

INSPECTION REPORT

FORDHAM CE (C) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Fordham, Ely

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110788

Headteacher: Mr K Bullock

Reporting inspector: Elisabeth de Lancey
22272

Dates of inspection: 1 – 2 October 2002

Inspection number: 247049

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:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 -11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Isleham Road Fordham Ely Cambridgeshire
Postcode:	CB7 5NL
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Katie Metterhauser
Date of previous inspection:	23 - 26 February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fordham CE Primary School is a popular school for pupils between the ages of four and eleven. It is situated on the outer edge Fordham, a village midway between Ely and Newmarket, in Cambridgeshire. Parents are employed in a variety of manual, clerical and professional occupations, and there is a wide range of housing types in the locality. Most of the pupils live in the village, with a small but significant number coming from further afield, largely because of the school's good reputation. Four traveller children attend the school. The original school buildings have recently been significantly improved and extended. There are currently 216 pupils on roll, which is larger than at the time of the last inspection. They are organised into eight single-age classes, with two parallel classes in Year 1. Children entering the reception class have a range of abilities, but overall standards of attainment when children enter the school are average. Almost all of the children have had pre-school experience in the nursery, which is situated in the school grounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Nine per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, which is well below average. They have a variety of specific and moderate learning difficulties, and speech and communication needs. None have a statement of special educational needs. This is below average. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is small and there is one pupil who speaks English fluently as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school that is held in high regard by the community. Pupils of all abilities attain very well. In 2001, compared with schools that take pupils from similar backgrounds, pupils in Year 6 attained results in English, mathematics and science that were well above average. The teaching is good, and pupils are enthusiastic learners. The school has effective strategies to promote educational inclusion and equal opportunities. The headteacher, together with key staff, and the governing body, provides very good leadership and management. There is a strong commitment to maintaining successful practice and further raising standards. Although the cost of educating pupils is very high, the school's many strengths mean that it gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The pupils attain high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school.
- Good quality teaching and well-planned guidance from teaching assistants enable all pupils to learn effectively.
- Pupils' personal development is successfully promoted and the pupils are responsible, well behaved and very keen to learn.
- The close links with parents, partner schools and the community greatly enhance pupils' learning.
- The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, key staff and governors.

What could be improved

- The pupils' attainment in writing.
- The outside provision for children in the Foundation Stage.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1998 and has maintained an appropriate pace of development since that time. The weaknesses identified on that occasion have largely been addressed successfully. Standards for seven-year-olds have continued to improve, and high standards have been maintained by pupils at the age of eleven. There are greater opportunities for more able pupils to be challenged in their work. Just over half the pupils reach the higher levels in the national tests. The school has adopted nationally recommended schemes of work for all subjects including art and design, design and technology and information and communication technology; improvements in the last of these subjects have been good. There is now a systematic programme to check how effective the teaching is,

especially in literacy and numeracy, and a strong commitment to

making the necessary improvements. Assessment procedures have improved and are now secure. Teachers' marking is used more effectively as a tool for assessment and indicates what pupils need to do to improve their work. Subject co-ordinators have clear responsibilities for monitoring standards in their particular subjects. The school makes very good use of its analysis of test results to identify groups of pupils and individual pupils who are not achieving as well as they should, and appropriate actions are taken. New initiatives, for example the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and the guidance for children in the Foundation Stage have been introduced successfully and are having a positive impact on standards. The successful introduction of a planned programme for pupils' personal, social and health education and regular 'circle time' make a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development and provide good opportunities for pupils to talk about their thoughts and feelings.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	C	A	A
mathematics	A	A	A	A
science	B	A	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 6 over the past three years have almost always been consistently well above average and the improving trend is broadly in line with the national trend. The exception was in 2000, when they fell from their previously high level in English. In 2001, results in English, mathematics and science were well above all schools nationally and well above those who take pupils from similar backgrounds. Pupils' attained very well at the higher than expected level (Level 5). In all three subjects, at the higher level, their results were well above average when compared with all schools and similar schools. Results in English were in the highest five per cent of all schools and, in mathematics, in the highest five per cent of similar schools. The school met its targets for the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level in both subjects. Based on their previous attainment at the end of Year 2, last year's pupils made rapid progress through during Years 3 to 6 and the progress of the more able pupils in English and mathematics was outstanding.

From year to year, in particular in writing and mathematics, there have been wide variations in the school's results in the national tests for seven-year-olds. In 2001, they were above the national average in reading and mathematics and well above average in writing. In reading and mathematics, they compare favourably with those of most other schools that take pupils from similar backgrounds. In writing, the results are much better. They show a marked improvement on the previous year when they were average in reading, below average in writing and well below average in mathematics.

The most recent results (2002) for pupils at the end of Year 6 show that high standards have been maintained in mathematics and science. Standards in English are lower than in the previous year because almost a quarter of pupils did not reach the expected level (Level 4). At the end of Year 2 standards in writing were maintained but standards in reading and mathematics were lower; a fifth of the pupils failed to reach the expected level (Level 2) in mathematics. At the ends of Year 2 and Year 6, there was no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys.

Children in the Reception Year are making good progress in all six areas of learning and are likely to exceed the national early learning goals for the Foundation Stage by the time they enter Year 1.¹

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are eager to come to school. They show great interest in lessons and take pride in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are polite, sensible and considerate. They work well on their own and in small groups.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils take pleasure in helping one another. They are sensitive to the feelings of others and show respect for different viewpoints.
Attendance	Very good. It is well above average and there is little unauthorised absence.

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.

Teaching in the school is good. The teaching of mathematics in Years 5 and 6 is very good and a major factor in the high standards attained. Good teaching in English and mathematics was observed across the school. The teaching of basic skills is very good and equips pupils very well for independent learning. Lessons proceed at a good pace and teachers make it clear that they expect the most of all pupils. They make lessons interesting by ensuring that activities are varied and meet the needs of the range of abilities in the classes. Pupils respond well and make good gains in their learning because they know what to do and know how to do it successfully. Questions are used skilfully to engage and involve pupils of all abilities. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Technical language is used confidently, and teachers are able to make work more demanding. Staff sustain very good relationships with pupils and use praise well to encourage and motivate them.

The productive involvement of teaching assistants in teaching individual and small groups of pupils is particularly effective in improving the rate at which pupils learn. This ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully involved in all aspects of the curriculum. Traveller children benefit from their full participation in all school activities and make rapid progress in learning basic skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good; a broad curriculum is taught with an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Good use is made of visits and visitors to extend pupils' learning experiences. The lack of a suitable outdoor area limits

¹ Early learning goals-these are the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer to the achievements children make in connection with each of the areas of learning.

	the provision for children in the Foundation Stage.
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Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; staff are well trained and there is strong support for individuals and small groups of pupils. Pupils take part in all activities and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good; staff provide very well for all aspects of pupils' personal development. It is evident in all areas of the school's work. The school is very successful at promoting pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good; the pupils are cared for well. Procedures for monitoring their progress are very good and their health, safety and welfare are given a high priority.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good; all members of staff with management responsibilities work well together towards a common purpose. They are given a clear lead by the headteacher's personal example and vision for the future.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good; governors play an active part in providing a sense of direction for the school. They are well organised and well informed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good; the school has developed good systems to check how well it is doing. It uses this information effectively.
The strategic use of resources	Good; the resources available to the school are effectively deployed and educational priorities are appropriately funded. Spending decisions are made according to the principles of best value.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like coming to school. • The school expects their children to work hard; they make good progress and attain high standards. • Their children are helped to become mature and responsible and their behaviour is good. • The school is well led and managed. • The teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents feel that the school does not give their children the right amount of work to do at home. • Too few activities are provided outside lessons. • A minority of parents would like more information about the progress their children make in lessons.

The positive comments made by the parents are supported by inspection evidence. The view that the school is not making effective use of homework is not borne out by the inspection. The work that the children are asked to do at home is appropriate. The range of activities provided outside school compares favourably with that of most similar schools and they cover a wide range of interests. The school makes considerable efforts to establish close links with parents and to keep them informed about their children's progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The pupils attain high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school.

1. In 2001, results in the national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 were well above average in English, mathematics and science and well above those of schools that take pupils from similar backgrounds. Pupils' results in the national tests over the past three years have almost always been consistently well above average. The exception was in 2000, when they fell from their previously very high level in English because fewer pupils attained the expected level (Level 4) in writing.
2. Pupils' results at the higher than expected level (Level 5), were particularly good, markedly so, in the case of English and mathematics. They were in the highest five per cent of all schools in English, and in the highest five per cent of all and similar schools in mathematics. Based on their prior attainment at the age of seven, last year's Year 6 pupils made rapid progress from Years 3 to 6 and the progress of the more able pupils in English and mathematics was outstanding. This reflects the emphasis that the school has put on challenging the more able pupils.
3. The most recent results (2002) for pupils at the end of Year 6 show that high standards have been maintained in mathematics and science, with a slightly greater proportion of pupils reaching the higher level in these subjects. Standards in English are lower than in the previous year because almost a quarter of pupils did not reach the expected level (Level 4) in writing and fewer pupils reached the higher level (Level 5) in both reading and writing. National and similar schools comparisons for 2002 are not yet available.
4. Over recent years there have been wide variations in the school's results for pupils at the end of Year 2 in the national tests, in particular in writing and mathematics. In 2001, results were above the national average in reading and mathematics and well above average in writing. In reading and mathematics, they compare favourably with those of most other schools that take pupils from similar backgrounds. They are much better in writing. Results at the higher level (Level 3) were well above average in writing, above average in reading and average in mathematics. These results show an improvement from the previous year when there was a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the class.
5. The school's most recent results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 are lower than in 2001 in reading and mathematics. A higher percentage of pupils (20 per cent) failed to reach the expected level in mathematics. Standards were maintained in writing and there was a slight increase in the number of pupils reaching the higher level in all subjects.
6. There was no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys in the national tests. Both boys and girls perform better than their gender group nationally.
7. The school reached the targets it set for pupils' attainment in the national tests for 2002. Targets for 2003 have been set based on teachers' assessments of how pupils are currently doing. These targets are more ambitious than those set in previous years, and are likely to be met, given the evidence of what pupils are currently achieving.

8. Pupils throughout the school make good progress and achieve very well. Their progress accelerates in Year 6 because of the very good teaching they receive. In English, current standards for pupils in Year 2 are above average overall, though they are better in speaking and listening and reading than in writing. Pupils have a wide vocabulary and contribute actively to class and group discussions. Expressive reading aloud by teachers inspires pupils to listen carefully, to ask and answer questions, and to join in with the text. For example, pupils in a Year 2 literacy lesson responded enthusiastically to the story 'Not now Bernard', and were keen to read the book for themselves. They enjoy reading a range of books, in particular fiction, and have a good understanding of what they read. A few higher attaining pupils identify their favourite books and authors and express their preferences clearly.
9. Year 6 pupils have access to and read a good selection of books that cover a range of cultures and include poetry, plays, myths and legends. By the end of Year 6, they read expressively, talk lucidly about the plot and characters and are able to find information efficiently by scanning a text to locate key words. They understand the way the library is organised and the way in which books are classified. Their library skills are reinforced through acting as librarians during the lunch hour, when they operate a bar code system to electronically record the borrowing and return of the books. Most pupils are well supported at home and the new library is helping to develop pupils' enthusiasm for reading. Regular use of homework is made to extend pupils' ability to spell and to practise reading.
10. In mathematics, standards for pupils by the end of Year 2 are above average. For example, they rapidly add and subtract simple numbers in their heads and know when a number is a multiple of two, five or ten. Most pupils identify common two-dimensional shapes and recognise a shape from a list of properties. They understand how to collect data and construct simple diagrams to communicate their findings. Higher attaining pupils show good understanding of place value up to a 1000, solve problems using three-digit numbers and have a good recall of basic multiplication tables. They have a good understanding of simple fractions and symmetrical shapes. Good use is made of other subjects to promote mathematical understanding. For example, pupils record the results of science experiments in charts and graphs. Most pupils are confident in using rulers to measure accurately in centimetres.
11. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and standards by the end of Year 6 are well above average. This is largely the result of the very good teaching the older pupils receive. They have good mental skills and explain the strategies they have applied using appropriate mathematical language. Most pupils recognise that multiplication is the inverse of division and use this knowledge to help make mental calculations. They have a good understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages. They calculate accurately the perimeters and areas of regular shapes, and the volume of cuboids, using simple formulae. They compile pie charts and line graphs to communicate the results of their investigations.

Good quality teaching and well-planned guidance from teaching assistants enable all pupils to learn effectively.

12. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. Teaching was assessed as very good in three lessons, good in eight lessons and satisfactory in the remaining four lessons. Examples of high quality teaching were observed in mathematics in Years 5 and 6. Good teaching was observed in English and mathematics across the school. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen.

13. All staff have very good relationships with their pupils and this is a significant factor in the good quality teaching seen. Staff use praise sensitively, focus on individual performance and acknowledge each pupil's involvement. This promotes pupils' confidence and helps them to realise that they are valued and their contributions are welcomed. For example, during a Year 4 lesson, a pupil's unplanned intervention was developed by the teacher to offer pupils an additional challenge to the task she had set. The pupil's responding smile said it all! Teachers plan their lessons well. They set out clearly what they want pupils of all abilities to learn, expressing their objectives in terms that pupils understand; for example, 'identify fresh and dry fruits, name these four flat shapes and change these improper fractions to mixed numbers.'
14. Staff inform pupils of their high expectations of standards, work rate and behaviour. As a result, pupils know what they are required to do and what is expected of them. This sets a clear tone to lessons because pupils are focused on their tasks and activities move at a brisk pace. Staff make good use of question and answer techniques to revise previous learning and build introductions to new sessions. This helps pupils' recall and enables them to refine their understanding by using their established knowledge in new contexts. In turn, this provides a firm base for pupils' future learning. For example, in a Year 6 lesson the teacher asked pupils to record the factors of a series of given numbers. He then used their findings to help them identify prime numbers. Staff use their questioning skills to good effect to involve all pupils in the activities and to encourage them to be precise in their explanations. This challenges their thinking and helps all pupils to deepen their understanding. This is a measure of the school's commitment to continuing to raise standards.
15. The school is committed to, and successful in, raising achievement for all pupils. The school works closely with local authority staff to ensure that its Traveller children sustain good progress and attain standards appropriate for their age. Teachers and teaching assistants offer pupils with special educational needs good individual assistance by securing a consistent approach in their teaching. Consequently, these pupils achieve well and make good progress towards the appropriate targets set for them. The provision for more able pupils has improved significantly since the last inspection. The increase in these pupils' attainment at the higher levels in national tests is testament to this. Work is more closely matched to pupils' abilities and expectations of all pupils has been raised. This is particularly evident in Years 5 and 6 when pupils' progress accelerates and they achieve very well.
16. Teachers display good subject knowledge and confidence in their teaching. This enables them to respond informatively to pupils' questions and move the lessons on through unplanned developments. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, a pupil enlarging and reducing a bird graphic on the computer screen accidentally produced reflected images. The teacher intervened to demonstrate what had been done and helped him to develop his skills further by showing him how an image could be rotated through a complete circle. Staff use their expertise to insist that pupils use technical language appropriately when describing how they have tackled a problem, or reached a particular conclusion. This helps pupils to think carefully through their responses and assists them in assessing the validity of their findings.
17. Staff make good use of all available opportunities to encourage pupils to practise their basic skills. They ask pupils to read, calculate, spell or correct their own work. For example, during a lesson in the reception class, the teaching assistant

encouraged a child to identify the number of corners on a rectangle by counting them. The child did so with the comment, "There's two corners here, and two corners here. That's four corners it's got."

18. Teaching assistants offer good support and guidance to the classes in which they work. Consequently, pupils make good progress towards the appropriate targets set. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to plan, prepare lessons, and review pupil performance. Those assigned specifically to pupils with special educational needs also take positive part in annual reviews, monitoring of individual education plans, share responsibility for the completion of pupil daily records and liaise with the school's special educational needs co-ordinator. Whatever their assignment, teaching assistants work effectively as an integral part of the classroom team. They help their teacher colleagues by dealing with general classroom issues to support learning, identify resources or resolve disputes. As respected members of the staff they benefit from appropriate training opportunities promoted by the school, guidance from the local authority's Primary Support Team, participation in school training days and attendance at staff meetings.
19. Good examples of effective marking were seen throughout the school. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are given useful guidance to help them improve their work and targets for future learning are identified. These pertinent comments are set out in pupils' workbooks or files as a record, for teachers and pupils, of issues discussed and as a basis to assess pupils' progress.

Pupils' personal development is successfully promoted and the pupils are responsible, well behaved and eager to learn.

20. The school is successful in creating an ethos that is firmly based on respect and care for others. It is a harmonious community in which everyone is valued. The effective involvement of all its pupils is central to its work. The school values the individual, seeks to develop the whole child and works to enable all children to achieve their full potential. A major strength is the high quality of the relationships established and sustained throughout the school. These create a mutual respect, promote responsibility and form a strong foundation for effective learning.
21. A particularly impressive feature is the wide range of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, show initiative and develop an understanding of living in a community. Pupils respond very well to these opportunities and this makes a major contribution to the level of maturity and confidence most of them possess by the time they leave the school. Parents agree that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. From the reception class upwards, pupils enjoy taking responsibility for routine tasks such as, returning registers, distributing and collecting resources or acting as librarians in the school library. They perform these duties conscientiously and with pride.
22. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of community and citizenship and to contribute to school improvements through the elected school council. The sensible way that pupils participate in meetings demonstrates that they take their responsibilities seriously and fulfil them very well. Recent discussions have been about making changes to the school lavatories, improving accessibility to the swimming pool and altering school routines so that the play equipment is used fairly and to the benefit of everyone.

23. Pupils are helped to develop their self-esteem and their social skills by learning the importance of sharing, co-operation and compromise. They respond well to tasks that require them to work together. For example, organising assemblies or working together on paired and group projects, and raising funds for children less fortunate than themselves.
24. Teachers take care to ensure that all pupils have equal access to every aspect of the curriculum. The school is sensitive to pupils from different backgrounds and good attention is paid to sharing and celebrating diversity. This makes a good impact on promoting tolerant and caring responses from one to another. Pupils make good use of opportunities in lessons and assemblies to explore feelings, and receive advice on how to deal with difficult issues, for example, keeping friends and respecting differences. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection because the school now has a good programme for pupils' personal, social and health education, which includes circle time.
25. Traveller children are well integrated into the school. There is good liaison with parents and outside agencies to ensure that these pupils benefit from the school's rich provision. Pupils with special educational needs have appropriate education plans that help them address their difficulties. These are shared with parents and are carefully monitored by class teachers in consultation with the special educational needs co-ordinator.
26. As a result of this very good provision, the pupils' attitudes to school are very good, even better now than those reported at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are friendly, eager to talk to visitors and are proud to show them around their school. They are keen to learn, and work with concentration and commitment, taking full advantage of the many interesting learning experiences they are offered. They are very keen to contribute their ideas to discussion and persevere with aspects of their work that they find difficult.
27. Pupils' behaviour is very good. In lessons and around the school, pupils are polite, sensible and considerate. Outside of lessons, pupils play amicably in the attractive school grounds, with older pupils taking good care of the younger ones.

The close links with parents, partner schools and the community greatly enhance pupils' learning.

28. The partnership with parents has continued to improve since the time of the last inspection. A very positive feature is the system that the school has developed for consultations with parents and their children. Parents are invited to complete questionnaires on areas of concern; their views are valued and help to shape the development priorities of the school.
29. Parents are welcomed into the school and encouraged to be fully involved in all aspects of their children's education. They express a high degree of satisfaction with most aspects of the school. They experience it as a happy, caring community where their children are encouraged to work hard and behave well, and helped to grow in responsibility. Parents appreciate the good quality of the teaching and the effective leadership provided by the headteacher. They like the ready access to the school and the teachers. The reservations expressed by parents about the range of activities provided by the school were not supported by the inspection findings. The evidence confirms that the number of activities offered outside lessons is at least

similar to most other schools, and they cover a wide range of interests. Parents report that they are well informed about the school's arrangements for homework, though a minority are dissatisfied with the amount of homework their children are set. Inspection evidence indicates that the amount of work that pupils are asked to do at home is appropriate.

30. Information for parents too, has improved since the last inspection. The majority of parents value the wide range of information they receive from the school. The school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are detailed and well-presented, and regular newsletters keep parents in touch with the day-to-day life of the school. Twenty-two per cent of the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that they were not informed about their child's progress. The inspection team found that the school provides a good range of opportunities for parents to find out how their children are progressing. Individual meetings can be arranged with the headteacher and teachers before or after school. There are termly meetings for parents to meet their child's teacher to discuss their progress and annual reports contain information about what individual pupils do and how well they perform.
31. The school places a high priority on securing the involvement of parents in their children's learning, and staff work hard to give them support to achieve this. In addition to leaflets giving them information about the topics their children are going to study, parents are invited to meetings to learn about aspects of the curriculum, such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and the Foundation Stage curriculum.
32. A considerable number of parents are involved in school life in a variety of ways. Some help in the classrooms or with outdoor activities, visits, fundraising and links with the community. Parents are invited to weekly assemblies. Celebratory services are held at the parish church; these are very well attended. Parents' involvement enriches school life and enhances children's learning.
33. The school maintains very good links with the local community and uses them well to enrich the curriculum. It liaises closely with the parish church, local businesses and other organisations which have a positive impact on pupils' learning. In involving local companies and local organisations in its work the school has been able to access extra funding, in the form of sponsorship, for developing its training programme for information and communication technology.
34. The school enjoys good relationships with the pre-school nursery and there are good procedures to help pupils on admission to the school. In liaison with the nursery school, a planned induction programme has been developed that involves teachers, children and their parents, and includes a number of visits before children transfer into the reception class. As a result, children are familiar with the staff, their surroundings and some of the school's procedures before they enter the school. Consequently, the pupils settle quickly and this has a beneficial effect on their attitudes to work. They soon become confident and effective learners in their new surroundings. Liaison with the secondary school is well established and pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. There are valuable opportunities for teachers from both schools to work together on aspects of the curriculum. Classes led by teachers from the Soham Community College are popular with pupils and their parents.

The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, key staff and governors.

35. This successful school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, key staff and governors. The headteacher's sensitive and open management style and his infectious enthusiasm are an inspiration to all who work for the school. Together they have established a clear sense of purpose and a strong commitment to sustain high standards of attainment for all pupils, irrespective of their abilities or personal circumstances. Their high quality leadership and management has produced an inclusive approach to school improvement. Key elements of that approach include comprehensive parent and pupil consultations. This underlines the school's respect for each group and the importance it attaches to its accountability.
36. Staff and governors recognise and value the contributions each of them makes to the school's growth. At all levels, they work successfully as team members because of the trust and high expectations they have of each other. This ranges from the teachers and teaching assistants, who work effectively together in the classroom, to the governors' shared practices, which are undertaken to fulfil their statutory duties efficiently. This very good teamwork, by promoting consistency, is helping to foster pupils' very positive attitudes and sustain high standards. The school makes good use of the individual strengths of staff to implement and develop relevant policies.
37. The curriculum co-ordinators' increased responsibilities for monitoring the quality of educational provision has grown out of the establishment of effective teams. The teams provided the context for the wide sharing of duties and to more widely support those who undertake them. Consequently, co-ordinators have secured new opportunities for professional development and for the refinement of their leadership and management skills. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
38. All co-ordinators, in consultation, monitor standards in their subjects through the examination of pupils' work, compiling portfolios of assessed work and tracking pupil performance. The co-ordinators for English, mathematics and science, analyse test results and use the information to set targets for individual and groups of pupils. They scrutinise teachers' planning, review policy and resources, prioritise developments, manage their own budgets and negotiate for non-contact time to carry out their duties. The monitoring of teaching is undertaken by the headteacher and the co-ordinators of English, mathematics and science. Other co-ordinators are preparing for this responsibility through a useful programme of team teaching and the shared observation of classroom practice.
39. The oversight of educational provision extends to the school's support for its committed teaching assistants. They are active participants in monitoring through their regular lesson feedback to teachers. The school promotes their professional development, and helps them reflect on their practices through a comprehensive appraisal programme. This initiative was developed from a proposal from some of the teaching assistants themselves.
40. Governors have a clear understanding of what the school does well, where it can improve further, and its success against local and national measures. They bring a wide range of personal and professional expertise to the leadership and management of the school. All governors have assigned duties, which range from curriculum responsibilities to oversight of performance management. They help shape strategic planning and monitor the implementation of the school's proposed action plans. They

see their roles in monitoring standards and provision and that of critical friend as integral to their planning responsibilities.

41. Outside their termly meeting, these effective governors work through informal procedures. For example, they set up 'function groups' in which a small number of governors come together to address an agreed priority. The group determines its own procedures and brings its proposal to the full governing body for its consideration. The thoroughly-prepared premises file followed such a route. This file includes asset management, contract reviews, energy audits and efficiency measures amongst its comprehensive and relevant contents. Governors' financial management is guided by the principles of best value and it is successful in enabling the school to reach its declared goals efficiently.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The pupils' attainment in writing.

42. Standards in writing are above average and there are some very good examples of pupils writing well across a range of genres. However, fewer pupils attain the higher levels in writing than in reading by the end of Year 6. The school is taking action to improve the quality of writing. The literacy co-ordinator has analysed pupils' work and identified weaknesses in pupils' sentence structure. To help remedy this weakness, the staff have received training in the teaching of writing, and they are using materials from the National Strategy for Literacy appropriately to help pupils develop and structure their writing. In general, most pupils do not read back what they have written to ensure coherence and, although they use dialogue in their writing, they do not ensure that it adds character and effect to their work. Whilst pupils write in other subjects to record their thoughts, for example in science, the school recognises that it could make better use of opportunities to write for a purpose in other subjects, and to reinforce the writing of different text types covered in literacy lessons. The school agrees that pupils would benefit from further opportunities to write extended pieces of text across the curriculum.

The outside provision for children in the Foundation Stage.

43. Although the school is set in very attractive grounds, there is no secure outdoor area which would allow the youngest children to move spontaneously between the indoor and outdoor environment; nor is there any large play equipment to provide frequent opportunities for physical activity. This limits the range of independent activities for pupils' physical and social development. Staff provide opportunities for the youngest children to enjoy physical education in the playground and there are planned times for them to use the hall and the large equipment provided for gymnastics.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

44. In order to improve further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

(1) Continue to improve pupils' standards in writing by:

- giving them more opportunities to use and improve their writing skills across the curriculum;
- strengthening pupils' sentence structure and their use of dialogue;
- ensuring that pupils read back what they have written to ensure coherence.

(Paragraph 42)

(2) Improve the curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage by:

- ensuring that the youngest children have access to a well-equipped secure outdoor area.

(Paragraph 43)

These items have been identified as areas for action in the school's improvement plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	15
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	3	8	4	0	0	0
Percentage	0%	20%	53%	27%	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 more than six 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	216
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	13

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	19

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

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	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	17	14	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	16
	Girls	13	12	14
	Total	28	27	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (84)	87 (96)	97 (96)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	15
	Girls	13	12	14
	Total	28	27	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (72)	87 (84)	94 (96)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	204	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	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	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.0
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	131

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

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

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	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.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	480,007
Total expenditure	471,484
Expenditure per pupil	2,134
Balance brought forward from previous year	34,940
Balance carried forward to next year	43,463

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	220
Number of questionnaires returned	73

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	34	4	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	45	47	1	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	55	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	52	15	0	5
The teaching is good.	53	38	0	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	41	19	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	30	5	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	37	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	34	47	16	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	58	37	3	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	49	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	8	47	27	7	11