

INSPECTION REPORT

OVER HALL COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Winsford

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111130

Headteacher: Hilary Berry

Reporting inspector: Jeff White
17242

Dates of inspection: 23rd – 24th September 2002

Inspection number: 247085

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 and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ludlow Close Winsford Cheshire
Postcode:	CW7 1LX
Telephone number:	01606 553692
Fax number:	01606 861998
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Vera Farrow
Date of previous inspection:	16 th June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	12
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	13
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	14

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The area served by the school is a mixture of privately owned and local authority housing and is in the top 10 per cent of wards within the county with potential educational disadvantage. There are very few pupils of minority ethnic background and only one is at an early stage of English acquisition. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The number of full time pupils has increased since the school's last inspection and is now 203, including 27 in the reception year. Boys outnumber girls. Twenty-six part time children attend the nursery. Children are admitted to the reception year at the beginning of the school year in which they become five. Forty-three pupils are identified as having special educational needs, a broadly average figure, and two have a statement. The number of pupils with special needs has risen since the last inspection. In some year groups, pupil mobility is high. For example, in the current Year 6 more than 30 per cent of pupils joined the school at times other than the usual admission time. The attainment of children on entry to the reception year is broadly below average. The school has received the government's Achievement Award for its results in the national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2001 and is involved in a range of national and local initiatives to raise achievement. Currently two teachers are temporary.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The headteacher, staff and governors are committed to improving the school. They work very well as a team and have succeeded in developing a harmonious community in which pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and generally achieve well. During the inspection, the quality of teaching was good, sometimes very good and never less than satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 6, in English, mathematics and science, have fluctuated over time but have tended to be largely below what is typical for pupils of this age. However, pupils have usually made good progress both in relation to their abilities and in comparison with pupils' performance in similar schools. More work is needed in raising the standards in pupils' writing. Good value for money is provided.

What the school does well

- By the end of Year 6 pupils have usually made good progress overall in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils' learning is developed very effectively and their attitudes and personal development are very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in writing are not high enough.

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 improved well since it was last inspected in June 1997. Parents' views of the school are now generally more positive. The key issues raised in the last inspection report have been addressed, most notably in broadening the curriculum and improving the quality of pupils' learning. Governors have striven to ensure that, where possible, there is no long-term succession of temporary staff. Although the standards of pupils' work are not necessarily higher, pupils now achieve better, in relation to their abilities, than pupils did at the time of the last inspection. The last inspection found that at the end of Year 2 standards in writing could have been better. This remains the case. In recent years, attendance has improved considerably. The school's capacity to improve is good.

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	C	E	D	B
Mathematics	E	C	C	A
Science	D	E	D	C

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

The results show that standards have fluctuated when compared with all schools nationally. Although pupils performed better in 2001 than in 2000 standards remained below average in English and science. The best performance was in mathematics where pupils exceeded the statutory target. The target was met in English. Over the last five years, the trend in the school's average points for all three subjects was broadly in line with the national trend. When compared with results in similar schools, pupils' performance in 2001 was above average overall and this represents good progress on their part. The unvalidated results in the 2002 tests indicated that overall standards declined. However, the prior attainment of the Year 6 group was generally lower than the previous year and the school's tracking of their performance shows that they had made good progress. An increase in pupils with special educational needs and high pupil mobility are significant contributory factors to the fluctuations in performance.

In the 2001 national tests for pupils aged seven, standards were below average when compared with all schools and average overall when compared with similar schools. Pupils performed best in reading and least well in writing. The school has acted to improve pupils' writing particularly that of boys and the unvalidated 2002 results for Year 2 indicate some improvement has been made. However, there is scope to raise attainment in writing further by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. In the work seen during the inspection standards in writing were below average overall. Standards were close to average in mathematics and science. Some good work was seen in art and design. In most of the lessons seen during the inspection, pupils achieved well including those with special needs and the more able. Pupils are making good progress in reading. Children in the nursery and reception class are making significant progress in personal, social and emotional development and many are on course to reach the standards that are expected, in this area of learning, by the time they enter Year 1.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are very positive and they are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave well and often behaviour is very good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils respond very well to opportunities for their personal development and relationships are harmonious.
Attendance	The attendance rate has improved significantly and is now good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	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.

No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Pupils' achievements and the standards of their work, in addition to the teaching seen, indicate that numeracy and reading are taught effectively. There is scope for improving the teaching of writing. Key strengths in the teaching are the very effective management of pupils, the work of classroom assistants and the development of very positive relationships. In addition, teachers have considerable success in improving the quality of pupils' learning and, in the main, all pupils are helped to achieve well. In the very best teaching pupils make very good gains in their learning because the teachers have high expectations of their performance.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils who need personal and emotional support are especially helped well, for example, in the school's "nurture" groups.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The very few pupils with English as an additional language are supported as well as their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Art and design makes a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of care is excellent. The headteacher and staff work very hard to ensure that the welfare of all pupils has a high priority.

Pupils speak highly of the headteacher and staff and particularly like the chance to relate to their adult "mentors".

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has a strong commitment to the school's development and has been very effective in improving pupils' learning. She is well supported by other key staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and are very supportive of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Evaluation of the school's performance is improving and is increasingly being used to help raise achievement.
The strategic use of resources	Finances are controlled efficiently and expenditure is closely linked to the school's educational priorities.

The school development plan is a useful tool for guiding the school's future development. It could be improved by having more precise evaluation of how pupils' attainment has been raised. The school's expenditure on classroom assistants is very high but is money well spent. They make a substantial contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. The overall principles of best value are applied satisfactorily. A good feature is the analysis of assessment results to ascertain the value added to pupils' progress over time.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and are making good progress. • They feel comfortable about approaching the headteacher and staff and are kept well informed about how their children are getting on. • The school is well led and managed and the teaching is good. • Children are expected to work hard and are helped to become mature and responsible. 	

The vast majority of parents who expressed their opinion had very positive views of the school. The inspection team endorses these views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

By the end of Year 6 pupils have usually made good progress overall in English, mathematics and science.

- 1 In most of the lessons observed pupils achieved well and were suitably challenged in their work. This contributes to their progress over time. A good start is made in the nursery where the foundation for pupils' future learning is laid. A suitable combination of adult-directed activities and opportunities for children to choose what they do ensures that learning is well structured and, at the same time, that early skills of working independently and an awareness of the needs of others are developed. For example, children worked with an adult as they developed their knowledge of the number five but also reinforced their understanding as they played on their own with five objects in the sand area. Close attention is also given to children's communication, language and literacy. Children are encouraged to talk about their work and answer questions, for instance, about what ingredients are being used as they make biscuits. Opportunities to develop recognition of familiar words and letter sounds are provided wherever possible.
- 2 In the literacy lesson seen in Year 6 pupils achieved well and made good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the voice and style of different texts. The teacher's lively introduction, well-focused questions and effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) captured pupils' attention and helped them to talk about different versions they had previously read of the "story" of Shakespeare's Macbeth. As they studied different texts pupils also gained in their knowledge of punctuation and this helped them to use it more effectively when they later wrote spells in the style of the text. Year 6 pupils similarly achieved well in a numeracy lesson because the teaching was good. Brisk pace at the start of the lesson and effective use of humour ensured all pupils were well involved in their work on fractions. A key strength in the teaching was the opportunity for pupils to explain their thinking, for example, when they talked about the differences between numerators and denominators. Pupils' knowledge of the relationships between fractions improved and was re-enforced well in the main activity and in the plenary at the end of the lesson. In a numeracy lesson in Year 2, pupils improved their knowledge and understanding of money. Clear questions, at the beginning of the lesson, helped pupils to identify reasons for adding coins together and they then used coins in a range of practical work. Pupils in Year 1 made good progress in their understanding of shape because the activity, including looking for shapes outside, sustained their interest throughout the lesson.
- 3 Only one lesson in science was observed. Very good teaching contributed significantly to pupils' achievement in Year 5. They achieved very well in their scientific knowledge and enquiry as they investigated evaporation and the factors which affect it. A significant strength of the teaching was the high expectation of pupils' use of scientific language when they explained their thinking. The range of pupils' abilities was catered for very well in this lesson and all gained from the systematic approach to investigative work.
- 4 As the inspection took place at the beginning of the autumn term, inspectors included in their scrutiny the work of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils from their previous year, i.e. when they were in Year 1 and Year 5. The work scrutiny also included some work from last year's Year 2, i.e. the current Year 3. Year 6 pupils' work in mathematics

shows good progress over time. For example, high attaining pupils in September 2001 worked on the place value of numbers to 1000 and are now accurately converting fractions to decimals and percentages. Number calculations have become progressively more complex and pupils have improved their understanding of shape and measures. Year 2 pupils have also made good progress in number from simple calculations to 10, at the beginning of Year 1, to working with numbers beyond 10 including multiplication. Achievement in numeracy could have been even better if there had been less repetition in some of the work in Year 1. This suggests not enough use was made of assessments undertaken at the end of the reception year. Year 6 pupils' work in English shows improvement over time in handwriting, spelling, grammar, punctuation and different forms of writing. For example, high attaining pupils' use of apostrophes and speech marks becomes increasingly more accurate. Below average attaining pupils improve their handwriting and presentation of work. Year 6 pupils read well to inspectors and in discussion showed they had improved their reading. Year 2 pupils' achievement in writing, when they were in Year 1, was patchy and they made very uneven progress. The signs are that they should now improve more quickly. Year 6 pupils' work in science shows good achievement in scientific enquiry.

- 5 In the national tests since 1998, for pupils in Year 6, the school has made progress in all three main core subjects. In 2001, Year 6 pupils' performance, based on prior attainment in similar schools at the end of Key Stage 1, was above average in English, well above average in mathematics and average in science. These results showed that pupils had made good overall progress. The best performance was in mathematics where the percentage of pupils reaching the above average National Curriculum level 5 was close to the average of all schools. The results suggest that teaching has been good over time.

Pupils' learning is developed very effectively and their attitudes and personal development are very good.

- 5 The headteacher has given strong leadership in developing a very effective climate for learning. She and the established staff have worked hard to ensure a common approach to teaching and learning which includes treating pupils appropriately, developing a stimulating but calm and orderly environment, ensuring pupils know what is expected of them and giving them opportunities to discuss their own learning. Good learning habits are started well in the nursery where children are helped to share equipment and to work and play together sensibly. The adults in the nursery work very well together and their concern for children's personal, social and emotional development is ensuring that children settle quickly and happily. A significant feature of the inspector's brief visit to the reception class was the care shown by adults and the help given to children to develop positive relationships with others. In all lessons teachers introduce pupils to the learning objectives and at the end of lessons discuss what has been learned. In a numeracy lesson in Year 6 pupils responded very well to the chance to say how much they thought they had learned about fractions. They then played an enjoyable game which meant that the lesson ended on a high note. Pupils respond very well to opportunities to talk about their work. In a history lesson in Year 4 their oral contributions showed that they had thought carefully before speaking about the life of Henry VIII. When the teaching is particularly challenging the quality of pupils' learning is very good. For example, in a very good art and design lesson in Year 3, pupils' acquisition of artistic skills improved considerably as they responded enthusiastically to discussing a range of artists' portraits and then drew portraits of their friends. Pupils are interested in their own learning and have individual targets for

English and mathematics. These are helpful to them but often are not as precise as they could be. It is not always easy therefore for pupils to see how much they have improved.

- 6 Pupils' attitudes to learning are mainly very positive and they usually behave well. For example, they enter and leave the whole school assembly in a very quiet and orderly fashion. They also behave well in other communal areas of the school. Several pupils need help with managing their behaviour and the teachers and classroom assistants do this very successfully. The headteacher knows pupils very well and often draws them to one side to have a quiet word if necessary. Pupils talked enthusiastically to inspectors about their life and work in the school and how well they are treated. They like having an adult "mentor" who they can turn to if needed and enjoy taking on responsibility such as looking after the library. One pupil acts as a "help and safety" officer. The very good quality of relationships is evident throughout the school. Pupils are keen to learn and when their interest is captured well they listen very attentively.
- 7 Classroom assistants make a considerable and very effective contribution to pupils' learning. They are well briefed and work in close consultation with teachers. Throughout the inspection there were examples of their effective work, for instance, having a quiet word with a pupil so that they fully understand the teachers' instructions or comforting a child who is upset. In the lessons observed the assistants invariably asked well-focused questions of pupils and encouraged them to do better.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in writing are not high enough

- 8 In the national tests in writing, in 2001, the percentage of Year 2 pupils who reached the average National Curriculum level 2 or above was below the average of all, and similar, schools. No pupil reached the higher level 3. Following the test results the school sought to raise standards especially in the work of boys. The results in the 2002 tests (unvalidated) indicate that although the percentage of pupils reaching the average level increased, only one pupil reached level 3. Inspectors' scrutiny of the current Year 2 pupils' writing indicates that the standards of their work were far too low by the end of Year 1. (In last year's Year 1 pupils were taught about half of their time by a supply teacher) Examples of the writing of pupils from last year's Year 2 (currently Year 3), also show that standards were not good enough. In much of the analysed work handwriting is weak with letters often not clearly shaped. The work is sometimes incomplete, punctuation is at a basic level and there is little or no evidence of pupils developing the skills they need in order to write independently with confidence. Marking is generally inadequate because it over-praises pupils' efforts and rarely indicates what they need to do to improve.
- 9 The standard of the current Year 6 pupils' writing was broadly below average at the end of Year 5. Scrutiny of their work indicates that although they made progress over the course of Year 5 there was scope to challenge them further to help them become more confident and fluent writers. Not enough pupils write in grammatically complex sentences and the breadth of vocabulary is often too narrow. There is not enough writing at length. In pupils' writing in science opportunities for them to write independently are not regular enough. Skills in drafting and editing writing, including the use of word processing, are under-developed. The quality of handwriting is inconsistent. Marking is not sufficiently rigorous and makes little reference to pupils'

targets. The signs are that in the short time since the beginning of term standards are rising. In the literacy lesson observed during the inspection pupils' attainment was close to average overall and the good teaching ensured pupils were achieving well. However, the inspection took place before the school had begun its usual arrangements for organising pupils into ability groups across Year 5 and Year 6. Given the inspection's findings the school should monitor and review its setting arrangements.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

10 The headteacher and governors should:

(1) Raise standards in pupils' writing by:

- setting precise performance targets for individual pupils based on what they already know and can do;
- ensuring teachers' marking consistently indicates how pupils can improve their work and where possible is linked to targets;
- making sure pupils are systematically taught the skills of drafting and editing their writing, including the use of word processing;
- raising expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation, especially in Year 1 and Year 2.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	13
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	7

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	-	2	7	4	-	-	-
Percentage	-	15	54	31	-	-	-

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than seven percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	13	203
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	53

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	43

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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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
	2001	13	12	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	11	13
	Girls	10	10	11
	Total	22	21	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (84)	84 (88)	96 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	13
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	22	23	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (92)	92 (100)	92 (92)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	16	16	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	13	14
	Girls	15	13	16
	Total	24	26	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	75 (61)	81 (68)	94 (74)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	8	14
	Girls	14	12	15
	Total	26	20	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (74)	91 (74)	91 (74)
	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	167	3	1
White – Irish	-	-	-
White – any other White background	-	-	-
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	-	-	-
Mixed – White and Black African	-	-	-
Mixed – White and Asian	-	-	-
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	-	-
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	-	-
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	2	-	-
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	-	-	-
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	-	-	-
Black or Black British – Caribbean	-	-	-
Black or Black British – African	-	-	-
Black or Black British – any other Black background	-	-	-
Chinese	-	-	-
Any other ethnic group	4	-	-
No ethnic group recorded	-	-	-

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)	8.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.8
Average class size	29

Education support staff: Y R – Y6

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.54
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13
Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	452,350
Total expenditure	423,280
Expenditure per pupil	1,969
Balance brought forward from previous year	39,448
Balance carried forward to next year	68,517

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

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

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	216
Number of questionnaires returned	59

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	32	2	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	65	31	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	41	5	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	37	8	3	12
The teaching is good.	70	25	0	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	73	22	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	83	17	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	24	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	57	36	2	5	0
The school is well led and managed.	68	25	2	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	32	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	36	7	2	8