

INSPECTION REPORT

SPALDWICK COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Spaldwick, Huntingdon

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110690

Headteacher: Mrs V J Cameron

Reporting inspector: Mr M H Cole
3369

Dates of inspection: 10th – 12th February 2003

Inspection number: 247030

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 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Royston Avenue
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Postcode: PE28 0TH

Telephone number: 01480 890371

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J Mellish

Date of previous inspection: February 1998

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	9
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	15
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	17
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	18

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a small rural infant and junior school serving 158 boys and girls aged four to eleven. There are 19 per cent more boys than girls. Pupils join the school's reception class in the September preceding their fifth birthday. Many of them have attended a playgroup but there is no formal nursery provision locally. Pupils currently start at the school with attainment which, overall, is about average. There has been some decline in pupils' attainment at entry in recent years. The area served by the school is one of varied social and economic circumstances but overall these are above average. Few pupils qualify for free school meals. Almost all pupils are of white British origin and all speak English as their first language. About one pupil in ten, a relatively small proportion, has been identified as having a special educational need. Two pupils have statements of special educational need, a typical number for the size of the school. There is considerable movement of pupils to and from the school; the rate is about twice the national average. This is because of the impact of new housing developments and the movement of service families to and from a nearby airbase.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and improving school with some very good features. Pupils achieve well in their work. They also make very good personal and social gains, acquiring very positive attitudes and showing excellent behaviour. The teaching is good and the leadership and management of the school is very good. Taking account of the level of available funding, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well; they respond industriously to teachers' high expectations so that they make good progress in their lessons.
- Teaching throughout the school is of good quality.
- Pupils' attitudes, personal development and relationships are all very good, and their behaviour is excellent.
- Very good provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and there are good arrangements for their care and welfare.
- Parents' views about the school are very positive and reflect the very good partnership that exists between school and parents.
- Very good leadership and management by the headteacher, who is very well supported by her deputy and by governors, promotes strong teamwork and a successful commitment to improving the school.

What could be improved

- Although teachers' expectations are generally high, they are not high enough in relation to pupils' writing, and the time given to written work is insufficient.
- Curriculum planning provides soundly for pupils' acquisition of knowledge and understanding but it pays insufficient attention to the need to ensure pupils make maximum progress in *skills* as they move from year to year, particularly in mixed-age classes.
- Steps have been taken to provide suitable challenges for the most able pupils but further development in this provision is necessary.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the previous inspection in February 1998 good improvement has been achieved. The school has maintained, and in some respects added to, its previous strengths in pupil achievement and teaching. There is a higher proportion of good and very good lessons than at the previous inspection. Pupils'

behaviour, previously judged very good, is now even better. The school has responded constructively to major recommendations in the previous inspection report. Provision for information and communication technology, which was previously weak, is now very good and standards in this subject are rising significantly. Previously unsatisfactory management processes for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, and for planning improvement, have been transformed by a new headteacher and are now very good. Long-term planning of the curriculum and short-term planning of lessons are both much improved. They now follow well the guidance of the National Curriculum and generally set clear objectives for pupils' learning. The school has also responded well to other matters raised at the previous inspection, for example by establishing a school council, and by substantial improvement in communication with parents. The school shows a very good commitment to improvement and has a good capacity to achieve further improvements.

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 ¹	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	A	A	C	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	A	B	C	D	
science	C	B	C	E	

1 *Similar schools are defined by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals; this measure has been*

found to be significantly related to the levels of attainment normally found in schools nationally.

Caution is needed in interpreting the above table, as the number of pupils taking the tests is sometimes small. This means that fluctuations in results from year to year are to be expected and trends are difficult to identify. The group of fifteen pupils (ten of them boys) taking the tests in 2002 was untypical for the school and included a significant number of pupils who had only recently joined the school. Those pupils who stayed at the school between ages seven and eleven make more progress than expected and some pupils who had scored poorly in the national mathematics test at age seven made particularly good progress to achieve their test scores at age eleven. Pupils' 2002 test results met the targets the school had set for them individually.

Pupils aged seven taking tests in 2001 and 2002 achieved results well above the national average in reading and mathematics. In writing, results were well above average in 2001 and above average in 2002. Results in mathematics in 2001 and in reading in 2002 put the school's results in the highest five per cent nationally.

Pupils' work seen during the inspection confirms that there are variations from year to year in attainment reflecting differing proportions of pupils of higher or lower ability. The broad picture, though, is of pupils achieving good standards and achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment. In some particular areas, such as speaking and listening, reading, mathematics and information and communication technology, the great majority of pupils make good progress. Other examples of good progress occur in art and design in Year 1, physical education in Year 2 and in historical knowledge and understanding in Years 3, 4 and 5. There are examples of more able pupils achieving especially well, as in mathematics in Year 6. Speaking and listening skills are a strength for the great majority of Year 6 pupils. Though satisfactory, progress in writing is not as good as in other areas. The content and grammar of pupils' writing are good but accuracy in spelling, punctuation and handwriting is slower to develop. Children in the reception class make good progress towards achieving the early learning goals for their age group. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well in relation to their personal targets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils show high levels of interest and enthusiasm. They like school and learning and they join enthusiastically in optional activities outside the classroom.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils are always sensible and co-operative. They show good self-discipline and need little adult direction as they go about the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils become very self-confident, independent and responsible. They make very good relationships, showing support and respect towards each other.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The rate of attendance would be above average but for the impact of parents taking children on holiday during school terms.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	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.

Teachers have a good understanding of their subjects and lessons are well planned. Lessons are relevant to the National Curriculum and to pupils' abilities and needs, including their special needs. Teachers explain clearly and question pupils effectively. The management of pupils is a particular strength. Teachers make lessons interesting, expect pupils to work and behave well and they use praise and rewards very effectively to encourage pupils. As a result, pupils respond well, taking a lively interest, concentrating on their work and showing a determination to succeed. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and lessons are calm but productive events. Numeracy skills are well taught and so are reading, and speaking and listening skills in English. Some aspects of writing are well taught; others are taught satisfactorily. At times the tasks provided for the most able pupils, and the expectations of their progress, are not sufficiently challenging.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall with some good features. The work provided gives a sound coverage of the National Curriculum, though it does not cater as thoroughly as necessary for development of enquiry, investigation or some writing skills. The strategy for teaching numeracy skills is good. Activities outside lessons, including contributions from the wider community, make a strong contribution to the quality and range of learning opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Work is appropriately adapted to individuals' needs and extra help is effectively given. Good strategies for helping pupils are designed and used.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall, with particular strength in moral and social aspects. Clear guidance and the personal examples set by staff help pupils to understand right from wrong, and the pupils are given very good encouragement to put their understanding into practice in their behaviour and relationships.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for pupils. The staff's caring relationships with pupils, their good partnership with parents and the school's reliable procedures

	mean pupils are safe, happy and secure.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher leads with a clear vision and an energetic determination to improve the school. She receives strong support from her deputy. The headteacher promotes close and committed teamwork amongst all involved with the school: staff, governors and parents.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors meet their responsibilities well and give thorough support to school self-evaluation and to the drive for school improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Very thorough procedures, using a good range of methods, are now in place to keep a check on pupils' progress, on the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and on the success of school policies.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Careful planning and checks mean that funds and resources are well used, and that the best value is gained from them. The full exploitation of information and communication technology to support the work of the school in a wide range of ways is a marked strength that has led to national recognition and an award.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>That their children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> like school and make good progress; behave well at school; become more mature and responsible. <p>That the school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is well led and managed; provides good teaching and expects pupils to work hard; is approachable with questions or problems and keeps them informed about their children's progress; provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small minority of parents would like to see a different amount of homework, some wanting more, some less. One in ten parents completing the pre-inspection questionnaire would like more information on their children's progress.

Inspectors' findings support all of the positive views expressed by parents. As in many schools, parents are divided on homework. Inspectors consider present arrangements for homework to be good and note that the proportion of parents dissatisfied with homework is smaller than in most schools. Inspectors also consider arrangements for informing parents about pupils' progress to be good. Again, the proportion of parents dissatisfied on this matter is smaller than usual.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils achieve well; they respond industriously to teachers' high expectations so that they make good progress in their lessons.

1. In the great majority of lessons seen during the inspection pupils were progressing well in acquiring knowledge, developing understanding and improving their skills. Examination of their previous work in exercise books also shows that pupils move forward in their learning from week to week and term to term at a good pace.
2. The good progress pupils make in their lessons accounts for the positive pattern in recent years of pupils' results in National Curriculum tests of English, mathematics and science. At both ages seven and eleven, results have usually been above, and quite often well above, the national average. Results have also compared favourably with those of similar schools.
3. Although the eleven-year-olds' test results in 2002 were not as good as usual, this particular year group was smaller than usual and had a profile of ability that is not typical for the school. Several pupils were also quite new to the school. For the longer-standing pupils in this year group, the most significant measure of their achievement is the progress they made between taking the national tests at age seven and those at age eleven. Comparing the average points pupils scored in the two sets of tests, they made more progress than might have been expected. In particular, several pupils who had not scored well in the mathematics test at age seven made very good progress to achieve their scores at age eleven.
4. In some particular areas, such as speaking and listening, reading, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), the great majority of pupils make good progress. Right from their first few months in the school pupils are developing good skills of speaking and listening. They learn to listen carefully to teachers and then show how well they have listened by answering clearly, confidently and sometimes at length, using a good range of vocabulary. Many good examples were seen during the inspection of older pupils being asked to work collaboratively, for example, to discuss scientific challenges, evaluate each other's writing or work in design and technology, or to plan musical compositions. On these occasions pupils listened and responded respectfully to each other's views and debated matters thoughtfully.
5. Almost all pupils soon develop fluency and accuracy in reading of a good standard for their ages. Many read aloud expressively and pupils' comprehension of what they read develops well. The more able pupils at age eleven are able to discuss well matters of character and motivation or social and emotional issues raised within children's fiction. The benefits of pupils' good progress in reading, speaking and listening are reflected in some aspects of their writing in English, which often shows lively content, good vocabulary, varied and effective phraseology and the ability to construct complex sentences. The oldest pupils write in a variety of styles well suited to audience and purpose.
6. Pupils also progress well in mathematics. In a lesson for Year 2 pupils, for example,

they were seen developing a good understanding of patterns in numbers, of the values of 'hundreds', 'tens' and 'units' columns and of the idea of 'multiples'. In discussion with an inspector, a group of the most able Year 6 pupils showed an impressive ability to select and apply an appropriate range of methods of calculation to solve a practical, everyday problem. They have a good awareness of the range of mental strategies that might be used, for example to multiply or divide by large numbers.

7. Several examples were seen of pupils achieving well in ICT. A new computer suite, staff training and the skilled contribution to the teaching of a member of the support staff have helped to improve provision in this subject substantially since the previous inspection. A group of Year 5 pupils, for example, made good progress in learning to combine sequences of text they had wordprocessed with graphics and sound effects they had imported to create a PowerPoint presentation on a topic. Year 2 pupils made good progress in understanding how to program the movements of a motorised and wheeled robot (a Roamer) with a complex sequence of commands. Pupils are progressing well in understanding how to use the Internet to research information and communicate by e-mail.
8. Amongst other examples of good progress seen are the pupils' careful refining of their designs for printing ties on fabric in art and design in Year 1. In physical education, Year 2 pupils achieved well in qualities of physical control, balance and co-ordination as they experimented with use of gymnastic apparatus. In a Years 3 and 4 games lesson, pupils made good progress in skills of throwing and catching. Younger children in the reception class progress well in their personal and social development, learning to co-operate well and showing good self-confidence in a lesson where they also made good progress in knowledge of letter sounds and in recognising rhymes. Examination of pupils' past work in Years 3, 4 and 5 shows that they make substantial gains in knowledge and understanding in history topics they have studied, such as the Tudors.
9. Important reasons for the good achievement of the pupils are the high expectations teachers have and the positive way pupils respond to them. The parents recognise and appreciate that teachers expect pupils to work hard and do their best. In making this clear to pupils, teachers also succeed in encouraging pupils' willing compliance so that they work hard and try hard as a matter of course.

Teaching throughout the school is of good quality.

10. As the pupils' good achievement shows, teachers are successful in bringing the best out of them for most of the time. Teachers' management of pupils is a particular and consistent strength of the teaching. Although they are demanding and challenging in the tasks they set pupils, teachers are also very successful in providing pupils with the motivation to behave and work well. Clear expectations are backed up with much encouragement, personal praise and, sometimes, special rewards. They also make the work presented to the pupils interesting and stimulating so that pupils want to learn and concentrating on the work becomes a matter of habit. Teachers also show a very caring and respectful attitude towards pupils. Teachers value and listen carefully to what pupils have to say. They often begin a lesson by explaining to pupils what they wish them to learn and at the end of a lesson involve the pupils in evaluating their own progress. Such practices develop pupils' sense of responsibility toward their learning and promote the very good relationships that exist between the teachers and the pupils. The teachers are also very successful in supporting pupils' progress in speaking and listening skills. A notable feature of a good many lessons is pupils' willingness to join in class discussions, putting forward their own ideas confidently.

11. Good achievement is also promoted by teachers' good knowledge of their subjects. This helps them to explain and demonstrate ideas clearly and to ask challenging and probing questions of pupils, that draw out their knowledge and understanding. This was well illustrated in a Years 5 and 6 science lesson on animal food chains, where the teacher challenged pupils well to appreciate the complexities of the topic by very careful questioning. Good knowledge of the subjects also enables the teachers to be clear and precise about what they want pupils to learn, an improvement since the previous inspection. They identify different tasks and outcomes for the different levels of ability within the class, using their sound knowledge of the individual pupils. This includes recognition that some pupils have special educational needs. These pupils are sometimes given specially adapted work and extra help, either by the class teacher or by a teaching assistant. Small groups of pupils who need extra help are sometimes taken outside the classroom for intensive work with teaching assistants who have been trained for this role and perform it effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely and co-operatively together in supporting pupils.
12. Teachers make use of a good range of methods appropriate to their objectives for pupils' learning. Whole-class discussions are lively and made interesting, teachers striving to involve as many pupils as possible and to ask question that challenge the range of pupils' abilities. Most pupils are keen to join in such discussions. Sometimes pupils are set to work in small groups, or given brief opportunities for discussion in pairs, as a preliminary to whole-class discussion. Pupils respond well to these opportunities, holding sensible discussions which often give them the ideas and confidence to then contribute to discussion with the whole class. Occasionally, though, the length of time devoted to oral work within the lesson means that pupils have too little time to work independently and to practise writing.
13. Teachers mark pupils' written work soundly, though with some inconsistency from class to class. In the best practice, pupils are given both good encouragement by the teacher's comments as well as helpful pointers on how to do still better, but use of the latter is not consistently made. The need for timely reminders to pupils, for example about accuracy in spelling, punctuation or handwriting, is often overlooked. As a result, some pupils' bad habits in these areas go unchecked and are allowed to persist.
14. Good use is made of homework to support pupils' learning and a weekly after-school homework club is provided for those who prefer to work at school rather than at home. A few parents would like more homework, and a few would like less, but the great majority are content with the arrangements.

Pupils' attitudes, personal development and relationships are all very good, and their behaviour is excellent.

15. The very good attitudes which pupils show in their learning in lessons are also found in other aspects of school life. Interest and enthusiasm are evident in the large numbers of pupils who choose to take part in activities outside of lessons at lunchtime or after school.
16. Attitudes to learning and school activities are matched by very good attitudes to others. Pupils co-operate very well with teachers, with other members of school staff and with each other, both in lessons and elsewhere. Pupils are kind, respectful and supportive to each other and work extremely well with each other when given tasks in pairs or groups. They listen well to each other and negotiate differences of view maturely. Boys and girls relate well to each other and older pupils show caring attitudes toward younger ones.

17. These positive attitudes and relationships help to explain the excellent behaviour found in the school which is as good in assemblies, playtimes and lunchtimes, as it is in lessons. The unanimous view of parents completing the pre-inspection questionnaire that behaviour is good is entirely justified. No thoughtless or unkind behaviour was seen during the inspection. Pupils show both independence and responsibility, in that they can be relied upon to do the sensible thing and have little need for adult direction.
18. All of these features make for a happy, calm, yet purposeful, atmosphere about the school which provides an ideal backdrop for pupils' learning and personal development.

Very good provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and there are good arrangements for their care and welfare.

19. Pupils' very good attitudes and relationships, and their excellent behaviour, reflect the very good provisions the school makes for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has a very sure sense of the attitudes, values and relationships it wishes pupils to adopt and all staff work together in a clear and consistent way to communicate their firmly shared expectations throughout the day-to-day life of the school.
20. Much is achieved, simply but powerfully, by the very good role models which staff provide in their caring and respectful relationships with pupils, with parents and with each other. This valuable basis is built upon with the opportunities taken in assemblies, in the personal, social and health education programme, through the work of the school council, and sometimes in lessons, to help pupils to reflect on fundamental ideas in life and on how they may apply to themselves. A good recent example of pupils being encouraged to reflect on some deeper questions in life, combined work in science and literacy when Year 2 pupils wrote thoughtfully about 'A Day without Light'.
21. Both discussions in personal, social and health education sessions and at the school council, help pupils to debate and agree on their rights and responsibilities. Opportunities for pupils to show care towards both elderly villagers visiting the school and new pupils help them to understand how they can contribute to the community. Some pupils recently demonstrated both their concern for the wider community and their skills in ICT, by sending the headteacher an e-mail requesting that the school join in a 'Blue Peter' appeal! The school encourages a concern for the environment, partly through after-school activity, which also promotes a sense of responsibility.
22. The work of the school council in helping pupils to think responsibly about their lives in school and to value democratic processes is supplemented by the school's practice of formally consulting pupils through discussions and surveys. For example, when the school conducted a major review and evaluation of its work in mathematics last year, it arranged for a local education authority inspector and an independent mathematics consultant to interview a sample of 42 pupils of nearly all ages about their experiences, likes and dislikes.
23. The school gives pupils good help to be aware of, and appreciate, their cultural heritage. Important contributions are made through art and design, music, history and religious education, supported by displays around the school and by occasional visits and visitors. Provision for pupils' awareness of cultures not immediately familiar to them has improved since the previous inspection with acquisition of resources of books and videotapes in which, for example, followers of various world faiths tell stories or talk about celebrations. The school's own self-evaluation recognises that this

provision could be further improved through direct contact with people and places.

24. The caring attitude to pupils shown by all staff is effectively backed up by reliable procedures to provide for pupils' health, safety and welfare at school. The close relationships the school has with parents and the very good channels of communication that exist with them also contribute to the quality of the care shown to pupils.

Parents' views about the school are very positive and reflect the very good partnership that exists between school and parents.

25. Parents' answers to the pre-inspection questionnaire showed their overwhelmingly high regard for the school. A smaller number of parents attending the pre-inspection parents' meeting showed a similarly high level of satisfaction. Parents are pleased with almost all aspects of the school, but they are especially pleased with the school's high expectations of pupils, with the approachability of the school staff and with the leadership and management of the school. They also strongly applaud the wide range of interesting activities outside lessons which the school provides. Inspectors also recognised the very good provision of such activities the school makes.
26. Further comments by parents show that one of the strongest reasons for their regard for the school is the very good relationships that the school now makes with parents and the very good communications that exist between home and school. Better communication is an area of significant improvement since the previous inspection. The school publishes, in lively and attractive style, plenty of information about the work of the school and annual reports to parents are helpfully informative. Openness with parents is seen in the easy access the school provides for parents who have computers to visit a website and, using a private password, access information about their children's progress. Similarly, parents are able to send e-mail messages directly to the laptop computer of their child's class teacher.
27. Just as the school consults pupils in evaluating its work, so it also consults with parents. For example, in the mathematics evaluation exercise described earlier, parents were invited to complete a detailed questionnaire on their views about pupils' work, progress and attitudes and the teaching of mathematics.
28. Many parents show their regard for the school by helping out in classrooms, with activities outside lessons or with fundraising. Some give freely of their professional expertise, for example in relation to developments in ICT.

Very good leadership and management by the headteacher, who is very well supported by her deputy and by governors, promotes strong teamwork and a successful commitment to improving the school.

29. The headteacher gives very good leadership to the work of the school. She shows a very clear vision, much determination and initiative, and she inspires strong and committed teamwork that extends not only to all staff but to governors and parents as well. There is a firm collective will to provide as good an education as possible for the pupils. There is also a firmly shared set of school aims and values, reflected in clear policies, that are consistently, and therefore effectively, turned into daily reality in the life of the school.

30. Since her appointment just over three years ago the headteacher has worked hard to build on the school's existing strengths and to attend to areas recommended for improvement at the previous inspection. This has been done with considerable success. Two areas of relative weakness previously – provision for ICT and the planning and evaluation of improvement – are now areas of strength. The headteacher shows much enterprise in securing support for the school from external agencies. She is, for example, very active in promoting HuntsNet', a network of schools in the Huntingdon area which is beginning to expand support for, and opportunities in, the curriculum by sharing resources and expertise.
31. In all that she does the headteacher receives very good support from her deputy who, as a longstanding member of staff, is especially influential in promoting a very positive climate of relationships both within the school and with governors and parents beyond. Others with responsibility for subjects of the curriculum or other areas of the school's work also make an effective contribution. The provision for special educational needs is conscientiously and efficiently managed by the co-ordinator.
32. Governors, too, work closely with the headteacher and are very supportive of the school. At the same time they are questioning of the school's performance and willing to hold it effectively to account. Governors bring a valuable range of professional and business expertise to their work in supporting the school.
33. The systems the headteacher has introduced for keeping a check on the school's performance are strong. A wide range of techniques is used to collect evidence of the effectiveness of the school's work. Teachers' planning is checked, lessons are observed, pupils' work is examined, pupils, parents and governors are consulted and external advisers are brought in to appraise what is done. Training and guidance for staff are provided where the need is indicated. Improvements in ICT and mathematics bear witness to the effectiveness of these management processes. Pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science from year-to-year is tested and tracked systematically, the data analysed carefully and the information used to set targets for pupils' future progress and to identify areas for school improvement. Once an area of the school's work has been evaluated, a detailed action plan is devised for bringing about improvement. It includes clear targets for the school to aim at. These very good processes, together with the evident commitment of the school staff to improvement, mean that the school is well placed to achieve still further improvement.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Although teachers' expectations are generally high, they are not high enough in relation to pupils' writing, and the time given to written work is insufficient.

34. Although the oldest pupils' writing has some clear strengths in terms of its lively content and style, in other aspects there is room for improvement. Some otherwise good quality writing is let down by inaccuracies in spelling, punctuation and handwriting.
35. In Years 1 and 2, progress in writing is not as rapid as it could be. This is principally because pupils do not get enough time to practise writing. In Year 2, when pupils are asked to write it is often only a few words. They have too little practice at putting together sequences of sentences and using related skills of punctuation and structured expression. This explains why, in recent years, pupils have performed less well in the

national tests in writing than in the reading tests. The time devoted to writing within literacy lessons is sometimes too short, or the task not sufficiently demanding. In addition, opportunities to practise writing skills in other lessons are too few.

36. In Years 3 to 6 pupils receive more practice in writing at length but teachers' expectations of their accuracy are not consistently high. Although spelling, punctuation and handwriting are taught, pupils do not always remember to apply what they have learnt in their routine writing, either in English or in other subjects. Teachers issue too few reminders about this and do not pursue these matters rigorously enough when assessing or marking pupils' work.
37. The headteacher identified handwriting as a weakness soon after her appointment and instituted a more systematic approach to teaching this skill. This has raised standards amongst the younger age groups who have been encouraged to form sound habits from the outset. Older pupils' handwriting still shows some of the bad habits they formed in the past, despite the fact that they now have regular handwriting lessons. Some older pupils write in a good, joined handwriting style in handwriting lessons and then revert in their other lessons to poor writing that is not joined and is sometimes inaccurate in form and size.
38. The subject co-ordinator, who is new to the school this year, has rightly identified as a priority the need to provide more time for pupils to write at length.

Curriculum planning provides soundly for pupils' acquisition of knowledge and understanding but it pays insufficient attention to the need to ensure pupils make maximum progress in *skills* as they move from year to year, particularly in mixed-age classes.

39. The school currently has three classes providing for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Each class includes pupils from two different year groups. The school has devised a long-term curriculum plan that provides for all pupils to cover, but not repeat, the major themes in the subjects of the curriculum. These arrangements are satisfactory in relation to coverage of the key areas of knowledge and understanding within the curriculum. However, the school does not have sufficiently reliable means to ensure that pupils' progress in developing those skills that must be learnt in the right sequence. This applies, for example, to the skills of enquiry and investigation that form an important part of the curriculum in science, geography and history.
40. As a consequence of past uncertainty in planning for skill development, pupils have not been consistently presented with appropriate challenges that build on past learning and represent the necessary next steps in learning. In science, for example, Year 6 pupils' investigative work has not represented a significant advance on some quite challenging tasks undertaken in Years 3, 4 and 5. As a consequence, these pupils' ability to evaluate scientific investigations as fair tests, or to design their own testing procedures, are underdeveloped.
41. The school has already begun to make some progress toward resolving this matter. It has already started to use good new processes for assessing pupils' progress which, when fully implemented, can provide the information on which to base teaching of skills in a more progressive manner. Schedules for assessing pupils' progress in skills have already been devised for art and design, ICT, design and technology, music and physical education.

Steps have been taken to provide suitable challenges for the most able pupils but

further development in this provision is necessary.

42. In its own planning for the present school year, the school has already identified the need to provide greater challenges for the most able pupils and the intention to help more pupils reach higher levels of attainment in the National Curriculum by age eleven. The school rightly plans to make further use of its already good assessment procedures in English and mathematics to identify those pupils who could be capable of still better progress and to set challenging targets for them. There is a recognition that the most able pupils should be encouraged in a willingness to be more enterprising in tackling independent and open-ended challenges and that some appropriate resources to support such activity should be acquired. Support for this endeavour from outside the school is being sought and 'HuntsNet' is about to begin a series of masterclasses for pupils of high ability in English, mathematics, science and ICT.
43. The proportion of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment can also be promoted by attending to the matters of writing and skill development discussed earlier.
44. Within the teaching generally there is scope for improvement by more rigorous use of teachers' marking of pupils' work and the setting of short-term personal targets for pupils. At present, more able pupils' success is often acknowledged orally or in written comments in their exercise books but, on too few occasions are fresh challenges presented to inspire pupils to strive for still greater achievement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

45. To raise standards and improve the quality of education further, the school should:
 - (1) Raise standards in writing by:
 - giving more time for pupils to write at length across the curriculum;
 - ensuring that expectations of pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting are consistently high across the curriculum.
(Paragraphs 34-38)
 - (2) Improve provision for pupils' progress in skills by:
 - identifying clearly the steps in progressive development of skills to be taken by pupils in each year-group in each subject;
 - ensuring that curriculum and lesson planning gives sufficient time to teaching and learning of skills;
 - assessing pupils' progress in skills carefully and planning future teaching accordingly;
 - monitoring and evaluating planning, teaching and learning in relation to skills.

(Paragraphs 39-41)

- (3) Ensure that the most able pupils are always fully challenged by the work they undertake, by continuing with developments outlined in the school improvement plan and by:
- ensuring that lesson planning always provides for all pupils to be fully challenged;
 - encouraging an attitude of enterprise in the pupils;
 - using assessments of pupils' progress to set challenging targets for future progress;
 - using marking of pupils' work to identify short-term targets for further progress.
- (Paragraphs 42-44)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

21

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

16

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactor y	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	5	13	3	0	0	0
Percentage	0	24	62	14	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 about five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	158
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	15

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	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
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 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	8	13	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*
	Girls	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*
	Total	21	18	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (95)	86 (95)	100 (95)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*

Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Girls	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*
	Total	18	19	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (95)	90 (95)	100 (95)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

* The numbers of boys and girls are too small to be significant and separate results are not therefore shown.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	10	5	15

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*
	Girls	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*
	Total	12	12	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (92)	80 (93)	93 (92)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*
	Girls	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*
	Total	11	11	12
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73 (87)	73 (92)	80 (88)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

* The numbers of boys and girls are too small to be significant and separate results are not therefore shown.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

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

No of pupils on roll
129
0
9
0
0
4

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

Mixed – any other mixed background	5	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	1	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	8	0	0

The table 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)	7.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.5
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	147

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	356,817
Total expenditure	360,480
Expenditure per pupil	2,253
Balance brought forward from previous year	20,465
Balance carried forward to next year	16,802

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)	0
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)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	158
Number of questionnaires returned	72

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	38	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	43	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	47	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	54	17	0	3
The teaching is good.	71	28	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	44	10	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	32	1	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	26	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	42	53	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	68	32	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	39	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	61	35	3	0	1