculum in order to check how well they are doing over time. Teachers have also started to think about setting their pupils individual targets for improvement, but when asked, hardly any pupils knew what their own targets were. In these mixed age classes, teachers need a much better knowledge of what pupils already know, understand and can do, so that they can plan lessons that build on this and take pupils of differing ages and levels of attainment on to the next important stage of their learning. They also need a greater knowledge of how to plan lessons for mixed age classes and to recognise work that reflects each level of the National Curriculum. Pupils are capable of understanding what learning targets are and have the right kind of attitude to school to want to strive to achieve them. The most urgent priority for improvement in this key issue is found in the Foundation Curriculum and writing, followed by reading, mathematics and ICT.

Pupils have too few chances to learn to use computers in all subjects.

25. Staff and governors, particularly the subject leader and ICT governor, have worked hard to overcome a lot of problems in relation to improving provision for pupils to learn and practise ICT skills. Frequent changes of teaching staff have not helped matters in the last year or so, and the courses attended by staff initially did not build on what teachers could already do. Governors, rightly, decided to make other arrangements in order to make sure that funding was not wasted. This caused a delay in getting new equipment up and running, and the school has only fairly recently become in the position to begin to move forward again. The fact that some computer equipment is now outdated and keeps breaking down has caused further delays, and there have been problems getting access to the Internet and ensuring safety for the pupils.

26. Many pupils have computers at home and some already have quite advanced skills. In a lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6, the teacher used the interactive white board very well to teach the class how to design and produce a title page for a newspaper. She took the lesson at a pace to suit the less advanced pupils. Some pupils became frustrated because they were not learning anything new, and they were eager to get working on more sophisticated designs. The teacher explained after the lesson that she did not know whether or not pupils had covered this work before, and that she was not familiar with the National Curriculum levels of attainment. The school does not have any records in place to give new teachers an indication of what pupils of differing levels of attainment need to learn next.

27. The subject leader has a lot of skills and, during the inspection, she used advanced ICT equipment very skilfully as a teaching resource. Pupils in Class 1 were fascinated and enthralled in their science lesson when they were able to see the image of chrysalises in a jar magnified and transferred to a computer screen. Similarly, when she used the interactive whiteboard in a numeracy lesson, she was able to demonstrate patterns in numbers very clearly, helping pupils to grasp the new teaching point quickly. Although teachers occasionally plan for the pupils to use computers themselves as an integral part of lessons in other subjects, during the inspection, there were too many lessons when computers were left unused. Pupils' work from the last school year includes only one or two pieces of either word processing in English or evidence of researching the Internet in other subjects. When asked

about working on computers, pupils say that they rarely do so, and they were unable to give examples of ways in which ICT could help their work in subjects, such as mathematics, science or geography. This confirms the concerns of parents that pupils do not use computers at school often enough.

28. The subject leader and governor with responsibility for ICT are well aware that there is much to do to make the school's provision as good as they want it to be. Teachers are not yet very aware of what pupils of each age group should be able to do, or how to assess pieces of work. The subject leader does not yet have a clear job description and has not had much opportunity to work alongside other teachers to find out how well the school is doing. Teachers have access to written programmes of work to reflect the National Curriculum, but they have found it difficult to organise and manage their teaching in the mixed age classes. The subject leader is trying to resolve this problem by talking to teachers in other similar schools. The school improvement plan includes a section on raising standards in ICT. This is linked to further training for teachers, governors and classroom assistants, continued improvement of resources and planning clear learning objectives for the pupils. The plan is not linked directly with spending, but the governor for ICT expects that funding will be released to help the school to move forward. The headteacher has set very challenging targets for National Curriculum levels at the age of eleven. She believes that the standard of pupils' work by the end of Year 6 will be at least in line with the national expectations. With so few opportunities for pupils to learn and practise new skills, however, it is difficult to see how this can be the case.

Pupils are not prepared well enough for their future lives in our multicultural society.

29. The last inspection found that the curriculum did not emphasise the richness of cultural diversity strongly enough, and this is still a weakness. The headteacher is aware of the fact, and wants to establish a link with a school with pupils from other ethnic groups to widen pupils' experiences of other people. Pupils in Year 6 recall a joint art project with Asian pupils from another school, and spoke of recent work in art and design when they studied Aboriginal art. The school sponsors a girl in Kenya, and pupils organise fundraising events to support her and her family. Lessons in religious education provide a few opportunities for pupils to find out how people from other backgrounds worship. When questioned about this, however, pupils in Year 6 named a few religious leaders and places of worship, but their knowledge and understanding were insufficient for pupils of their age. They were unable to recall listening to music from other cultures, but said that they expect to do dancing to African drums next term.

30. There are few resources in the school to promote interest and positive attitudes towards people from other cultural backgrounds, and displays do little to reflect the cultural diversity of society today. Pupils in this school gradually become confident, thoughtful and articulate young people, who are open to new ideas. The school does not do full justice to their capacity to understand the interdependence of cultures. In association with this, the recently revised statutory policy to promote race equality is still in draft and has not yet been agreed by governors. The school improvement plan indicates that governors want to develop multicultural links. They are about to start a programme for raising their own awareness of other cultures by visiting other schools. This is a sensible move forward, but by itself will not ensure that pupils' awareness is raised as quickly as it needs to be, given that the weakness was first highlighted in 1998.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

31. In order to maintain the school's strengths and raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governing body should:

- (1) Raise the standard of pupils' writing by:
 - finding ways to motivate boys to improve;
 - having a consistent approach to teaching handwriting;
 - setting higher expectations of pupils to present their work neatly and carefully;
 - planning more chances for pupils to extend and improve their writing as part of their work in other subjects;
 - planning more chances for pupils to use computers to draft and re-draft writing;
 - giving writing a higher profile around the school and in displays of work.
- (2) Make sure that pupils' work always builds step by step on what they can already do by:
 - putting the new policy for assessing pupils into practice;
 - writing more precise individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs;
 - setting National Curriculum targets for groups of pupils or individuals and planning work that leads them towards increasingly higher levels;
 - organising lessons for reception age children that provide the right kind of chances for them to reach the early learning goals.
- (3) Provide more chances for pupils to learn new ICT skills and to practise using them in other subjects.
- (4) Improve provision for pupils to learn about our multicultural society.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

13

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	0	5	7	1	0	0
Percentage	0	0	38	54	8	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 more than seven 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	62
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/a	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/a	10

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.5
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	6	4	10

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	*	*	*
Percentage of pupils At NC level 2 or above	School	* (100)	* (91)	* (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	*	*	*
Percentage of pupils At NC level 2 or above	School	* (100)	* (100)	* (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	5	4	9

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	*	*	*
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	*	*	*
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	*	*	*
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	*	*	*
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

* There were too few pupils tested to publish the results for this school.

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	61	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	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	0	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	0	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)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.3
Average class size	20.7

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	62

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	168,951
Total expenditure	174,531
Expenditure per pupil	2,644
Balance brought forward from previous year	25,719
Balance carried forward to next year	20,139

Recruitment of teachers

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

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
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	68
Number of questionnaires returned	50 (74%)

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	32	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	36	8	6	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	42	10	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	50	16	8	2
The teaching is good.	30	48	6	4	12
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	38	24	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	22	24	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	44	6	4	2
The school works closely with parents.	30	24	16	26	4
The school is well led and managed.	24	42	8	12	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	38	14	4	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	14	16	34	36	0