

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST MICHAEL'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Dalston, Carlisle

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112246

Headteacher: Mr S Fraser

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sonja Øyen  
7167

Dates of inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 247202

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:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Carlisle Road Dalston Carlisle Cumbria
Postcode:	CA5 7LN
Telephone number:	01228 607805
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Keyden
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Michael's is a voluntary controlled Church of England infant and junior school in the village of Dalston, three miles south of Carlisle. The school is popular and almost half of the pupils travel from the Carlisle area. The number on roll has fallen recently to 190, with smaller infant year groups. There are very few pupils from ethnic minorities and none has English as an additional language. Five per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. Most pupils have attended pre-school groups before starting in the reception class. Pupils' attainment varies on entry but is generally as expected, or better, for their age. Twenty-five pupils in the school have been identified as having special educational needs, predominantly for speech and learning difficulties. There are nine pupils who have a statement of special educational need. This is well above average for a primary school of this size. In 1999 St Michael's was awarded Community Development Centre status and public courses, such as computer studies, are held during and out of school time. The school received national achievement awards in 2001 and 2002.

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

This is a very good school giving very good value for money. Standards are higher than in most similar schools but the school's key strength is its success in providing a high quality, broad educational experience for all its pupils. The strong leadership and dedication of the headteacher, the shared sense of purpose, very effective teamwork and the high commitment of the governors, staff and parents, all combine to create an extremely positive learning atmosphere. Pupils thrive, and good, enthusiastic teaching helps them to achieve their best academically and personally.

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

- It ensures pupils develop as mature, confident, well-rounded individuals.
- It helps pupils achieve good standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they transfer to secondary school at the age of eleven.
- It provides very good quality support for pupils with special educational needs and ensures they achieve their best.
- The strong leadership of the headteacher and governors keeps the school moving forward.

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

- Pupils' achievement in writing, especially in the infant years.
- The quality of school development planning and the active role of key staff in raising standards across the school.

*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 made very good improvement and gone from strength to strength since the inspection in 1998. It has dealt effectively with the two key issues related to assessment and planning, and also with aspects for improvement raised in the report. The increased focus on analysing the gaps in pupils' learning has heightened St Michael's success in raising standards. This brought the school a national achievement award for excellence in 2001. Standards have continued to rise, particularly for the eleven year old pupils, with the school gaining its highest ever results in 2002. Strengths identified in 1998 have been sustained, namely, the very good relationships between staff and pupils, the positive climate for learning and the high quality leadership and management of the school. The headteacher has continued to give a strong direction to the work of the school and worked with staff and the community to develop new strands that now add considerably to the pupils' experience. Prime examples are the setting up of the after-school club, the shared use of the computer suite by the school and community, the work of the school council and the high emphasis on developing the pupils' awareness of citizenship. However, there is still some room for improvement in the effectiveness of subject leaders and in the specific identification of development priorities.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	A*	A	A*	A	highest 5 per cent A* well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	A*	A	A	A	
Science	A*	A	A*	A*	

The school has achieved high standards over the last few years. Pupils achieve well and those with special educational needs frequently reach the level expected for their age. Most pupils start school with knowledge and skills typical for five year olds. They reach the expected standard by the end of the reception year with many reading and doing well in number. Pupils make good progress in the infant and junior classes with rapid progress in Year 6 prompted by much very good teaching. In the current Year 6 class, where there is a high percentage of pupils with special needs in learning, standards are rising as pupils are lifting the pace of their learning. Standards are good but not as high as in previous years. In 2000, the school was in the top five per cent of all schools for English, mathematics and science as its results in the national tests for eleven year olds were so good. In 2001, the results were again well above those of most schools. In 2002, the school exceeded its targets in English, mathematics and science. For the first time, all pupils reached the level expected for their age in science and three out of four did as well as pupils two years older. This is a significant achievement for the school. Similarly, in English, the pupils' very strong performance gave the school its highest ever results. Unlike the national picture, the boys outdid the girls in reading. The good English and science results again place the school in the top five per cent of all schools. Throughout the school, pupils' easy facility with language stands them in good stead. Their ability to express themselves confidently and to give detailed explanations shows in the good quality of their work across the curriculum. However, while most seven year olds do as well as expected for their age, relatively few excel in reading and writing. They fare better in mathematics as they have a good awareness of number and of how to work out number problems. By the end of the junior years, pupils are confident in handling number and dealing with data as part of their work in all subjects. Nevertheless, few present their work to a consistently high standard. Standards are at least satisfactory in other subjects and all pupils achieve well. In information and communication technology (ICT), a significant number of pupils do better than expected for their age.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils enjoy school, are keen to learn and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; pupils show a high level of self-discipline. They act sensibly and responsibly in school and in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; pupils show concern for one another. Boys and girls of all ages and backgrounds get on extremely amicably together.
Attendance	Very good. This is well above the national average.

## 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.*

As in the last inspection, the overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The enthusiasm, commitment and the desire of all the teachers for the pupils to do well are reflected in the pupils' willingness to learn. In the reception class, the children have settled very quickly and are already making good progress because the teacher encourages them to try new things. Her delight in their achievements typifies the highly positive and responsive attitude of all the staff, which is a major factor in the pupils' learning. While there is much good, purposeful and well-prepared teaching throughout the school, the strongest teaching is for pupils in Year 6. Here the teaching is frequently very good and occasionally outstanding, especially in English. As a result, the Year 6 pupils find lessons really motivating. They make marked strides in reading, writing and number because the teacher's skilful questioning, explicit focus and interesting activities foster the pupils' ability to apply what they know and to make connections between old and new information. The same lively teaching also typifies some lessons for pupils in other years, particularly in Year 2. However, the teaching of writing in the school is not as strong as that in reading and mathematics and pupils do not achieve as well as they might. The infant teachers do not always expect enough of the pupils and in all classes, bar Year 6, the teachers do not exact high enough standards in spelling, handwriting and pupils' use of punctuation. The frequent use of worksheets does not allow pupils to develop their own ideas. A good focus on problem solving is boosting pupils' awareness of numbers. When marking pupils' writing, the teachers are very encouraging but miss chances to identify exactly what pupils have done well and to pinpoint where they need to do better. As a result, pupils do not always move on fast enough in their learning and there is some underachievement, particularly by the higher attaining pupils. This is less evident in Year 6. The teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. The teachers and support staff understand pupils' needs and plan activities carefully to ensure they make good progress towards their individual targets.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall; pupils experience a wide range of activities that offer many opportunities to develop personal interests especially in sport and music. Teachers make effective use of themes to link subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good; pupils receive good teaching and personal support in class and in periods of individual tuition. Learning programmes are well matched to individual pupils' needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good; the consistent focus on citizenship and Christian principles ensures pupils acquire a well-developed sense of themselves as individuals and as members of a community. Good links with the village ensure the pupils know about their local culture and heritage.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well; the school has very efficient and effective procedures to ensure the pupils' welfare, and personal and academic development. The teachers do not use well enough what they know about the pupils to present a high enough challenge, especially for the higher attainers.

The parents are extremely supportive of and very loyal to the school. They value what the school offers and willingly give their time and help to support their children's learning.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The very good leadership of the headteacher sets the direction and tone and high quality teamwork ensures the school runs smoothly and initiatives are followed through. Subject leaders show a high level of responsibility but are not all actively driving up standards in all classes. The school development plan does not specify well enough where improvements are needed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well; the governors are very well informed and highly supportive. They act very responsibly and ensure that all responsibilities are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good; governors and staff have a clear overview of the school's achievements. They analyse performance data but are not always sufficiently critical to identify whether progress has been good enough and exactly where improvements need to be made.
The strategic use of resources	Very good; financial planning and control are major strengths and the school makes efficient use of personnel, space and time.

Recent extensions have added rooms for group work in and out of school hours and ensured that the needs of pupils with special needs are met. The school seeks best value in its purchases and services, sets challenging targets and compares itself critically with others. Governors are conscious of the need to sustain the number on roll and are actively promoting St Michael's in the local area.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They find the school and staff very welcoming – it is easy to voice concerns.</li> <li>• The teaching is good and their children are expected to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school helps their children to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• Their children like school and enjoy lessons.</li> </ul>	<p>A small percentage of parents raised the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to keep them informed about how their children are getting on, especially               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the timing of the summer term meeting;</li> <li>– access to the reception classroom.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection team fully endorse the parents' positive views which neatly summarise what the school does well. The school does more than many other primaries to offer activities out of lessons but makes fewer visits to places of educational interest. The school keeps parents well informed about their children's progress. Annual reports are extremely detailed. The headteacher is looking at ways to reschedule the summer term meeting and to ensure parents of reception children know they can see their children's work at any time.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **It ensures pupils develop as mature, confident, well-rounded individuals**

1. St Michael's is very effective in promoting the pupils' personal development and parents value this as highly as the school's success in gaining good academic standards. The team fully agree with parents who, in comments on the questionnaires, at the meeting before and in conversations with inspectors during the inspection, praised the way the school encourages their children "to be individuals, to know where they are going" (a parent's comment endorsed by others). Many justifiably highlighted the happy atmosphere in the school and their choice of St Michael's because "it felt so right, warm, friendly and caring for the children."
2. As judged in the previous inspection in 1998, the school has a very positive Christian ethos. The headteacher's quiet, unassuming but nonetheless powerful presence throughout the school sets the tone. In school assemblies, he uses stories and experiences to reinforce pupils' understanding of personal qualities like trust and responsibility. His genuine, strong interest in the pupils and their achievements is echoed in the concern of all the staff and in their willingness to listen to pupils, to discuss with them any concerns and to share their successes. Pupils appreciate the time that the staff give to them and show a high level of trust and warm affection for them.
3. These very good relationships start in the reception class. The first day of the inspection coincided with the first full day of school for the reception year children, but it was very noticeable how easily the children settled in to the routines of the school. They were already familiar with the layout of the classroom from their half-days in school and showed much self-assurance in organising themselves and taking care of their own needs. Behind this was the warm encouragement of the teacher and support staff. The teacher was quick to pre-empt possible problems, such as fears about going out of the classroom to the toilet, by asking other children to show the way and by praising them on their return. All the staff talked to the children as equals and drew them easily into conversation. The children were very willing to sit on the 'magic carpet' and to stop and listen when the teacher rubbed her 'magic ring'. These strategies placed all the children at their ease and the development of their self-confidence and concentration was very marked. The children were interested in the activities, very willing to participate and often highly engaged because the adults chatted to them and showed a keen interest in what they had to say. For example, when making salt dough cakes with an adult's help, the children talked at length about what they did at home and the special cakes they had for birthdays. Similarly, having spent their first lunchtime with other pupils in the school, the teacher gave them time to talk about their experiences and to hear about 'the big friends' they had made.
4. The older pupils take a keen interest in the welfare of the younger ones. They relish being given responsibility but also help out spontaneously and show a good level of initiative. Their good manners and thoughtful behaviour are a direct reflection of the school's way of working. The staff expect the pupils to be polite, well behaved and respectful of others. They are quick to reprimand but this is often in the form of personal disappointment that pupils have not done as they know they should. Likewise, the staff set good examples in the way they thank pupils and express their pleasure in what the pupils do well. At the end of many lessons, the teachers thanked the pupils for their co-operation, industry and success in completing the given task. Similarly, at the end of the day, pupils often left school knowing they had pleased the teacher by working hard and were looking forward with the teacher to what the next day would bring.

5. Pupils are also encouraged to appreciate their role as one of a community. Year 1 pupils, deciding on the food and drink to take on a picnic, began to realise that individual choices could not always be accommodated when the majority wanted something else. Year 2 pupils showed a good understanding of the need for rules when discussing life in the playground. They discussed cause and effect and began to formulate simple rules such as, 'Do not climb on the wall' and 'Help someone who has fallen'. All showed great disappointment when the lesson came to an end but responded positively. Many spontaneously picked up litter on the floor and helped others to tidy things away.
6. The introduction of a school council has given pupils the opportunity to share in the decisions taken about the school. Pupils understand the need to elect council members and the Year 6 pupils thought carefully how to 'sell' their qualities as prospective councillors. The school makes good use of the knowledge, expertise and skills of staff, governors and parents to introduce pupils to how others live and how society works. For example, one parent has shared her Japanese heritage with pupils, and a governor has taken older juniors to the police station and magistrates' court to alert them to the process of dealing with those who break the law. The school also plays its part in village life. Pupils are well used to seeing adults taking courses in the computer suite and to making visits to the village for different events. Having baked bread and cakes to serve local elderly residents as part of their programme of personal, social and health education, Year 6 pupils enjoyed a return visit to have lunch with their 'old' friends.
7. A strong element in how the school works is the development of pupils' awareness of themselves, their skills and their achievements. Some of this is done through lessons in personal, social and emotional education. Year 3 pupils had willingly brought items from home to explain what they liked doing and made them special people. By referring to items such as favourite books, football scarves and binoculars for bird spotting, the pupils found out about each other. This interest is also fostered through many of the school's day-to-day procedures. The teachers give constant oral feedback to pupils on how well they are doing and frequently make positive comments in their books. 'Good work' assemblies provide an opportunity for staff to celebrate the pupils' achievements in and out of school. Pupils are proud to earn commendations from the headteacher and to gain points for their school house. The friendly rivalry between the four school houses also extends to those who captain them. Last year, Year 6 pupils used their ICT skills very effectively to produce multi-media presentations on how to be elected house captain.
8. The pupils know how well they are doing personally and also know that their efforts are valued. This is highly evident in the very detailed, extensive and highly personal comments by all teachers in the annual reports for parents on their children's progress. Year 6 pupils are also asked to reflect on their experiences, to highlight their successes and to outline their hopes for the future. The high quality of their reports is a fitting culmination of the strong emphasis and commitment given by the Year 6 teacher to boosting the pupils' self-awareness and their belief in their own abilities. In lessons, the teacher challenged the Year 6 pupils; she pushed them to think for themselves, to offer ideas, to talk about their thinking and to take increasing responsibility for their own learning. Comments such as, "Come on, think again!" prompt the pupils to persevere, and when talking to the class, the teacher's smile along with "Stand and deliver!" encourage pupils to project their voice and consider the needs of their audience. When they do so they are richly praised and made to feel special. As a result, pupils are quietly confident and very willing to improve.
9. Year 6 pupils work very hard and develop in personal maturity as well as maturity of style in their work. For example, several pupils in year 6 last year, in summaries of their final year, commented that they realised how much the hard work had paid off as they felt they had done their best in the national tests. They also commented on how much they had enjoyed all the other activities the school offered and been well supported along the way. Many proudly noted their, and the school's, achievements in sport and music, and their growing expertise in ICT reflected in their success in gaining certificates of competence.

10. Pupils leave St Michael's very well equipped to deal with life at secondary school. Their aims for the future are well founded on a secure knowledge of what they have achieved in the past.

**It helps pupils achieve good standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they transfer to secondary school at the age of eleven.**

11. The school's results for eleven year olds in the national tests have been well above the national average for the last three years. In 2001 the school gained an achievement award for excellence as its results in 2000 placed it in the top five per cent of all schools. St Michael's has kept pace with the national upward trend and also kept ahead of schools in similar contexts. In 2002, the school has achieved its highest results. Nearly all pupils have attained the level expected for their age, and a significant percentage have done better in reading, writing and mathematics. In science, the school has, for the first time, enabled all pupils to reach the level expected of eleven year olds. This significant achievement is even more marked by the fact that 77 per cent of pupils have actually attained higher levels, and for the second year running, a pupil has attained a very high standard.
12. The good results underline the school's prestigious position in relation to all and similar schools in achieving good standards. The results also reflect the pupils' good, and in many cases, very good achievement, especially in Year 6 where the pupils respond very positively to the teacher's very high expectations of them. Given their attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 2, most pupils from last year's Year 6 class have made more progress than expected in the junior years. The school's own evidence from tracking pupils' progress confirms that many do better than expected. Boys and girls do equally well in progress and on average are well ahead of pupils nationally when they move to secondary school.
13. When compared with national trends, the boys do well in English, especially in reading. The pattern of this year's results is a good example. All the eleven year old boys have reached the level expected for their age, with more than twice the national percentage attaining higher levels. The girls have also done well but not so well when compared with girls nationally.
14. Pupils get off to a good start in reading in the reception class and Year 1, much helped by parents who are very willing to hear their children read at home and to help them learn new words. Pupils regularly take books home and select from a good range of texts. They are generally confident, fluent readers who enjoy a good story as well as finding information in non-fiction books, CD-ROMs and on the Internet. Year 2 pupils concentrated well and spent time happily looking at books and sharing what they found out to support their work on the topic of 'My body'. They also enjoyed being word detectives to find words containing 'oo'. Year 3 pupils worked hard to improve their reading of a play based on the tale of 'Rumpelstiltskin' as the teacher used her subject knowledge well to refer them to key features in the script that were clues to how they should add characterisation. Ploys such as author of the week ensure pupils become familiar with children's classics as well as current favourites. By Year 6, pupils tackle new texts with confidence. They use their good general knowledge as well as knowledge of English to work out unfamiliar words and phrases, and show a good level of understanding of nuance and style.
15. Since 1998, in response to a key issue, the school has developed the ways it assesses pupils' learning and strengthened the setting of targets for classes and individuals in English and mathematics. This has helped the teachers to identify common gaps in pupils' learning and to focus on what the pupils need to know. For example, in mathematics the staff are aware of the common need to develop the pupils' skills in seeing number relationships and in solving number problems in a range of ways. The introduction throughout the school of weekly problems, such as Year 4 pupils having to find as many different ways as possible to make 20, is developing pupils' confidence to use what they know and to apply even more lateral thinking. Pupils had given not only simple addition and subtraction of two numbers, but were beginning to investigate patterns including  $100 - 40 = 40$ . Year 6 pupils' work on 19 showed an

impressive range of possibilities that included the use of brackets, factorials, fractions and decimals. It is such good application of number knowledge that has lifted standards over the last few years.

16. The gains in pupils' mathematical knowledge are a direct reflection of systematic, purposeful teaching. The teachers have good subject knowledge and follow the guidance in the National Numeracy Strategy to structure their lessons. Pupils make really good progress when the task is rooted in a realistic context. The Year 6 boys and girls were highly motivated by having to follow clues to work out problems including the arrival times of 'Doctor Strange', a character invented by the class teacher. All worked with a will to apply their number knowledge to eliminate numbers from a grid. They used relevant mathematical terms to explain their strategies and because the teacher pressed them to try again when they made an error, many realised where they had gone wrong. This skilled prompting and questioning, not as evident in other classes, is a key reason why pupils do so well in Year 6.

**It provides very good quality support for pupils with special educational needs and ensures they achieve their best.**

17. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Parents of pupils with special needs value highly the way the school endeavours to help their children develop as fast and as far as they can. They also appreciate the way the school ensures that their children's needs are dealt with sensitively and unobtrusively in class and in withdrawal groups when appropriate. The school and parents work closely together. Parents play their part in attending the review meetings and in discussing with school and specialist staff what they can do to support their children's learning.
18. Several key strands account for the effective provision. The management of special needs is very good. The co-ordinator is highly effective and efficient. She makes good use of her limited hours to work with pupils, to liaise with staff and to evaluate provision. She is very knowledgeable about specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, and in how to apply the principles of the Reading Recovery Programme to support those pupils who lag behind in reading. This places her in a strong position to advise class teachers on strategies to develop literacy skills and resources to use. She knows well the needs of all the 25 pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and works closely with class teachers and support staff to ensure that all pupils receive their full entitlement. The school has nine pupils with statements of special need and governors have made certain, through adaptations to the building and through the employment of staff, that the school is well able to meet pupils' physical, emotional and learning needs.
19. The co-ordinator has been quick off the mark to revise the school policy and to reflect in practice the recent revisions to national guidance. She has advised all staff on what the revisions mean for them and has already developed the process of consulting pupils about how well they think they are doing in achieving their targets. Pupils' individual learning plans are of good quality. The co-ordinator advises class teachers on realistic, short-term targets for each pupil. The targets are related to pupils' specific needs and show how they may be met within the context of lessons and classroom life. The move to include numeracy targets in programmes has heightened class teachers' awareness of pupils' individual strengths and how to deal with areas of concern.
20. The teachers actively take pupils' targets into account in their lesson planning. They ensure that pupils have adult support when appropriate and also tailor their questions to ensure all pupils participate as fully as they can. For example, in a mathematics lesson, when a pupil struggled to answer a question, the teacher rephrased it and then allowed thinking time before returning to the pupil for the correct answer. Similarly, prompts such as "Make sure you are estimating first" not only ensured that one pupil with special needs got off to a good start but also prompted others to amend what they were doing. In ICT lessons, the teachers often use

the strategy of pairing pupils so that one may tutor the other. This worked extremely well for one older junior who gained huge satisfaction from completing a task that needed step-by-step explanation and demonstration.

21. In a good session led by the co-ordinator, infant pupils made good progress in using a range of strategies to read a new book. Through her comments and prompts the co-ordinator led the pupils to self-correct, to use analogies and to break words into segments. This mirrored the content of their individual learning plans. It was a very good example of how the school recognises that pupils' progress is best prompted by short sessions of intensive learning with highly structured support to help pupils acquire key skills and useful strategies. Teachers and support staff are very effective in focusing pupils' concentration and in praising them for their effort.
22. The teachers and co-ordinator regularly assess the pupils' progress. In the reception class, the teacher and support staff make very good use of daily observations to log significant information. This is building a reflective, comprehensive overview of pupils' progress, particularly those pupils with statements of particular need.
23. The school is aware that standards may not be as high in 2003 as a significantly higher than average percentage of Year 6 pupils have been identified as having special needs. Although the governors have agreed targets lower than in 2002, they and the teaching staff are not complacent and are determined to help pupils do as well as they can. This was very evident in lessons during the inspection. The Year 6 class teacher was often highly successful in injecting pace into the pupils' learning and in defining with pupils the most helpful strategies to help them succeed.

**The strong leadership of the headteacher and governors keeps the school moving forward.**

24. As in 1998, the leadership and the efficiency of the school are very good. The governors, headteacher and staff share an honest wish to make the school the best it can be for the pupils. They all work in harmony to sustain the best quality of education, to make improvements where warranted and to introduce new elements when it is felt they are to the benefit of all. This pragmatic approach has ensured the school has sustained its strengths and worked on the areas for improvement identified in the 1998 inspection. It has largely dealt successfully with them and also acquired new areas of expertise. The very good overall improvement reflects the astute and well-reasoned judgements of the headteacher and governors about what is best for the school and how to make the most effective use of a decreasing budget in real terms due to fewer pupils on roll. Governors closely monitor spending patterns and actively seek additional funding to enrich the curriculum. The award of monies from the foot-and-mouth recovery fund allowed the school to use the skills of a visiting artist to help the pupils design, make and display clay tiles that reflect the life of the community.
25. The headteacher is a strong leader and is highly committed to the school and the community. He leads by example and is highly visible around school at key times of the day to greet parents and pupils and to deal with issues as they arise. His extremely good organisational skills and his ability to think through what needs to be done ensured that the school was well prepared for the inspection. The headteacher has been a key factor in sustaining high morale in the school and in ensuring that change has been managed successfully. He has maintained the school's highly positive ethos while working to manage curriculum change and to develop other areas of strength. A good example is the work of the Community Development Centre, which is now managed by trained staff but initially was managed by the headteacher and involved other senior members of staff in providing training and support for the adult learners.

26. The school has an effective, well-established system of shared school management and nominated leadership when the headteacher is out of school. The staff work extremely well as a team. The headteacher sets the direction and works with the staff to develop ideas and agree priorities. As subject leaders, all the teachers, including the headteacher, follow the action identified in their subject improvement plans and place an emphasis on keeping their knowledge up-to-date. A good example is the way the teachers have increased their ICT expertise and skills so that they are very confident in teaching ICT and in using ICT as part of teaching and learning across the curriculum. Their success is mirrored in the success of all the Year 2 and 6 pupils in attaining local education authority certificates of competence. The co-ordinator for ICT is conscious of the need to raise the challenge for the junior pupils who have good ICT skills and has realistic plans to widen the training for staff and to extend the range of equipment in use. Similarly, governors are aware of the possible links with other schools and agencies through the school's website, and the way that the site can help to make the school even more well known.
27. The governors are very well informed about the work of the school. Many are involved in the school on a day-to-day basis and also have regular contact with subject leaders. They are also aware of the outcomes of the school council and sanction suggestions such as pupils' use of equipment outside at break times. The chair of governors makes good use of the committees to deal with aspects of the school's work and then to bring key elements to the attention of the full governing body. The chair of governors, the headteacher and other staff worked very well together to compile the very detailed headteacher's statement that formed part of the inspection documentation. This was a good example of the partnership and evaluative approach taken to school leadership. The headteacher and subject leaders keep the governors well informed about curriculum developments, ongoing concerns and school achievements. For example, governors are very aware of the possible fall in standards in 2003 and of the need to use pupils' progress as an indicator of the value added by the school. They are keen for the school to achieve the 'Healthy School' standard and to continue to provide as wide a curriculum as possible.
28. The headteacher, staff and governors share a common purpose to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can, not only in academic subjects but also in personal interests and skills. There is a very clear commitment by all who work in the school to high achievement. The governors and headteacher are looking ahead to possible changes and developments and how best to meet them. They set their own challenges in seeking high calibre people to work with the pupils but see this as essential as well as desirable in sustaining the high quality of the school's work.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Pupils' achievement in writing, especially in the infant years**

29. Although the school's results were well above average for the Year 6 pupils in the 2002 national tests in writing, the quality of the content and presentation of writing in pupils' books do not indicate similarly high standards throughout the school. Most pupils attain the level expected nationally for their age but do not always achieve as well as they might. For example, most Year 2 pupils this year attained the level expected for their age but many only just did so. The percentage doing well for their age was well below the average of similar schools. In 2001, the percentage was also below average. The good standard reached at the end of the junior years shows how well pupils can do. A scrutiny of pupils' work across the year groups, a review of teachers' planning and assessments of pupils' writing along with lessons seen, indicate several key factors that contribute to the pattern of under-achievement for too many pupils in writing.
30. The problem in writing does not lie in the pupils' inability to compose what they want to write. In speaking, listening and reading, pupils achieve well. They are fluent speakers who use a good

range of vocabulary. Reception children were quick to offer a range of synonyms for 'grumpy' and to suggest what the bear might be saying to reflect the look on his face in the picture. Some already know how to write their name and the names and sounds of letters of the alphabet. Such knowledge was also evident in the work of reception children last year. However, the school is not building sufficiently well on this good foundation. Children in last year's reception class practised handwriting skills and copied adults' writing, but there was less to show that they had been actively encouraged to have a go at writing and to write as part of their play or as a natural part of classroom life. At the end of the reception year, many were still in the very early stages of writing and higher attaining children were not confident in writing independently. The teacher's expectations of what the children could achieve were not high enough and there were too many missed chances to involve the children in writing and to show them what to do.

31. Pupils' writing in Years 1 to 5 also points to a few gaps in teaching expertise. Pupils make satisfactory progress in writing at greater length and in writing for different purposes since the teachers often give them good, meaningful reasons for writing. For example, Year 2 pupils produced leaflets on Dalston Park as well as a non-fiction book about the Titanic, mini-books on stories including 'The Enormous Crocodile' and a diary entry on the death of the Queen Mother. However, the pupils do not make enough progress in developing the quality and effectiveness of what they write nor in the accuracy of spelling, grammar and punctuation. The potential of pupils in several year groups to do well, as seen in their work in the spring term, had not always been fully realised in the summer term. This was because pupils had not received enough guidance on how to shape and structure their writing to lift their attainment.
32. Pupils are well used to copying out by hand, or on the computer, work that the teacher has corrected but there is little evidence to show that pupils are systematically taught the skills needed to revise and improve the structure and content of their writing drafts. In the lessons seen, the focus was more on reading than writing but chances were missed to demonstrate the links between reading and the writing process. For example, Year 3 pupils, well motivated by the teacher's exploration of the verb 'to boast' went on to find other powerful verbs in a text and to discuss their impact. Chances were missed to list these verbs for future reference when pupils were writing. On other occasions, writing becomes an oral rather than a visual process. Year 5 pupils wrote their own poems to a given structure. When they read them out to the class at the end of the lesson, the teacher did not do enough to show pupils effective writing structures such as alliteration.
33. The poor presentation of work from some pupils in many year groups, and the drop in quality of presentation and content in pupils' writing in the summer term – more so in the higher attaining pupils' work – show that the teachers are not insisting enough on a high standard in how pupils are to set out and present their work. While many pupils write carefully and neatly in handwriting books, their writing is often less well formed in other books. The teachers do not always comment on this in their marking. They mark pupils' work regularly and often give positive comments, but do not refer enough to how the pupils might improve their work. As a result, pupils tend to repeat the same error or fail to make progress in developing the quality of their writing.
34. In line with national guidance, the teachers have set curriculum targets for writing. However, they are not all gearing their teaching sufficiently well to ensure the pupils achieve the targets. The teachers rely heavily on a commercial scheme to structure the content for pupils but when they use their own ideas the quality of the pupils' work is often better. Not enough consideration has been taken of recent national guidance on effective practice, such as the publications 'Developing early writing' and 'Grammar for writing' which are specially designed to support teaching in relation to targets in writing.

**The quality of school development planning and the active role of key staff in raising standards across the school.**

35. The school improvement/development plan for 2002/3 outlines the priorities within the financial year and gives an overview of the direction forward for the next few years. It is well founded on the vision of the headteacher, and the views of the staff, governors, parents and pupils, and sets out a programme of improvements in keeping with the school's mission statement "to provide a high quality education ...". The school has been very effective to date in drawing up improvement plans to raise standards at the end of the junior years. The current plan indicates relevant areas of focus and activity plans but they are not specific enough in where the 'gap' and 'dip' areas are and what specifically needs to be done to make improvements. The school plan gives too little detail on the exact action to be taken, the time plan anticipated to achieve the success criteria, the resources needed to ensure that each activity plan can be implemented effectively, and the ways in which all will be monitored.
36. The school makes good use of specialist expertise to analyse, compare and contrast test results. This gives a good overview of performance but governors, the headteacher and senior staff are not yet making the most effective use of other available information about teaching and learning and pupils' performance to analyse critically where improvements are necessary. A good example is the lack of a specific, concerted action plan to raise pupils' achievement in writing. The literacy plan refers only to the development of the use of literacy targets with the aim "to raise standards even higher in the different areas of literacy". There is no indication of how much higher, in which year groups and in which elements of literacy. Similarly, the absence of action plans for reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, the use of punctuation and grammar, with specific intentions and strategies to achieve them, makes it hard for the subject leader to initiate action and to evaluate improvement. It also makes it difficult for the governors to monitor the impact of action taken and to evaluate the effectiveness of money and time spent. Minutes of governors' meetings give little information on the progress being made in relation to key school priorities and similarly, the headteacher's reports to the governors make little reference to the effectiveness of action to date and where changes may need to be made.
37. To add to existing good systems to monitor and evaluate the overall quality of what it offers, the school is beginning to use a formal process of self-evaluation. The honest evaluation by the literacy and mathematics subject leaders shows they feel the school is still in the stages of establishing and enhancing key evaluation procedures, including the monitoring of the quality of teaching. The school has established the pattern of subject leaders having days out of the classroom to work on their action plan but this time is not used as well as it could be to give leaders an overview of standards in their subject across the school, or to see how well agreed action is having the desired impact.
38. A good example has been set by the mathematics co-ordinator in analysing pupils' responses in the 2002 national and school tests to identify where improvements are needed. This process has highlighted continuing gaps in pupils' strategies to deal with number and in their application of mathematical knowledge. As a result, curriculum amendments have been suggested and staff have been advised on strategies and resources to use. However, this process relies heavily on other staff knowing how to put this into operation. The teachers conscientiously attend courses but less is done to ensure that all put agreed practice into effect to raise the quality of teaching and learning.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

39. In order to strengthen further the quality of education and standards achieved, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- raise pupils' achievements in writing by
- identifying areas of common weakness;
- setting out a clear action plan for improvement;
- sharing existing good practice;
- lifting teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve;
- enhancing teachers' skills in developing pupils' writing;

(paragraphs 29-34)

- improve the quality of development planning by
- evaluating more critically performance data and information from monitoring to identify exactly where improvements are needed;
- ensuring that subject leaders take an active lead in directing the programme of improvement and evaluating its impact.

(paragraphs 35-38)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	30
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	4	14	11	0	0	0
Percentage	3	13	47	37	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 three percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR-Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	190
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	25

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
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	*	14	*

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	*	*	*
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90(90)	90(90)	95(94)
	National	84(84)	86(86)	91(90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	*	*	*
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90(94)	90(90)	95(88)
	National	85(85)	89(89)	89(89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	19	16	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	18	19
	Girls	14	15	16
	Total	33	33	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94(97)	94(87)	100(97)
	National	75(75)	73(71)	96(87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	19	19
	Girls	14	15	15
	Total	33	34	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94(87)	97(84)	97(90)
	National	73(72)	74(74)	82(82)

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

\*Because fewer than ten boys and fewer than ten girls took the tests the numbers at each level are omitted from the tables in line with the governors reporting arrangements to parents.

**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	186	0	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	0	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	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	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)	8.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.59
Average class size	27.14

### **Education support staff: YR-Y6**

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	103

*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	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.*

## **Financial information**

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	436975
Total expenditure	441516
Expenditure per pupil	2287
Balance brought forward from previous year	-1414
Balance carried forward to next year	-5955

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

188

Number of questionnaires returned

89

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	41	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	43	1	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	43	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	53	2	0	6
The teaching is good.	69	27	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	41	8	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	22	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	31	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	52	41	5	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	67	31	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	31	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	48	6	0	6

*The figures may not total 100 due to rounding up.*