

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BIRCH COPSE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Tilehurst, Nr Reading

LEA area: West Berkshire

Unique reference number: 109844

Headteacher: Mr J E W Peacock

Reporting inspector: David Westall  
2414

Dates of inspection: 3 – 4 March 2003

Inspection number: 246942

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wittenham Avenue Tilehurst Reading Berkshire
Postcode:	RG31 5LN
Telephone number:	0118 942 7442
Fax number:	0118 945 4489
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Vickers
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

There are 337 pupils on roll, aged between four 11 years. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, and the percentage identified as having special educational needs is below the national average. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Two pupils speak English as an additional language but none are at an early stage of English language acquisition. On entry to reception, pupils' standards are broadly average, although mainly at the higher end of the average range.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very good school. It benefits from an able, highly committed staff and from the clear sense of direction provided by the headteacher and governors. The teaching is well matched to children's needs in the reception classes, and pupils make good progress in English and mathematics as a result of effective teaching across the school. Pupils' personal development is fostered very well, and they demonstrate very positive attitudes and behaviour. The support for pupils with special educational needs is good, and the school is a caring community. The roles of subject co-ordinators need further development but the school's strengths vastly outweigh this weakness, and it provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics as a result of effective teaching.
- The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, and benefits from a committed and effective governing body.
- In reception, good teaching and a well balanced curriculum help children to make a good start at the school.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and their behaviour is very good.
- The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs.
- Very good provision is made for pupils' personal development.
- The school is a caring community where the welfare of pupils is given a high priority.
- A strong partnership is established with parents, and parents hold the school in high regard.

#### **What could be improved**

- Co-ordinators do not have a range of sufficiently rigorous and systematic procedures for checking the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection, in 1998, when standards in English and mathematics were average in Year 6 and pupils were making mainly satisfactory progress in their learning. Current findings show that standards in English and mathematics are above average in Year 6, and pupils' overall progress is good. In addition, the school has successfully rectified the deficiencies in curriculum planning which were identified by the last inspection. However, the monitoring roles of subject co-ordinators were underdeveloped in 1998, and this is still the case.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	B	A	A	A	well above average A
Mathematics	B	A	A	A	above average B
Science	C	A	A	A	average C
					below average D
					well below average E

The table shows the results of the Year 6 statutory tests in 2002 were well above the national average and also well above the average results of similar schools. These results maintained the high standards achieved in the previous year. Current standards in Year 6 are a little lower in English and mathematics than in 2002, and are above average, overall. This results from the lower proportion of very able pupils in the current Year 6 classes, rather than from any reduction in the school's effectiveness. When account is taken of pupils' starting points on entry to the school, current standards and previous test results confirm pupils' good achievements.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn. In all lessons, they listen attentively to their teachers and concentrate on their tasks.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good, throughout the school day.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils relate very well to one another and to the adults who work with them. They work together constructively, and their respect for one another is evident in their caring behaviour and in their ability to understand others' viewpoints. They enjoy the opportunities they are given to take responsibility and undertake their duties conscientiously.
Attendance	Well above the national average.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Reception	Years 1-2	Years 3-6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed during the inspection and the vast majority demonstrated good, and sometimes very good, teaching.

In the reception classes, effective teaching enables children to make a good start at the school. Activities are stimulating and skilfully structured so that all children can take part at the level they need for their all-round development. Teachers have a good understanding of children's learning and ensure that basic skills are taught in interesting and practical ways.

Across the school, teachers plan their lessons well and have high expectations of pupils' potential achievement. In Years 1 to 6, the teaching in English and mathematics is good, and is sometimes very good, enabling pupils to make good overall progress in their learning in these key subjects. In the most successful lessons, pupils are working at the edge of their current capabilities, and the very effective support and guidance they receive enable them to make significant gains in their learning. Lessons are characterised by positive relationships between pupils and teachers, effective use of the time available, and teachers' skilful use of questions to probe pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils listen attentively to their teachers, concentrate very well and persevere with their tasks.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	In reception, the curriculum is well matched to children's early learning needs and helps them to make good progress. In Years 1 to 6, the curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a wide range of worthwhile learning opportunities. Sufficient time is allocated for literacy and numeracy, and this time is used effectively.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for these pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The school is a caring community where pupils' welfare is a high priority.
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## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has very good leadership and management skills. He provides the school with a clear sense of direction and analyses its performance very rigorously. The headteacher promotes high standards and ensures that strategic planning is well focused on key priorities. His strong commitment, high expectations and clear thinking contribute significantly to the school's success. The senior management team make a valuable contribution to the leadership and management of the school but the roles of subject co-ordinators are generally underdeveloped.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The school benefits from an able, conscientious governing body that takes its responsibilities seriously and fulfils its role well. Governors are well informed and are influential in shaping the school's work. Statutory requirements are fully met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The results of the statutory and non-statutory tests are analysed carefully, and the governors have a good awareness of the school's performance. The headteacher checks teachers' planning thoroughly and examines examples of pupils' work, from across the school, to monitor standards. In addition, the headteacher frequently observes and evaluates the quality of teaching, and provides staff with useful feedback which benefits their professional development. At present, however, too much of the responsibility for checking the school's work rests on the headteacher's shoulders, and the monitoring roles of subject co-ordinators need to be developed.
The strategic use of resources	The school budget is analysed rigorously, and financial planning is appropriately linked to the priorities in the school development plan. The governors debate expenditure thoroughly and apply the principles of best value effectively. Overall, the school makes very good use of its resources.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
Parents believe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the school is well led and managed;</li><li>• their children are well taught and make good progress;</li><li>• the school encourages children to become mature and responsible;</li><li>• children's behaviour is good;</li><li>• staff are easy to talk to, and a strong partnership is established with parents.</li></ul>	There were no aspects of the school which significant numbers of parents thought required improvement.

Inspection findings confirm parents' positive views, although there is scope for subject co-ordinators to play a fuller role in the leadership and management of the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics as a result of effective teaching**

##### **(a) English**

1. The school's results in standard assessment tests (SATs), in 2002, for pupils in Year 2 were well above the national average in reading and were above the national average in writing. The results of SATs tests for Year 6 pupils were well above the national average, and also well above the average results of similar schools. All pupils attained the standard expected of pupils their age, and half exceeded this level. These results mark a significant improvement on the results in 1997, which were published in the last inspection report, when only two thirds of the pupils aged 11 attained the expected standard. Now, very few pupils aged seven or 11 fall below the standards set nationally for pupils of their ages.
2. Inspection findings confirm good achievement. There are variations in the profiles of different year groups in the school, and the current Year 6 classes do not include such a high proportion of advanced learners as the 2002 classes. Consequently, current standards in Year 6 are above average rather than well above average. Inspection evidence shows that all pupils, irrespective of ability, make mainly good, and sometime very good, progress in relation to their starting points at the school. The most capable pupils achieve very high standards, and it is not unusual for pupils with special educational needs to make up lost ground and to reach the standards expected nationally by the time they are 11.
3. From Year 1 onwards, pupils have good powers of concentration and are good listeners. They are interested in what others have to say, follow discussions thoughtfully, and respond calmly to instructions. When answering questions, and in discussion with their peers, they generally use spoken Standard English correctly and express their ideas clearly. Although by no means all choose to join in class discussions, all are confident enough to speak up for themselves, and they are happy to take messages, perform in assemblies and participate in school drama productions. In all classes, pupils are taught the importance of precision and impact in their own use of words, and teachers make sure they learn the technical terms they need to discuss their learning, not only in English but also in other subjects.
4. The teaching of reading is a strength, and standards are generally high. Younger pupils receive a very secure grounding in initial literacy skills, including phonic awareness. Older pupils still requiring this kind of support benefit from various intervention programmes designed to suit their individual needs. During literacy lessons, teachers introduce pupils to a wide range of fiction and poetry that includes both classics and contemporary work of very good quality. In their turn, pupils are encouraged to read widely and to reflect on what they read. When pupils share texts with their teachers during lessons and in 'guided reading' sessions, they are taught the art of reading aloud as well as to appreciate the structure, organisation and other characteristic features of different kinds of writing. Teachers use questions skilfully to help pupils understand hidden meanings in texts, for example, to appreciate the feelings of different characters in a novel as events unfold. Older pupils are encouraged to keep reading journals to record their thoughts, predictions and comments on the quality of the books they read, a practice which further develops their insights. The strong partnership that exists between staff and parents means

that most parents support their children's reading at home. Given the enthusiastic support of school and home, it is hardly surprising that pupils of all abilities love reading and derive great pleasure from it. By the time they are 11, almost all pupils read texts appropriate for their age fluently, expressively and with understanding. All know how to find information in the library, and can locate information successfully from books, for example, in order to pursue research in history.

5. When they write, in all subjects and for all purposes, pupils' work is influenced by what they have read and by what their teachers have helped them to appreciate in the many texts they have studied. Even by Year 2, most pupils are capable of producing well organised sentences and developing pieces of writing which are interesting, have detail and are coherent. Almost all have mastered basic punctuation, while higher attaining pupils already use commas confidently and correctly to separate main and subordinate clauses. By the age of 11, most pupils consistently produce written work which is above average in terms of its organisation and technical control, and almost all have neat, legible cursive handwriting. They are adept at matching the form, style and vocabulary of their writing to suit a specific purpose and audience. For example, they produce newspaper reports, change narrative into play-scripts, write well structured stories and compile independent research projects related to their work in history.
6. The quality of teaching is mainly good, and is often very good. Lessons are planned well. Teachers share their learning objectives with pupils at the beginning of each lesson and reinforce what has been learned at the end. They choose resources carefully, making sure that pupils of all abilities are suitably challenged. Support staff are deployed to good effect to make sure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, receive their full entitlement to the curriculum in English and progress well.
7. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace, each activity running smoothly on to the next so that no time is lost. Staff have good organisational skills and lessons are managed well. Teachers' own knowledge and understanding of English as a subject are good, and they are particularly well informed about the skills pupils need to develop, whether in speaking and listening, reading or writing. This means that teachers are able to demonstrate or 'model' language use competently, for example, when reading aloud, during 'shared writing' sessions and in 'guided reading' groups. It also means that they are able to intervene spontaneously, as well as in planned ways, to help their classes, groups and individual pupils acquire new skills and overcome difficulties. Rather than focusing only on what has been planned for a lesson, teachers also seize opportunities as they arise to show tentative pupils the 'next' steps and to help them gain confidence in using newly acquired skills.
8. The very good relationships that exist between staff and pupils mean that pupils feel secure as learners: they trust their teachers to help them, dare to take risks in their learning, and are inspired, rather than worried, by their teachers' high expectations of them. Equally significant as a factor contributing to pupils' good progress are the continuing efforts of all staff to equip pupils for life as independent learners. Whenever appropriate, pupils are encouraged to apply their existing knowledge and skills to 'new' learning and to make effective use of any resources made available to them. As a result, pupils turn readily to word-banks, dictionaries and thesauri. Without being oppressive, staff make clear, consistently, their expectations in terms of routine matters such as the layout and presentation of work. Once staff have shown pupils how to approach a particular task and answered their initial questions, any further questions from pupils are met more often by questions which cause them to think for

themselves than by explicit answers which mean they can avoid taking responsibility for learning. At the same time, when monitoring work in progress, teachers and support staff are quick to recognise and respond to strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance. For example, staff are alert at all times to particularly well chosen words and phrases, to effective sentence structure and to ambitious and accurate uses of punctuation. Such achievements win instant acclaim. Equally, and again without in any way causing upset to the pupils, 'weaknesses' such as misspelled words, unusually untidy handwriting or incorrect uses of grammar are likely to attract comment.

9. It is ongoing attention of this kind to every aspect of pupils' work in English, over and above the thorough teaching of the programmes of study that makes for effective teaching. One result is that pupils are not only aware of their own responsibility as learners, but take pride in it; another is that they learn to have high expectations of themselves, grow in their knowledge and understanding of themselves as learners and, by striving, achieve high standards.

**(b) Mathematics**

10. Pupils' achievements in mathematics are clearly reflected in the results of the standard assessment tests in Years 2 and 6 in 2002. In Year 2, the results were well above the national average and were above the average results of similar schools; and in Year 6, they were also well above the national average and were well above the results of similar schools. The school's effective tracking systems confirm the good progress pupils make in mathematics, and the Year 6 results in 2002 were above those of schools with comparable results in Year 2. Current mathematical standards in Year 6 are above average, rather than well above average. This results from a smaller proportion of more advanced learners in the year group, compared with the situation in 2002, rather than from any reduction in pupils' overall progress in the subject.
11. In Year 1, pupils generally build well on the good start they make in reception in developing their mathematical understanding and skills. They can count, sequence, add and subtract numbers when solving problems with up to ten objects, and many can cope with considerably larger numbers. For example, the more advanced learners can accurately add ten to two digit numbers, and recognise number sequences such as odd and even numbers. In Year 2, pupils can use rulers with reasonable accuracy, and make good progress when learning to measure capacity, using standard metric units. They can identify right angles and angles which are bigger or smaller than right angles. In a lesson observed during the inspection, Year 2 pupils were able to calculate, mentally, the sum of three single digit numbers, and were able to demonstrate their strategies for reaching their answers by using jottings which included number lines. For example, pupils calculated the sum of  $6+4+8$  by using their knowledge that  $6+4=10$ , and could rapidly add eight to reach the correct answer. In pupils' exercise books, there is clear evidence that most pupils can add nine or 11 to any two digit number by adding ten and either adding a further unit or deducting one; and the more advanced learners can readily apply the same strategy when adding 19 or 21 to two digit numbers.
12. In Year 3, pupils make good progress when learning about fractions and when interpreting mathematical tables. They can use written methods to add or subtract two digit numbers, and the more advanced learners can, for example, subtract 69 from 112. In Year 4, pupils have a good understanding of place value, for their ages, can round figures to the nearest ten, and can calculate the perimeters of objects in

their classrooms, such as their whiteboards. These pupils are able to classify three-dimensional and two-dimensional shapes including identifying the number of vertices, edges and faces of shapes such as square based pyramids. In Year 5, pupils make good progress when learning about mathematical probability, and can convert a range of different fractions to the same denominator in order to put them in the correct sequence of size. In a lesson observed during the inspection, Year 5 pupils made very good progress when finding the area of compound shapes by dividing the shape into rectangles. The more advanced learners were able to calculate the area of compound shapes which needed to be broken down into triangles as well as rectangles, and achieved particularly well when using the formulae for finding the areas of triangles. In Year 6, pupils can use protractors accurately, and the more advanced learners know the angle sum of a triangle and the sum of angles at a point. They make good progress when learning to calculate using brackets appropriately, and have a secure grasp of the relationships between percentages, decimals and fractions. In a lesson observed in Year 6, pupils were able to solve a range of two stage mathematical problems quickly, which involved percentage decreases in shop prices. For example, they rapidly decided that if a pair of jeans, normally priced at £30, was reduced by 25 per cent they would need to deduct £7.50 from the original cost to reach the new price of £22.50.

13. Overall, the quality of teaching in mathematics is good, and results in pupils' good progress in the subject. Mathematics lessons are carefully planned and individual lessons form part of coherent series of lessons which develop pupils' skills and understanding. The learning intentions of lessons are clearly identified in the planning and teachers ensure that their classes are made fully aware, at the beginnings of lessons, of what is expected of them. Good use is usually made of time at the end of lessons for pupils to discuss what they have learnt, and for teachers to check pupils' understanding and skills. Most lessons begin at a brisk pace with teachers asking well judged questions to develop pupils' calculation skills. Teachers explain the tasks to be carried out in the main activity very clearly and, throughout their lessons, motivate pupils well. Pupils have very positive relationships with their teachers and try hard to meet the expectations which are set for them. In the most successful lessons, pupils are working at the edge of their current capabilities, and the very effective support and guidance they receive enable them to make significant gains in their learning. Teachers introduce and reinforce appropriate mathematical vocabulary, use pupils' mistakes as teaching points and ask skilful questions to probe pupils' understanding. In a lesson taught by a part-time teacher in Year 1, she captured pupils' interest very effectively by using food packaging and foods to stimulate their learning about shapes. For example, pupils were interested to discover that the cylindrical swiss roll could be opened out to form a rectangle, and each responded individually when given a 'malteser' from their teacher with "thank you for my sphere". The needs of all pupils are addressed well in mathematics, including those with special educational needs. Overall, the teaching of mathematics is a strength of the school, and this is reflected in pupils' good achievement in the subject.

**The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, and benefits from a committed and effective governing body**

14. The rigour of the headteacher's monitoring strategies is impressive. As a result, he is very well informed about the quality of education provided at the school, particularly in relation to the provision for English and mathematics, and can diagnose what needs to be done to secure further improvement. A wide range of methods is used. For example, the headteacher checks teachers' planning carefully, and has a meeting with every teacher, in the first ten days of each term, to provide feedback which

recognises teachers' conscientious work. His detailed notes about each teacher's planning inform these discussions well. He ensures that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met and that sensible adjustments are made, when necessary, to improve on teachers' draft plans. The headteacher observes lessons, on a very regular basis, to judge the quality of teaching and learning. His written analysis clearly identifies the strengths and areas for development in each lesson seen, and he takes care to provide detailed feedback which has a beneficial effect on teachers' professional development. In addition, the headteacher examines examples of pupils' work from all classes to check their progress against the targets which have been set for them in English, mathematics and science, and analyses the results of statutory and non-statutory tests rigorously. He is quick to notice trends in pupils' performance, to identify pupils who are making good progress and those who will need additional help to enable them to achieve as well as they should. He ensures this information is passed on to individual teachers, and this helps to keep expectations high for pupils' potential standards.

15. The headteacher's very effective monitoring and evaluation strategies mean he is able to provide informed leadership in the identification of key priorities in the school development plan. He involves governors and staff appropriately, and makes sure that action plans include success criteria, time scales and resource implications. In addition, the headteacher ensures that detailed planning for the current year is supported by outline planning which shows key priorities until 2006. It is clear that the school development plan is an effective management tool, has a beneficial effect on school improvement, and contributes well to the clear sense of direction provided by the headteacher. The headteacher's strong commitment, high expectations and clear thinking contribute very significantly to the school's success. He is astute and caring, and is rightly held in high regard by parents.
16. The headteacher is supported by an able, conscientious governing body that takes its responsibilities very seriously. An appropriate range of committees is established and all work effectively to support the school's work. Governors discuss the results of statutory tests carefully and are well aware of the school's achievements and targets. The governors with responsibility for literacy, numeracy and special educational needs are all well informed, and the chair of governors visits very frequently for focused meetings with the headteacher and to meet staff. The vice-chair is particularly experienced in personnel management; and the chair of the finance committee is very effective, ensuring that funds are targeted on key priorities and that the principles of best value are applied rigorously. During each academic year, a day is set aside when governors visit the school to see it in operation, spending time in classrooms, with pupils at lunch and play times, and talking with staff. Their observations of the day are discussed in a meeting which follows in the evening; and it is clear that the event adds to governors' understanding of the workings of the school. In addition, each September, governors and staff work together during a training day which is jointly planned and led by the chair of governors and the headteacher. The most recent training day, focused on "ways to improve our school", fostered teamwork and a shared commitment between governors and staff to commonly agreed goals. At governors' meetings, they debate the school's progress towards the targets in the school development plan, and are not afraid to ask challenging questions to hold the school to account. In summary, the governors have high levels of expertise that they bring to their roles, have a good awareness of the school's performance, are influential in shaping its work and ensure that statutory requirements are met.



## **In reception, good teaching and a well balanced curriculum help children to make a good start at the school**

17. Children are admitted to the reception classes in the September or January of the school year in which they become five. There are good arrangements to introduce children and their parents to the school which include well organised talks and visits, and opportunities to spend time with the teachers. Once admitted to the school, there is a gradual introduction to school life which helps the children to feel safe and secure from an early stage.
18. The reception classrooms are a good size and they benefit from their own enclosed outdoor area which is used in all weathers for a range of well planned activities, covering all areas of learning. The curriculum for reception children is good. It is thoroughly planned and ensures that children make good overall progress in their learning. There are very effective procedures for keeping track of children's progress and assessing what they know, understand and can do. This information is used well to inform planning for future work. All adults working in reception have very good relationships with the children. They act as positive role models, treat the children as individuals and have a secure understanding of their different needs. Teachers have a good knowledge of the curriculum requirements and of the ways in which reception aged children learn best. The teaching assistants give very good support to the children they work with, particularly those with special educational needs.
19. The formal elements of the curriculum, such as the early skills of reading, writing, and number work, are taught in interesting and practical ways. For example, the children sustained attentive listening to the story of 'The Pet Shop', during a whole- class literacy session. The teacher made very good reference to the clues in the illustrations and the text about the feelings of the characters in the story. The children responded well to this, recognising that the 'mum' in the story was not too keen on having a hairy spider as a pet, and reading 'Oh no!' in a suitably horrified tone. Later on, in the same session, children were given an opportunity to play in the role-play area which had been set up extremely well as an animal hospital. The resources that had been provided were very effective in developing children's spoken vocabulary about pets and encouraged them to retell elements of the story that they had just read, embellishing it and extending it with their own imaginative ideas. There are high expectations of what children can achieve in the reception classes, and teachers sensibly take every opportunity to teach the many skills of literacy. For example, although the main objective of the literacy lesson seen was to develop pupils' phonic awareness, the teacher simultaneously developed the children's knowledge of punctuation, use of contextual and picture clues, their skills of reading with expression and their knowledge of letter formation. The children are actively encouraged to make their own attempts at writing from an early stage. All their early attempts at making marks are valued and, as a result, children develop the confidence they need to begin to write. Numeracy is at first taught formally, and then through opportunities to apply their mathematical skills. For example, children peg numbered shirts on a washing line in the correct order, set out a hopscotch game, and count out money as they collect and deliver 'Pizzas' from the 'drive in pizza hut' in the playground. This is effective in helping the children to consolidate their skills and to recognise that mathematics can be useful in everyday life.
20. Activities are rich, stimulating and skilfully structured so that all children can take part at the level they need for their all-round growth and development. Provision for pupils' personal and social development is very good. Clear routines and procedures are established at an early stage and this ensures that the children have a good

understanding of what is expected of them. A wide range of very well organised activities encourages the children to work and play together, make learning enjoyable and help them to gain the confidence to do things for themselves. As a result, children develop positive attitudes to their learning, learn how to get along with others and develop the skills of independent learning. Children's physical development is fostered well, both in the outdoor area, where they are able to be more active on a larger scale than is possible indoors, and in the classroom, where they learn the skills to control small tools and equipment. There are ample opportunities for creativity through art, dance and imaginative play. A thematic approach to planning much of the curriculum ensures that children develop the skills and understanding that help them to make sense of the world. This forms the foundations for their later work so they are well prepared for the subjects of the National Curriculum in Year 1.

### **Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is very good**

21. Pupils of all ages are happy at school and enjoy the time they spend there. When asked their views, pupils from Year 6 speak enthusiastically about every aspect of school life and are clearly in no hurry whatsoever to leave. They enjoy many different lessons, trust and respect the staff, and derive great pleasure from the many opportunities they are given to work and play with friends, for example through clubs, sports, visits and drama productions as well as in the classroom and in the playground. It is evident, from the comments they make, that pupils feel valued by staff and that they feel very secure within the school environment. The sense of 'belonging' to a school 'family' is powerful and mirrors the strong emphasis placed by all staff on inclusion. The value placed by staff on pupils' different talents, and the recognition given to their many diverse achievements, both in and out of school, mean that almost all pupils exude a quiet air of confidence. Certainly, in lessons, pupils tackle new work calmly and confidently. Skilled teaching empowers them and equips them well for independent learning. At the same time, pupils know that they can always ask for and receive help should they need it. Aware of the good progress they are making, pupils of all abilities view themselves positively as learners :they are happy to work in partnership with their teachers, and, given the strong support most receive from their parents, they are willing and conscientious in regard to completing homework. Reflecting the very positive attitudes to reading promoted by teachers, pupils of all ages and abilities view literature as a source of pleasure and turn readily to books, including dictionaries, encyclopaedias and thesauri, to find things out or to help them with their work. In lessons, pupils show very good powers of concentration. They listen well to others, and they very rarely speak out of turn. Rather, they are interested in what teachers and other staff have to say, and they follow the development of quite lengthy discussions very well indeed, joining in when they feel they have something useful to contribute. When required to work independently, they do so conscientiously and quietly, drawing effectively on previous learning and on the resources made available to them. They work in pairs without fuss, and they build constructively on others' ideas without argument.
22. Pupils' behaviour is very good. They have a very good understanding of what constitutes 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour, and they are mature in their attitudes. For example, pupils in Year 6 state with great conviction that there is no bullying. More significantly, they are able to attribute this to the opportunities they are given to resolve any difficulties or tensions that might arise - either by talking directly with staff, or through discussions in 'Circle Time'. In lessons and around the school, pupils move quietly and calmly. They are polite and courteous, and they greet one another, staff and visitors in a friendly, open way. They are always keen to offer help, for example, by holding open doors, and they show respect for their own and others' property.

During breaks from lessons, they share play equipment outdoors amicably and fairly, so that the good but limited resources available remain a source of pleasure rather than becoming a focus for friction.

23. Relationships are constructive, supportive and friendly. Regardless of ability, gender, background, ethnicity or special educational needs, pupils mix well together in the classroom and the playground. Most pupils readily perceive differing viewpoints and have a strong sense of empathy. This is evident when they discuss characters in stories, when they write from particular perspectives in history, and also in their daily interactions with others. Pupils are kind to one another, work together well to achieve shared goals, and are quick to respond to others' needs. Returning the trust and the sense of self-worth given to them by staff, pupils, in their turn, make every effort to co-operate with the various adults who work with them.
24. Pupils of all ages undertake routine duties and responsibilities reliably. For example, pupils in a Year 1 class reorganise their classroom and tidy away resources with impressive speed and efficiency, and older pupils take pride in helping younger pupils with trays in the dining-room, setting up the hall ready for assemblies, organising outdoor play or undertaking library duties. They respond very well to the opportunities they are given to use their initiative, for example, by going directly to the headteacher with suggestions of ways to improve the school, or by thinking of fund-raising projects for the many charities the school supports. More significantly, in terms of their own development, they do not shirk from taking responsibility for their own learning. Rather, they accept gratefully the efforts made on their behalf by the staff, and they return those efforts by working hard to build on what they have been taught.

### **The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs**

25. Pupils with special educational needs are taught effectively and make good progress. The school places strong emphasis on inclusion and on equality of opportunity, and has invested substantially from its budget to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs receive the help they need to succeed. As a result, there are enough well trained, high calibre support staff to help teachers during literacy and numeracy lessons in all classes. These staff are very well briefed and, when required to work with pupils with special educational needs, make a significant impact on the pupils' attainment and progress. Class teachers plan suitable work for pupils with special educational needs. Tasks and resources are well matched to pupils' individual needs and particular styles of learning. For example, where pupils have particular strengths in either auditory or visual domains, work and teaching methods are adapted appropriately. Both teaching and support staff strike a very good balance in their interactions with pupils. They make sure pupils know what is expected of them, set out clearly their high expectations for what pupils will be able to achieve, and make sure appropriate resources are available for them to use. More significantly, they know when they need to help pupils, for example, by giving an explanation or a piece of additional information, and when pupils are capable of working things out for themselves. Over time, almost all pupils with special educational needs become independent learners able to take pride in their achievements. Indeed, in the national tests in English in 2002, all pupils attained the standard set nationally for pupils aged 11.
26. In addition to the support they are given in mainstream classes, some pupils are also able to benefit from effective intervention programmes which provide additional opportunities for them to catch up lost ground in both literacy and numeracy. The one pupil who has a statement of special educational needs is very well supported, and

effective provision is also made for pupils with other specific learning needs, associated, for example, with behaviour or with speech and communication. There are good links with outside specialists and agencies who work with the school to support pupils with special educational needs, and the school has also forged very effective links with the parents. Parents appreciate the efforts made by staff to help their children, and most are both willing and able to provide good support for their children by helping them with work at home.

27. The headteacher manages special educational needs provision very well, and funds are used efficiently. A particularly wise investment has been the purchase of the services of an advisory teacher for special educational needs who makes a strong contribution in terms of the expertise and advice she is able to bring to special educational needs work. For example, she has been instrumental in training staff, in securing appropriate help from other agencies, and in advising staff about appropriate teaching and learning methods. A particular strength of special educational needs provision lies in the very good teamwork amongst all those involved. As a result of their combined efforts, pupils with special educational needs are able to participate fully in all aspects of school life and have the confidence that comes from pride in their very genuine achievements.

### **The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development**

28. The school fosters pupils' personal development just as surely as it strives to raise their standards of attainment in academic subjects.
29. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is effective. Through its aims, policies and practice, the school encourages pupils to be in touch with their own feelings, to use self-knowledge as a guide in their relationships with others and to be aware of their own place in the wider world. In assemblies, in lessons and in discussions with individuals, staff introduce spiritual themes in terms pupils find accessible and comforting, often drawing parallels between stories or real-life events and pupils' own experiences of life. Sometimes, they draw on their own experiences and feelings to make sense of the world for a child, for example when a teacher reveals her own feelings on the death of a grandfather when a child is clearly troubled by a similar event in his own family. Recent tragic events involving the death of a young teacher at the school have meant that grief has been, and continues to be, a very real, shared experience. At the same time, pupils are also encouraged to reflect on very positive spiritual themes. Assembly themes, for example, address concepts such as 'hope', 'courage' and 'the secrets of happiness.' In assemblies and in religious education lessons, pupils are taught about the lives and work of religious leaders and other famous people whose actions have inspired faith and fortitude in their followers or who have simply made a difference to the lives of others. Closer to home, pupils are taught to consider the selflessness of those in the community who work to help others. Members of the local clergy are regular visitors who lead assemblies and who talk to pupils about Christian religious themes, while the celebration or study of events such as Christmas, Easter, Remembrance Day, Passover and Divali serve to remind pupils of the special nature of all religions to their respective followers. The study of literature presents many opportunities for teachers to discuss spiritual themes and emotions with their classes, for example, by considering the feelings of various characters in a story or by empathising with the plight of evacuees as in the story 'Goodnight Mr Tom.' Through lessons, in assemblies and through visits and visitors, staff also plan opportunities for pupils to appreciate the mysteries and wonders of the world. For example, older pupils are introduced to creation stories from different cultures, while children in the reception class are brought face to face with marvels

from the animal kingdom which instantly inspire awe and wonder, including live cockatiels and stick-insects!

30. Pupils' moral and social development are promoted very successfully. Staff set a good example in their own relationships and interactions with pupils. They care about individuals, and the values they promote firmly establish high expectations for moral behaviour and attitudes. Good behaviour, thoughtfulness and helpfulness are promoted consistently by all staff. As a result, learning takes place in a very secure, inclusive and trusting atmosphere, and pupils' own understanding of moral and social principles is strongly influenced by the very good examples set by the staff who work with them. During 'Circle Time', pupils are given opportunities to discuss any concerns. The rights and wrongs of incidents which have occurred in the classroom or playground can be talked through openly, and difficulties or misunderstandings resolved. During assemblies, real incidents or stories, for example from the Bible and other sacred texts, are used to very good effect to encourage reflection on attitudes and behaviour towards others. The school aim of showing respect and courtesy towards others is strongly reinforced by staff, and a very good behaviour policy underpins all aspects of the school's systems of sanctions and rewards. Each class has its own system of rewards to encourage good attitudes and good behaviour towards one another. Weekly assemblies highlight successes and achievements in all aspects of pupils' lives, frequently including exemplary behaviour and caring attitudes. The annual presentation of the 'Madden Good Citizen Award' to a Year 6 pupil who has shown qualities of good citizenship throughout his or her time in the school gives pupils an opportunity to consider candidates in the light of rigorous criteria which also enhance their own understanding of what it means to live a purposeful life and to help others. In school, pupils learn to work closely and constructively with others, for example, in group work, in team games, in extra-curricular clubs and in drama productions. Educational visits, sports fixtures with other schools and visits within the local community, for example, to deliver Harvest parcels to the elderly, provide very useful opportunities for social interaction beyond the immediate locality. In addition, the residential visit to Cornwall, undertaken by pupils in Year 6, presents an excellent experience for them to develop an understanding of community living, however briefly. From a very young age, pupils are taught to take responsibility for particular classroom duties and for aspects of their own learning. As they grow older, they are also given more wide-ranging responsibilities, for example, as library monitors or for distributing equipment for outdoor play at lunch-time. They are also encouraged to help younger pupils, for instance, by helping with trays in the dining-hall and by 'supervising' younger pupils during wet play-times. Fund-raising activities for various local, national and international charities successfully develop pupils' sense of responsibility for those less fortunate than themselves. Their understanding of the need to care for the environment is fostered well through 'Green Team' activities such as litter retrieval and through educational visits to places such as country parks, Cornwall and the 'tropical rain forest' at Wylde Court.
31. Effective provision for pupils' cultural development increases their knowledge and understanding of their own cultural heritage and raises their awareness of the multicultural dimensions of society. In addition to the usual Christian festivals, assemblies also cover cultural celebrations as diverse as Japanese Children's Day and American Thanksgiving. In English lessons, pupils are introduced to high quality literature which represents some of the best of past and contemporary writing for children and which includes many stories and poems from other cultures. A recent visit by Michaela Morgan, an author in residence, introduced pupils to Welsh legends, while pupils in Year 2 this term are engaged in drawing comparisons between Oscar

Wilde's story of 'The Selfish Prince' and stories from other cultures. In music lessons, in assemblies and with the help of visitors such as the Berkshire Young Musicians' Trust, pupils are helped to appreciate cultural diversity in music and have opportunities to play instruments, some of which have their origins in distant countries. In art, they are taught to appreciate, and sometimes to imitate, the art of both famous and unknown artists from western and other cultural traditions. For example, pupils in Year 6 consider the meanings of Aboriginal dot paintings, while those in Year 5 experiment with designs associated with Sikhism. Studies in various subjects are enhanced by well planned visits, for examples to galleries and museums, and also by visitors who come into school to work alongside pupils. Work in history is enriched by powerful opportunities for pupils to adopt the roles of people from the past, for example, during visits to the Victorian Schoolroom in Reading or when involved as ancient Egyptians or Romans, or as evacuees in Britain during the Second World War. A French Club, held after school, provides older pupils with useful opportunities to learn about the language and traditions of a European neighbour.

### **The school is a caring community where the welfare of pupils is given a high priority**

32. The care and welfare of pupils are given strong emphasis in the school and make a very positive contribution to the confidence, self-esteem, high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes to learning that pupils develop. The generous staffing of both learning support assistants and lunchtime controllers ensures that they can get to know the pupils well and are sensitive to their needs. Relationships with support staff are very good and pupils are confident that these adults will listen to any worries or concerns and take appropriate action. Consequently, incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are very rare and are dealt with quickly. The school has identified aspects of school life that some younger pupils might find less easy to cope with, and targets adult support to help them. For example, when pupils begin full-time schooling there are several adults to help them select what to choose for school dinners and the catering staff are particularly friendly, quickly learning their names. Children in the younger classes enjoy the time spent back in the classroom with their lunchtime controller who initiates singing, games or storytelling to enable children to be well settled for the afternoon session.
33. All support staff have basic first aid training, and there are detailed records of any accidents or incidents that involve pupils. Staff have had appropriate training in child protection, and health and safety issues are carefully monitored by staff and governors. The annual meeting of the governors' risk committee takes a proactive approach to discussing and planning to minimise possible accident scenarios; this leaves the school well prepared for coping with any such incidents.

### **A strong partnership is established with parents, and parents hold the school in high regard**

34. Parents rightly hold the school in high regard and value the education it provides for their children. Communication with parents is very good; termly summaries are given to indicate what is to be taught and regular newsletters keep parents up to date about school activities. The home/school diaries are well used to record homework and to facilitate communication between parents and teachers. Useful guidelines for parents about how best to listen to their children's reading are provided by the school. Parents find all staff easy to talk to, and there is a high level of trust that any changes in their children's performance or behaviour will be shared with them. Parents value the planned opportunities to discuss their children's progress each term, and find the use

of attainment and effort grades in annual reports helpful. The school is open and friendly, and parents are happy to respond to school requests for offers of help, whether regularly in classes or to accompany visits. For their part, parents are very supportive of school activities and the successful Parents' Association raises significant funds to improve the resources or environment of the school. Parents are also very committed to supporting learning at home, play their full part in ensuring homework is completed and ensure that their children arrive in good time for school.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Co-ordinators do not have a range of sufficiently rigorous and systematic procedures for checking the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects**

35. When the school was last inspected, in 1998, the monitoring roles of subject co-ordinators were underdeveloped; and this is still the case. All co-ordinators examine planning in their subjects but none, including those for English, mathematics and science, have opportunities to observe teaching. In addition, co-ordinators do not study examples of pupils' work, from across the school, with sufficient rigour to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' progress with enough precision. As a consequence, co-ordinators are in a relatively weak position to judge the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects, and to target areas for improvement. At present, too much of the responsibility for monitoring the school's work rests on the shoulders of the headteacher, and he appropriately recognises that more should be delegated to co-ordinators. They would benefit from in-service training to develop their confidence and expertise in monitoring their subjects.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

36. In order to develop the roles of co-ordinators, the school should ensure they receive well focused in-service training to enable them to develop more rigorous and systematic strategies for monitoring their subjects (see paragraph 35).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	25
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	7	14	4	0	0	0
Percentage	0	28	56	16	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 four 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	337
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	7

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	59

#### 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	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5



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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	21	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	20	20
	Girls	24	25	24
	Total	44	45	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (90)	98 (98)	96 (88)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	20	20
	Girls	24	24	23
	Total	44	44	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (3)	96 (76)	93 (93)
	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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	19	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	18	19
	Girls	17	16	17
	Total	36	34	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (94)	94 (79)	100 (98)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	18	19
	Girls	17	17	17
	Total	36	35	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (85)	97 (79)	100 (92)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

**Exclusions in the last school year**

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
259	0	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
5	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
30	0	0

*This 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)	14.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.8
Average class size	25.83

### Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	252

### Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	n/a
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a

Total number of education support staff	n/a
Total aggregate hours worked per week	n/a

Number of pupils per FTE adult	n/a
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	658,814
Total expenditure	642,134
Expenditure per pupil	1,964
Balance brought forward from previous year	22,818
Balance carried forward to next year	39,498

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8.6

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	334
Number of questionnaires returned	117

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	29	1	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	62	35	1	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	63	36	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	36	10	0	4
The teaching is good.	64	34	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	36	3	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	17	1	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	17	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	58	37	4	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	78	21	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	32	0	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	47	13	0	2