

INSPECTION REPORT

CROSSHALL INFANT SCHOOL

St Neots

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110891

Headteacher: Mrs R Dunkley

Reporting inspector: Phil Mann
23219

Dates of inspection: 24th –25th March 2003

Inspection number: 247066

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	4 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	446 Great North Road Eaton Ford St Neots Cambridgeshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Airey
Date of previous inspection:	13 th October 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Crossall Infant School has 355 pupils on roll, aged 4 to 7 and has beacon status. It is located in the Cambridgeshire town of St Neots. The school was built in 1974 and shares its site with a playgroup, nursery, before- and after-school clubs and a junior school. There have been several extensions to the building in order to accommodate an increase in pupil numbers. The average class size is 30. The current circumstances of most families are above average and the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is quite low. A very small number of pupils are from homes where English is an additional language. At the time of the inspection, there were 60 children under five in the reception classes. The overall attainment of children when they start school in these classes is average. Six per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs. There are 11 pupils at the early, school-based stages of assessment and provision. Currently, there are four pupils with a statement of special educational need, with an extra six pupils needing the support of outside agencies. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an excellent school that is outstandingly effective in what it does. It provides an extensive range of exciting and vibrant opportunities for all pupils, laying solid foundations for lifelong learning. The quality of leadership and management is exemplary. Combined with very good teaching it is ensuring that all pupils make rapid progress in their learning to achieve very high standards in all subjects. Given the current resources available, the standards being achieved, the school provides excellent value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve very high standards and especially so in writing and the expressive arts.
- The development of the pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their relationships with each other.
- Teaching is very good overall across the school.
- The provision for children in the reception classes is of very high quality.
- The quality of planned learning experiences for infant pupils is very good.
- Assessment information is used very well to plan for new learning.
- Leadership and management of the school are excellent.

What could be improved

- There are no key issues for the school to address.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has continued to sustain improvement since the previous inspection and its capacity for further improvement is very good. The key issues from the previous inspection have all been addressed. The quality and range of reading books are now very good. Teachers set targets for pupils to aspire to and these are reported effectively to parents. The long-term plan for school improvement is very detailed and it very effectively provides a structure for further development.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
Reading	A*	A	A	A
Writing	A*	A*	A*	A
Mathematics	A	A	A	A

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

Pupils achieve well above average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school at the age of seven. Standards are equally as high in all other subjects and these very high standards are particularly noticeable in writing, art, music and dance. All pupils make very good progress as they move through the school because of consistently very good teaching, the effective use of assessment information to group pupils and a strong focus on the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. Writing is taught very well and, as a result, this is being reflected in the high quality of pupils' work in their books and on display around the school.

Standards achieved by pupils aged seven in the 2002 national tests were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Particularly good results were achieved by more able pupils, with approximately half of all pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics. Exactly a quarter of these pupils attained this high standard of work in writing. Test results for the last three years indicate that standards have continued to remain very high and rise in line with the national trend. When these results are compared with schools in similar circumstances, standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This particularly high level of achievement is due to the very high expectations set by the outstanding leadership of the school, high quality teaching, the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and the very effective use of assessment information to enable all pupils to be working at a level that accurately matches their ability.

The attainment for most children when they start school in the reception class is overall in line with that normally expected. All children make very good progress in all areas of learning due to very good teaching and a wide range of well-planned learning experiences matched to their needs. By the end of the reception year most will have made a good start on areas of learning within the National Curriculum and their overall attainment is above average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes to work are excellent. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who love being at school, taking great pride in all that they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	There is a very high standard of behaviour in the school. All pupils respond very well to the school and class codes of behaviour, both in school and in the playgrounds.
Personal development and relationships	There are very good relationships and a happy working atmosphere in classes. School councillors take their responsibilities seriously.
Attendance	Just about in line with national averages. Some absences are caused because of a rise in family holidays during term time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching overall is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Thirteen out of the 15 lessons observed were very good or better with four lessons being excellent in quality. The best teaching included some inspired teaching of mathematics and music. Pupils of all abilities are taught very well either in ability groups, class lessons or in small withdrawal groups. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very effectively in a structured way. All teachers have utilised the very best elements of the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy, and combined them with their own high levels of expertise and methods to ensure that these basic skills are taught very well. A strong emphasis is placed on the teaching of writing and its use in other subjects. This very high quality teaching overall ensures that all pupils make very good progress in all subjects.

All teachers use resources to make lessons interesting. They use practical activity as much as possible to make learning relevant to the needs of all pupils. Classroom areas are managed very well and support staff are used very effectively to support the teaching of other subjects, such as art, in an integrated way during lessons. Teachers and support staff in the reception classes make good use of real experiences to stimulate the children's interest and learning. This has a direct impact upon the very good progress they make and the knowledge they begin to acquire.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the planned learning opportunities for children under five are very good. There is a very good balance between teacher-directed activity and learning through play. The school places a strong emphasis on developing the infant pupils' literacy and numeracy skills while ensuring that they experience the full range of National Curriculum subjects. Very high expectations and very detailed planning promotes rich and relevant opportunities for the pupils where subjects are studied in depth. Teachers provide numerous opportunities for pupils to undertake investigations to satisfy their curiosity. An extensive range of visits and visitors bring lessons to life and ensure pupils enjoy their learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is unobtrusive yet outstanding. Pupils' individual needs are catered for very well and, as a result, they all make very good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils make rapid progress as a result of the specific learning opportunities planned by teachers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides outstanding opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally and culturally. Social development is very good. Teachers provide impressive opportunities for pupils to explore cultural diversity. As a result, all pupils are very well prepared for life in a culturally diverse society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Staff look after all pupils in a caring and sensitive way and child protection procedures are good. Teachers regularly undertake very thorough assessments of the achievements of all pupils during the year. This information is used very successfully to plan learning opportunities geared to the ability of individual pupils. Well-presented individual records of pupil achievement form a permanent record of their life at school and celebrate their achievements in a very visual way.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is an extremely effective manager of the school who provides excellent leadership to staff, pupils and governors. She provides very clear direction for the school's work and sets very high expectations. This is resulting in all pupils making rapid progress in their learning in all subjects. Responsibilities are very effectively delegated to senior staff, who work as a strong team to ensure that each year-base functions as a coordinated unit.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties very effectively and provides very good levels of support for the work of the school. In partnership with the headteacher, the governors have ensured that the building and resources have been improved to a very high standard for the benefit of pupils and staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The work of the school is evaluated very effectively. The headteacher, senior staff and subject coordinators regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning. These observations are used very effectively to ensure that teaching is consistent between classes and that learning opportunities are of the highest standard. The governing body is also fully involved in the process of evaluation. It systematically reviews the work of the school in order to maintain these very high standards.
The strategic use of resources	The plan for school improvement is a particularly impressive document. It very clearly identifies improvements to be made to the quality of provision available for the benefit of all. These are supported by very precise budgetary allocations and based on the effective application of best value. Administration staff work in full partnership with governors and senior staff to ensure that these resources are used to best effective to support pupils' learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The meeting was attended by 12 parents and 34 per cent of parents returned the questionnaire.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My child likes school (99 per cent) • My child is making good progress (99 per cent) • The school's high expectations (99 per cent) • Behaviour in school is good (98 per cent) • Teaching is good (98 per cent) • The school is helping my child to be mature and responsible (96 per cent) • Leadership and management of the school (93 per cent) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons (25 per cent) • Being kept well informed about my child's progress (19 per cent)

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. They judge that the range of activities outside of lessons is very good and feel that parents are well informed about how well their children are progressing at school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils achieve very high standards and especially so in writing and the expressive arts.

1. Pupils achieve well above average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science by the time they leave school at the age of seven. Standards are equally as high in all other subjects. Very high standards are particularly noticeable in writing, art, music and dance. All pupils make very good progress as they move through the school because of very good teaching overall, the effective use of assessment information to group pupils and a strong focus on the teaching of basic skills. Writing is taught very well and, as a result, this is being reflected in the quality of the pupils' work in their books and on display around the school.
2. Attainment is in line with expected levels for most children when they start school in the reception class. All these children make very good progress in all areas of learning due to very good teaching and a wide range of well-planned learning experiences matched to the needs of all children. Assessment records indicate that by the end of the reception year most will have attained all the Early Learning Goals¹ in the six areas of learning identified for children in this age range. A small proportion will still be working below these levels by the time that they start Year 1 but a good proportion will already be working within the National Curriculum at Level 1.
3. Standards achieved by pupils aged seven in the 2002 national tests were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Particularly good results were achieved by more able pupils, with approximately half of these pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics. Exactly a quarter of these pupils attained this high standard of work in writing. Test results for the last three years indicate that standards have continued to remain high and rose in line with the national trend. When these results are compared against schools with similar circumstances, standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This high level of achievement is due to the very high expectations set by the outstanding leadership of the school, consistently very good teaching, the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and the very effective use of assessment information to enable all pupils to be working at a level that effectively matches their ability.
4. A very strong focus is placed on teaching literacy and numeracy skills. This is started very effectively in the reception classes. Teachers provide all these children with the opportunity to develop early writing and counting skills. For example, all children are encouraged to hold a pencil or paintbrush correctly when they are either writing or painting; other creative activities such as weaving are used to develop the children's dexterity. The development of correct letter formation is fully encouraged by all staff working with the children. Staff also provide them with many opportunities to develop a basic understanding of number through practical counting activities, both inside and outside the classrooms, and the good use of computers to stimulate problem-solving skills.
5. The encouragement of these important skills ensures that, by the time reception children enter Year 1, they are carefully writing simple words and sentences in a neat and consistent way, and counting numbers up to 50 or more with considerable confidence.

¹ **EARLY LEARNING GOALS**

Early learning goals - these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They mainly refer to achievements children make in connection with: communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; and physical and creative development. There are many goals for each area of learning; for example, in language and literacy pupils should be able to write their own name and other things such as labels and begin to write simple sentences.

Higher attaining pupils are even able to undertake simple additions and subtractions accurately and name several common two-dimensional shapes. These skills are further built on in the infant classes. By the time pupils reach Year 2, many can write carefully constructed sentences that are correctly punctuated and use quite sophisticated strategies, such as doubling and halving, to solve problems.

6. The high standards reached in writing are particularly noteworthy. Higher attaining pupils are developing the skill of making their sentences more interesting with the use of connecting words such as 'but' and 'because'. The quality of writing by many of these older pupils is of a very high standard. For instance, one more-able Year 2 pupil wrote as part of a piece on surviving in space, 'We might take plants, they give us oxygen. They make our air clean'. Another wrote, 'At the weekend if we are busy, I like to go to the park because it is exciting!' All pupils have clearly understood targets for the improvement of writing skills. Teachers use these effectively to group pupils in lessons. Pupil Record and Year Books are used very effectively to monitor and celebrate pupils' individual achievements, and always ensure that work is matched to their needs.
7. The teaching of reading is managed very well across the school. This good practice is begun in reception and followed right through until the end of Year 2. All pupils, including the reception children, take books home on a regular basis to read to an adult. Specific skills are taught in a weekly reading workshop session in each year team. All pupils are organised and taught very well in ability groups during these sessions. Inspection evidence confirms that the standard of pupils' reading at seven is well above average, since over half of the pupils read at the higher than expected Level 3.
8. Teachers plan an extensive range of exciting and vibrant opportunities for all pupils, with a strong emphasis on laying solid foundations for lifelong learning in all subjects. This is particularly so in the expressive arts such as art, music and dance, where skills are taught expertly by teachers and support staff. An atmosphere of very high expectation has been established by the headteacher, which is fully exemplified by the quality of the pupils' artwork and in their ability to dance and make music. Many pupils are developing skills at a level well above that expected of other similar aged pupils. Staff utilise many different media, such as watercolour painting, pastels and pens, batik, weaving and quilting, to teach a wide range of skills for pupils to further develop, as they grow older. These activities are often used to explore the art of non-western cultures, such as the aboriginal peoples of Australia and Africa, and provide a deeper understanding of their own place within a multi-cultural society.
9. Music is expertly taught in the studio designed for this purpose. Consequently, the quality of pupils' singing by the end of Year 2 is well above average. This very high quality singing was clearly demonstrated during the assemblies observed in the inspection, when songs were confidently sung with expression and gusto. Many pupils in Year 2 can use percussion instruments with confidence to accompany a wide range of songs and they are starting to read simple graphic notation to play musical instruments. Music making is fully complemented by the very good opportunities for pupils to dance expressively to short pieces of music as part of the planned physical education programme. Inspection evidence, including the observation of one Year 1 dance lesson, confirms that pupils are performing well above national expectations in this aspect of learning. For example, these pupils performed a short sequence of dance and mime to different pieces of music in order to portray the carrying of a large box. They performed their jumping and turning routines with a confidence and assurance that is rarely seen in lessons with similar aged pupils.

The development of the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and their relationships with each other.

10. Pupils' attitudes to the school are excellent. They obviously enjoy coming to school and display a very keen enthusiasm for lessons. There is an exceptional interest and involvement because teachers and support staff ensure that activities are interesting and relevant to pupils' individual needs. All the pupils willingly take part in class discussions, such as in circle time or as part of a religious education session. The overwhelming majority of pupils are well motivated and their overall response to teachers, support staff and volunteer helpers is excellent. Many pupils concentrate very well for reasonable periods of time and display obvious satisfaction and pride in what they do; for instance, when writing a story or painting a still life picture of some spring flowers when paintbrushes and colour are used with deliberate care and thought. Pupils display a sense of responsibility and rise very well to challenge, such as putting things away in class or lighting the assembly candle. Many are able to generate ideas and solve problems independently. This is because teachers plan a wide range of practical activities in subjects such as mathematics and science for pupils to participate in.
11. The excellent provision for spiritual development is a major contributory factor to the level of pupil interest and involvement in learning activities. Time for pupils to reflect on their experiences is extremely well established during lessons and assemblies, and this thinking profoundly enhances their spiritual development. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to consider the beliefs of others during the very well planned assembly programme. The daily act of collective worship fully complies with statutory requirements. Meaning, purpose and values are central themes at these times and a broad Christian outlook is the basis of collective worship in the school.
12. The behaviour of pupils throughout the school is very good. This is because provision for pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils respond very well to the school's very high expectations of how they should behave in and around the premises, and this has a very positive impact on pupils' achievements. Pupils are encouraged to express their views and feelings. They are keen to take responsibility for their own actions and care for others. Their response to the school's code of conduct is very positive. Good behaviour is fully recognised by staff and rewarded through praise in class, achievement certificates or nomination as a 'helping hand' within the classrooms. Individual achievement is frequently and very effectively recognised through the inclusion of pupils' pictures on the 'Stars of the Week' board in the hall. Pupils greatly value this recognition and parents comment very favourably about how proud their child is when this recognition takes place for them. Pupils are courteous, trustworthy and respectful. Instances of bullying and of aggressive, sexist and racist behaviour are rare. There have been some isolated instances of bullying in the playground but, when this has happened, it has been dealt with in sensitive but effective ways by staff.
13. The provision for pupils' social development is very good and a particularly strong feature of this school. Adults provide excellent role models for pupils, and relationships between pupils and staff and pupils themselves are particularly good. Older pupils are becoming accustomed to organising their own work, and they take great delight in working with a partner, as well as working as individuals, for example when using computers to research the life of the Victorians as part of a Year 2 history project. The school council provides excellent opportunities for all pupils to demonstrate a sense of responsibility and citizenship in what they do by involving everybody in making decisions about issues that affect life in school. Pupils display enthusiasm to help others in need and, together with their parents or carer, raise considerable sums of money for national or local charities. Many pupils show initiative and all readily accept the responsibility of engaging in routine tasks, such as taking the register to the office. School assemblies, combined with the extensive range of visits and visitors, are all making the pupils aware of the importance of their own cultural traditions and of their place within a culturally diverse Britain.

Teaching is very good overall across the school.

14. The quality of teaching is very good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Thirteen out of the 15 lessons observed were very good or better, with four lessons being excellent in quality. The best lessons included some inspired teaching of mathematics and music. Pupils with special educational needs, or the very small number who speak English as an additional language, are taught and supported very well, either in class or during specified times for individual work. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very effectively in a structured way. All teachers utilise the very best elements of the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy and combine these with their own high levels of expertise and methods to ensure that these basic skills are taught very well. A strong emphasis is placed on the teaching of writing and its use in other subjects. This very high quality teaching overall ensures that all pupils make very good progress in all subjects.
15. Very detailed planning and thorough preparation are key features of the teaching. Teachers share clearly with their pupils at the start of each lesson what they are going to learn. This is a consistent feature of all lessons and, therefore, the purpose of the work is always made clear to pupils. These learning intentions are often also shared with the pupils at the end of each lesson to determine the overall effectiveness of new learning. In the very best lessons, pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on and to evaluate their own progress in achieving these objectives. This was very effectively demonstrated in an excellent mathematics lesson for Year 2 pupils. The teacher used the session at the end of the lesson to review learning as a means of involving all pupils in sharing what they had learnt in readiness for the next session.
16. Teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can do. Tasks set are challenging but planned at the appropriate level of difficulty for individual groups of pupils. These very high expectations are clearly exhibited in the very high standard of pupils' artwork around the school. Much of the artwork displayed on classroom walls and in the corridors is quite stunning and a credit to the staff and pupils alike. Standards in art are well above those expected, at all age levels in the school, and the achievements of the oldest pupils are often better than those found of much older pupils. Teachers encourage all pupils to write in a neat cursive style, with the result that written work is always neat both in pupils' books and when displayed around the school. This level of care and attention to quality writing experiences, presentation of work and lessons that challenge pupils of all abilities, is a major contributory factor to the rate of pupils' achievements and overall standards of work attained.
17. Lessons contain a good balance between direct teaching, practical and investigative activity and time to review what has been learned. All teachers use questions skilfully to assess the pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking. Very good subject knowledge, combined with very effective explanations, ensures that all pupils make good progress in lessons. For example, in a very good information and communication technology lesson for Year 2 pupils, the teacher demonstrated the use of a publishing program to merge pictures with text. Explanations were backed up with skilful questioning to ensure that all pupils knew what they had to do. Because of this very effective teaching, the pupils made very good gains in their own learning with the result that they could match a picture related to the Victorians with three sentences of text.
18. Teachers manage pupils well in all lessons. All teachers create a very good working atmosphere for learning by setting very high expectations of behaviour for pupils. Very positive relationships and mutual respect exists between teachers and pupils and pupils themselves. Together with clearly established classroom routines, this is enabling all pupils, including those who occasionally exhibit challenging behaviour, to persevere with

their tasks, work cooperatively with each other and make good progress. Pupils' positive attitudes towards their work, their very good behaviour and enthusiasm for learning, combined with the teachers' skilful management of open-plan learning environments, are major contributory factors to the quality of learning experiences in the school. This was demonstrated very effectively in a dance lesson for pupils in Year 1. The teacher managed the lesson very well. Very good management of the pupils ensured that the lesson was highly successful and the standard of dance and mime were well above average for pupils of this age.

19. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who are more able than their fellow classmates, are taught very well by teachers and teaching assistants. This is because activities are planned to meet the needs of all pupils in lessons. Various strategies are used to achieve this. For instance, support assistants teach small groups of less able pupils in literacy and numeracy lessons at the level of difficulty most appropriate to their needs; more able pupils are also taught in small groups in these lessons by a support assistant employed by the school for this purpose. The grouping of pupils into ability groups within each year group is ensuring that literacy and numeracy skills are taught very effectively. Teachers also provide all pupils with targets for improvements in these aspects of learning to further support their rate of achievement. Specific needs and targets for improvement are clearly identified within individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. This very good practice ensures that all pupils of all abilities, including those with specific difficulties, make very good progress in their learning.
20. Resources are used very well to make lessons interesting and to introduce new learning. This is particularly so in literacy and numeracy lessons. For example, in a writing lesson for pupils in Year 2, the teacher used pictures and other resources related to the current history topic on the Victorians to 'fire up' the pupils' imagination. A flip chart was then used very effectively to create a bank of interesting words that these pupils could then use in their writing about life in these times. The small computer suite is used very well to teach information and communication technology skills to individual pupils each week. This regular teaching of computer skills is ensuring that all pupils make good progress in this important area of learning. Support assistants liaise very regularly with teachers and they provide very good levels of support to individuals or to small groups throughout the teaching day. This support is particularly effective in the teaching of artistic and creative activities.
21. Teachers' marking is consistently good across the school and is always of high quality. It is always thorough and provides the basis for the school's ongoing assessment of the pupils' progress and achievements. All teachers constantly monitor the progress pupils are making and, together with support staff, make notes of any significant learning to be recorded in the pupils' individual record books.
22. Teachers provide very good levels of praise for pupils. Targets for improvement are shared with pupils and monitored regularly through good quality feedback to individuals and groups of pupils. Teachers in each year team make very good use of this ongoing assessment information to place pupils in ability groups for literacy and numeracy work. This in turn is making lessons in these aspects of learning even more effective and a major contributory factor to the standards being achieved.
23. Homework is thoughtfully used to supplement and reinforce what is learnt in class. Pupils throughout the school are encouraged to take reading books home, together with spellings and number work.

The provision for children in the reception classes is of very high quality.

24. The quality and range of the planned learning opportunities for children in the reception classes are very good and a significant strength of the school. A very good balance exists between teacher-directed activity and children learning through play. In all classes the quality of this learning is particularly enhanced by the contributions made by the support assistants and volunteer helpers. This is particularly so in areas of creative development, such as art.
25. All staff work hard to create a very supportive and caring environment in which the children feel valued. This shows itself in the way children make choices about their own learning and grow in confidence in whole-class activities. Assessments are regularly carried out and help teachers to monitor the progress of the children in all the areas of learning. Teachers make very good use of ongoing assessments to inform daily and future planning. Children with special educational needs have very clear individual learning plans in place to support their learning.
26. Provision for personal and social development is particularly good. As a result, the children naturally share equipment, chat about what they are doing and begin to organise themselves. Following teaching sessions and discussions the children set about their activities with a sense of purpose and enjoyment. Visitors immediately feel part of the classes as the children chat happily to them about what they are doing. The adults working with the children have high expectations of behaviour and deal promptly and sensitively with any problems that might occur. Discussion time and assemblies are used to address issues such as friendship, helping one another, persistence and how we behave.
27. Teachers provide an environment that is rich in books, words and conversation. Every opportunity is taken to engage the children in using language. For instance, children are asked to give reasons for their answers when picking out favourite parts of a shared story or describing a toy car in readiness for a writing session. All teachers and assistants work hard to create an environment that provides the children with a range of mathematical experiences through play and structured activities. For instance, there are displays of numbers to help the children count and identify them.
28. Teachers make good use of real experiences to stimulate the children's interest and learning and this has a direct impact upon the very good progress they make and the knowledge they begin to acquire. Opportunities are carefully planned and thought through to ensure that all children experience a wide range of activities related to aspects of the current topic being studied. A strong emphasis is placed on learning through first-hand experience, both inside and outside the classrooms. Although the outdoor area is undergoing a complete redevelopment and not yet finished, teachers and support staff provide a wealth of exciting and interesting activities out of doors. These not only give all children opportunities for physical activity but also provide very good opportunities for intellectual growth and development. These can include the investigation of forces by pulling and pushing the large wheeled toys, locating hidden words in the adventure area, weaving coloured ribbon into the fence and drawing sketch maps of an imaginary world on the picnic table.
29. Provision for creative development is very good and all children make very good progress in a wide range of skills. Teachers and support staff plan for and teach a wide range of creative skills to all the children. As a result, many are using a mixture of colours in their work and paint with confidence. Children are wholeheartedly encouraged to hold and use paintbrushes correctly. This in turn reinforces the skills needed to hold a pencil and provides very good opportunities for the improvement of dexterity and the development of early literacy skills. Staff alter the character of the role-play areas frequently so that imaginative play can be encouraged and children can take on the characters in a hospital,

café or enchanted world. The creative use of other equipment, such as the puppet theatre and construction equipment, is also used to good effect to stimulate the children's imagination.

The quality of planned learning experiences for infant pupils is very good.

30. The quality and range of planned learning experiences for all infant pupils are very good. These are broad and balanced, and planning is most carefully thought out. Policy statements for all subjects are very detailed and regularly reviewed formally by staff and governors. High expectations and very detailed planning promotes rich and relevant opportunities for the pupils, where subjects are studied in depth. These planned learning experiences provide for excellent levels of interest and stimulation and the pursuit of high achievement. Teachers also provide numerous opportunities for pupils to undertake investigations to satisfy their curiosity. The time allocated for the curriculum meets national recommendations for all subjects. The needs of pupils are always met because the curriculum is relevant to their needs. Appropriate schemes of work are very well established, and very good use is made of learning resources to make lessons interesting and relevant.
31. The school places a very strong emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and ensures that all pupils experience the full range of National Curriculum subjects through an integrated approach. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught very effectively throughout the school. This is because all pupils in each year group are placed in ability groups to ensure that planning is matched very closely to their individual needs. The school has chosen not to fully adopt the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy but, instead, teachers utilise many good elements of these initiatives to support their own very good planning for these aspects of learning. The effectiveness of this strategy is fully exemplified by the very high standards being achieved by most pupils at the end of Year 2 in the national tests
32. All teachers place great emphasis on providing pupils with opportunities to write at length. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress in this skill. So much so that many achieve the higher Level 3 standard by the end of Year 2, writing interesting, well structured stories, poems and prose in a neat cursive style. All staff provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop their artistic skills. Pupil participation in art activities forms an integral part of daily lessons. As a result, all pupils develop an appreciation of art and a sense of satisfaction as they complete their pictures and sculptures.
33. An extensive range of visits and visitors bring lessons to life and ensure pupils enjoy their learning. Activities outside of lessons are an integral part of school life. Teachers listen to pupils read at lunchtimes and they provide after-school clubs in several pastimes and sports during the summer months. Parents comment very positively about the quality of pupils' concerts and musical events. There is a comprehensive range of visits out of school and the school plays host to an excellent range of visitors.
34. The school works extremely hard to ensure that the planned curriculum is socially inclusive. For instance, teaching groups are effectively organised to ensure all pupils have equality of access to the curriculum. Great emphasis is placed on providing for pupils' personal, social and health education. For instance, the school is currently part of a healthy eating project. The school council provides an ideal opportunity to develop in these young pupils the concept of citizenship .
35. The school's links with the local community significantly enhance pupils' academic progress. For instance, the school makes very effective use of resources within the

locality and representatives from the local community and ethnic minorities are encouraged to visit and to speak to pupils. Maximum use is made of links with commerce and industry, and the school gives very good support to events organised by the local community. The school has made effective use of its beacon school status and, as a result, relationships between the school and other partner institutions are very good.

36. The school provides a wealth of enriching cultural experiences for its pupils. There are very frequent opportunities for pupils to appreciate art, literature and music. Trips and excursions to places of interest such as the Iron Bridge Gorge in Shropshire are used very effectively to bring history topics to life. This is particularly so when all who take part in the visit dress in clothes typical of the Victorian period. Visits from artists, poets and theatre groups are regular features of school life and provide for further enrichment of the planned learning experiences.

Assessment information is used very well to plan for new learning.

37. Overall, the school's arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic performance are very good. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very comprehensive. They are applied consistently for all children in the reception classes and pupils in the infant classes. All teachers make very effective use of assessment information to guide their lesson planning in all subjects. Very detailed records of each pupil are kept in individual record books and very good use is made of these records to help pupils make progress. For example, these books are used by teachers in each year team to group all pupils into teaching groups for literacy and numeracy based on the ability of each pupil. Assessment, recording and monitoring of attainment and progress are an integral part of teaching procedures, and extremely well presented subject portfolios of pupils' work are part of this process. They all provide a very comprehensive overview of the standards being achieved in all subjects and a very effective method for monitoring the quality of pupils' work.
38. A particular strength of the school is the excellent educational and personal support and guidance provided for pupils. Pupils regularly select, with staff guidance, pieces of their own work to be included in their year book. These year books very effectively celebrate the success of each pupil and provide a permanent record of achievement and progress over time. These are then presented to each pupil during a special assembly before they move on to their next school. Pupils with special educational needs are always helped to meet individual education plan targets and the level of this support is outstanding. Statutory requirements regarding day and residential care are fully met. Special provision is also made available for pupils identified as being more able. Excellent portfolios of their work confirm that these pupils are achieving very high standards indeed when compared with pupils of a similar age.

Leadership and management of the school are excellent.

39. The quality of leadership and management in this school is first class. The future direction of the school is extremely well mapped out by the headteacher, governors and senior staff in an impressive plan for school improvement. An atmosphere of very high expectations for all has been established and pupils' standards are very high as a result, especially in writing, art, dance and music. A very high priority is placed on the inspiration and motivation of staff, and teamwork between teachers and other staff is very well established. The quality of leadership is an excellent reflection of the published aims and values of the school. There is a particularly strong emphasis on providing all pupils with the opportunity for 'Learning for Life'. So much so that this has become the school's mission statement.

40. The delegation of responsibilities to management staff is very well established and all fulfil their roles with enthusiasm and dedication. The headteacher works extremely closely with these senior staff to strive for excellence, and there is a profound shared commitment to school improvement. The school has continued to sustain improvement since the previous inspection and all the key issues identified at that time have been successfully addressed. The long-term plan for school improvement is particularly noteworthy. It is extremely comprehensive and it very effectively provides a structure for further development.
41. Governors and staff frequently monitor and evaluate the school's overall performance. The quality of teaching is monitored and evaluated very well by the headteacher and subject coordinators when they observe samples of lessons. The findings of these observations are used very effectively to ensure that teaching is consistent between classes and that learning opportunities are of the highest standard. Very good teachers are very well deployed to influence and improve the overall quality of teaching and learning in this school. The school's procedures for appraisal and performance management are excellent, and performance targets are clearly understood by all staff. The procedures for the induction of new staff are extremely effective. There is a very considerable sense of commitment from teachers to work as a team in order to provide the best possible education for pupils in this school. The correlation between school improvement and performance is excellent, and the steps taken to meet the school's targets for improvement are very effective. Staff with managerial responsibility display high levels of commitment and a keen desire for the school to excel in what it does.
42. The governing body's procedures and methods of working are extremely well established. Frequent contact with the school is a feature of the governors' role in supporting its work. Governors demonstrate an exceptional level of understanding about the school's strengths and areas for further development. The governing body works hard, and in tandem with the headteacher and senior staff, to shape the strategic direction of the school. Targets for school improvement are always monitored throughout the improvement planning cycle, and governors play a significant role in setting targets for school development and improvement. The governing body completely meets its statutory responsibilities. Governors continuously work in partnership with the headteacher to improve the quality of education available to the pupils.
43. The strategic use of resources, grants and other funding to further pupil standards is excellent. A high level of skill is employed by governors and senior staff to ensure that financial resources are used wisely to support school improvement. The efficiency and effectiveness of the financial administration systems are excellent, and the school reacted extremely well to the most recent auditor's report. The competent and efficient administration staff keep the headteacher and governing body fully informed about the position of the school finances. New technology is used very effectively throughout the school to support management and pupils' learning.
44. Specific grants are used effectively for their designated purpose to further support pupils' learning. The school monitors the nature of its spending extremely well and the principles of best value are applied effectively to further the opportunities available to the pupils. The school engages in competitive tendering, and the staff are required to justify their use of resources and identify further needs for their subjects. The school consults widely on major expenditure decisions and is fully aware of the need to compare its costs with those of other schools.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

45. There are no key issues for further improvement in this school.

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	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	4	9	2	0	0	0	0
Percentage	27	60	13	0	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	YR-Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	355
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR-Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	21

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	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
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	60	58	118

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	56	58	60
	Girls	56	57	58
	Total	112	115	118
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	95 (96)	97 (98)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	60	60	60
	Girls	57	58	58
	Total	117	118	118
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	99 (98)	100 (99)	100 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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	328	0	0
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	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	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	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 – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30:1
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	236

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	1

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	2001-2
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	£
Total income	853,167
Total expenditure	820,131
Expenditure per pupil	2,278
Balance brought forward from previous year	56,560
Balance carried forward to next year	89,596

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 33%

Number of questionnaires sent out	360
Number of questionnaires returned	119

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	33	6	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	50	49	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	47	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	47	8	2	4
The teaching is good.	48	50	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	58	17	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	36	50	10	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	37	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	24	60	11	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	35	58	5	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	57	3	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13	42	14	11	20