

INSPECTION REPORT

**HOLM CULTRAM ABBEY CE PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Abbey Town, Wigton

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112249

Headteacher: Mr D Mountain

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sonja Øyen
7167

Dates of inspection: 16 - 17 September 2002

Inspection number: 247203

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

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:	Abbey Town Wigton Cumbria
Postcode:	CA7 4RU
Telephone number:	016973 61261
Fax number:	016973 61309
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Frances McIntyre
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
7167	Mrs Sonja Øyen	Registered inspector
13459	Mrs Eva Mills	Lay inspector
22740	Mrs Margaret Leah	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
Strathblane House
Ashfield Road
Cheadle
Stockport
SK8 1BB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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	14
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	17
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	18

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Holm Cultram Abbey is a small voluntary controlled Church of England infant and junior school in Abbey Town, six miles west of Wigton. Since the last inspection in 1997, infant and junior classes have been housed in one building. The local public library is also placed in the school and the Pre-school group has a building on the school site. There are 51 girls and 41 boys but the numbers vary considerably in each year group. Apart from the class of ten reception year pupils, the classes have mixed year groups. While many pupils live close by, one in four travels from villages and outlying farms. A higher percentage of pupils than seen nationally join or leave the school during the year. No pupil is from an ethnic minority. Eight per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than average. One in four pupils, similar to the national average, is identified as having special educational needs. Three pupils have a statement of special educational need and five others receive support from external agencies, predominantly for moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Before joining the reception year most pupils attend the Pre-school group. On entry to school, pupils' attainment varies but is generally as expected for their age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Holm Cultram is a good village school that provides good value for money. It is a happy school that is successful in meeting its aim of being "a community in which everyone is valued and everyone values each other". The school is particularly effective in developing pupils' self-confidence and their ability to get on with others regardless of their background. This reflects the good, caring leadership of the headteacher, the commitment of the staff to the pupils and the pupils' enjoyment of what they do at school. Much good teaching ensures all pupils make good progress over time. Standards are better than in many similar schools, especially in reading. The school's good partnership with the parents enriches the range of experiences for pupils.

What the school does well

- Boys and girls of all ages get on well together. They are confident and enjoy school.
- Good teaching and interesting tasks ensure the infant pupils get off to a good start in writing.
- Pupils make good progress over time and many achieve well.
- Parents' help is welcomed and pupils benefit from their support in and out of class.

What could be improved

- The achievement of the higher attaining pupils in science.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a teaching and learning tool across the curriculum.
- The use of information to decide how well the school is doing.

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 good improvement since the inspection in 1997. It has sustained the strengths identified then and been largely successful in remedying the weaknesses. The school is now unified in one building and there is a good, family feel and sense of common purpose. The hall, grounds, adventure playground and garden areas now provide good space for indoor and outdoor physical activities for all the pupils. The school also has access to the library room when it is closed to the public. An increased focus on identifying exactly what pupils are to learn has helped to boost their progress. Standards have risen significantly since 1997, especially in English and science, and brought the school two achievement awards. Standards are rising in ICT as the pupils have hands-on computer experience under the supervision of trained helpers. Although the headteacher still has a heavy teaching

commitment, he now gives time to evaluating the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. While this has helped to improve the focus for school improvement, subject coordinators and governors are not all clear about how well the school is doing, what needs to be done and how it may best be achieved.

STANDARDS

No table of standards comparing Holm Cultram with other schools is included, as in 2001 the number of boys in Year 2 and the number of girls in Year 6 were fewer than ten. As the number of pupils varies year to year, it makes statistical comparisons difficult and unrealistic. For example, in 2002, each Year 2 pupil accounted for almost 13 per cent of the year group.

Since 1997, standards have risen gradually. In 2001, the good achievement of the Year 6 pupils in English, mathematics and science took the school's results well above the national average and that of similar schools. This was a notable achievement for the school and also for the pupils who made very good progress in their junior years. In English, their progress was outstanding. Inspection findings indicate that pupils are making good progress over time in all subjects. School evidence shows that many pupils meet or exceed their predicted results. Most pupils reach the standard expected for their age at seven and 11, and many do better than this, especially in reading. This was reflected in the school's good results in the 2002 national tests when half of the seven and 11 year olds did really well in reading. The school has been successful in meeting its target in English as systematic, good teaching helps the pupils to focus on what they need to know. Support for pupils with special needs in literacy enables them to make at least satisfactory progress towards their targets, and often to do as well as expected for their age, especially in reading.

The school is aware that standards in writing, mathematics and science could be even higher. This year there was some high attainment in writing in Year 2 - a first for the school. Standards in writing in Year 6 were similar to the national average but there was little high attainment. As seen nationally, the boys' skills fall short of the girls' in spelling and in expressing themselves fluently and accurately. In mathematics, the infant pupils are doing well in using different strategies to deal with number, but a significant percentage of junior pupils are slow in dealing with number mentally and in applying what they know to solve problems. The school did not meet its target for mathematics in 2002. Most pupils have good scientific knowledge. They remember scientific facts well but the junior pupils are less secure in knowing how to carry out their own investigations. Higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough nor given the opportunity to test out their own ideas. In the 2002 national tests, the high attainment of 2001 was not sustained.

Standards are rising in ICT. The infant pupils are doing as well as others of the same age in other schools. The junior pupils' confidence in trying new things is helping them to make up experiences missed in previous years and bringing their attainment close to that expected for their age.

The reception year children are making satisfactory progress in counting, learning letters and having a go at writing. They are also generally doing as well as expected for their age in knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and in creative development.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils enjoy school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; pupils behave well in and out of class. They are polite, courteous and generally follow the rules.
Personal development and relationships	Good; relationships are very good between boys and girls of different ages. Pupils develop good self-confidence and a mature approach but do not always have enough chances to organise their own learning.

Attendance	Good.
------------	-------

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Good teaching overall helps the pupils to make good strides in their learning over time. The teaching seen in the junior classes during the inspection was satisfactory. However, evidence from pupils' work, progress records and teachers' planning indicates that teaching overall is good. In English and mathematics, systematic teaching enables the pupils to make good progress over time.

As expected at the beginning of a new school year, the teachers were settling pupils into class routines and getting to know what pupils knew and could do. In the junior classes, this meant that occasionally pupils were not being challenged enough and the pace was too slow to boost their learning. Lively, good teaching for the Year 1 and 2 pupils is accelerating their learning especially in reading and writing.

A key strength of the teaching is the adults' warmth of relationships and their interest in the pupils as individuals. This is very evident in the reception class where the children have settled quickly. The teachers are conscientious in their planning and preparation of lessons. They make good use of national guidance in literacy and numeracy to set targets for pupils and to plan pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory; the good range of linked and often exciting activities for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is not so evident in other classes.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory; the adults give the pupils much time and personal support but do not always provide resources best suited to their needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good; the staff are very skilled in developing the pupils' ability to get on with everyone, irrespective of their background, and to celebrate their achievements. The school takes part in local events and uses opportunities, such as a Japanese visitor, to widen pupils' awareness of other cultures, beliefs and values.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall; every pupil is valued and the teachers know the pupils well. They do not make the most of information and data about pupils' progress to support their learning and development fully.

The parents are very supportive of the school and help in many ways to support their children's learning and improve the quality of what the school offers. Staff are vigilant about pupils' welfare but the school does not meet all legal requirements in health and safety procedures and documents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher sets a positive, calm tone and leads the team in bringing about improvements. Subject managers are more tentative in initiating change and developing school improvement programmes.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are supportive but not all responsibilities are met in ensuring the school has necessary documentation.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory; the governors and staff are starting to make critical use of performance data to analyse how well the school is doing and to hold key staff to full account.
The strategic use of resources	Good; governors are drawing on reserve funds to enable Year 5 and 6 pupils to be taught separately for English and mathematics. Good use is made of the ICT suite and space throughout the school.

The pupils benefit from good outdoor facilities and the school is well maintained. The school seeks best value in goods and services, sets challenging targets and seeks the views of pupils and parents. The evaluation of the impact of spending on teaching and standards is not so well developed.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is friendly and their children like it. Parents feel comfortable approaching the school with problems and concerns. • The teaching is good; the children are expected to work hard and they make good progress. • The school is well led and managed. • Their children are helped to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons. • The frequency and amount of information on how well their children are doing. • The partnership with parents. • The regularity and amount of homework.

Six out of ten parents returned the questionnaire and 13 came to the meeting. Inspectors agree with the parents' positive views but feel their concerns are not fully justified. The school has responded to their comments and issued new guidance on homework. As so many pupils travel by school bus the range of after school activities is understandably limited. The school does as much as others to keep parents informed and involved, but the headteacher is considering ways to develop these aspects.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Boys and girls of all ages get on well together. They are confident and enjoy school.

1. At the meeting with the lead inspector and in their response to the questionnaires, parents commented positively on the good relationships between the pupils and also between the pupils and the staff. They know their children enjoy school and have many friends, often from different year groups. This is a good testament to the school's success in helping all the pupils to get on with each other irrespective of their social background and differing lifestyles.
2. Holm Cultram Abbey School is similar to many rural schools in that there is a mix of pupils from local, well established families and pupils who join the school during the infant and junior years as their families move into the area. However, the movement of pupils is higher than seen in many schools. Last year ten pupils left (10 per cent of the school) and five joined. This meant that some year groups experienced significant changes not only in numbers but also in friendship patterns. Similarly, although there is almost an equal number of boys and girls in the school, the balance in year groups is very uneven. For example, in Year 4 the boys outnumber the girls by three to one. Nevertheless, these aspects are not noticeable in classroom and school daily life. All the pupils get on well together. They accept one another as part of the school family and show an interest in what "the family" does. They were particularly thoughtful in opening doors and placing chairs to help a classmate who was using crutches after an accident.
3. Since the last inspection the closure of the infant building and subsequent housing of all pupils in the extended junior building has given the school a clear identity. The headteacher and staff commented on initial teething problems as the junior and infant pupils gradually got used to being together but the junior pupils clearly now enjoy playing with and looking after younger ones. During the inspection Year 6 pupils showed a mature attitude in checking on the reception children at playtimes. There was much laughter as they pretended to be scared when the five year olds chased them around the playground. They also helped them to get used to the school rules, such as queuing to have a turn on the swings. Although the reception children had only been in school two weeks they showed much confidence and assurance in choosing what they wanted to do and following school and classroom routines. They sat contentedly to listen to stories and sing songs, and played happily together in "The bears' cave". Their self-assurance reflected not only their teacher's positive encouragement to try things but also the relaxed atmosphere which pervades the whole school.
4. In all year groups the pupils know what is expected of them. The staff allow the pupils to show and take initiative, especially in the day-to-day organisation and general running of the class and school. For example, Year 6 pupils run the School Council and seek the views of pupils in each year group as to what they would like to see changed or developed. They also act as monitors in checking those who use the school bus and organising equipment for assemblies and lessons. Year 1 and 2 pupils are proud to be "Busy Bees" and help the teacher by giving out and collecting resources or checking on the weather to see if they need to wear coats outside.

5. Pupils generally behave well. Older junior pupils commented on occasional outbursts from some that temporarily affect friendships but they did not identify any incidents of bullying. In lessons seen, boys and girls worked well together. When their interest was caught, they worked industriously. For example, in a handwriting lesson, Year 5 boys were really motivated by the teacher's challenge to "*let it flow*" and upped their pace while still trying to keep their writing neat. Similarly, excited boys and girls in Years 3 and 4 concentrated hard and cooperated well to allocate roles as they dropped water onto different papers to test absorbency.
6. The "I can do it" programme and system of gold, silver and bronze awards is helping to raise pupils' awareness of the role they have to play in achieving their own success. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 had some good ideas for a "Charter of Behaviour" when they discussed individual and group rights and responsibilities in relation to behaviour in class and school.

Good teaching and interesting tasks ensure the infant pupils get off to a good start in writing.

7. Scrutiny of last year's work shows that Year 2 pupils made good progress in writing and most did at least as expected for their age. They experienced a wide range of interesting tasks that encouraged them to write for specific purposes and audiences. These tasks were well planned and structured and enabled all the pupils to achieve well. In the last inspection, the quality of the planning for the Year 1 and 2 pupils was identified as a weakness. This is no longer the case and the planning, as well as many evaluations of how well the pupils have done, is detailed and takes due account of their different abilities.
8. Current Year 2 pupils show a keen willingness to write and good confidence in their own writing abilities. When writing about "The Little Red Hen" they wrote sentences that were correctly punctuated and included "Not I", using speech marks accurately. Higher attaining pupils are already making use of capital letters for effect as in "*all the better to EAT you with*". Pupils rely on their knowledge of words, letters and sounds to spell words independently and are often successful. For example, two pupils discussed the need for "th" to begin "then" and both went on to spell it correctly. Such good learning reflects systematic, good teaching of key skills, including spelling and grammar, as well as the features of different writing styles and formats. For the current Year 1 pupils, and for those Year 2 pupils who as Year 1 pupils worked with the reception class last year, the teacher's good subject knowledge and enthusiasm are helping to lift their performance. They are beginning to write independently.
9. Several positive factors in the teaching account for the pupils' good progress. One is the teachers' flair in presenting the pupils with reasons for writing that they find enjoyable and motivating. A scrutiny of last year's work shows that events, stories and themes in other subjects were frequently used to prompt the pupils to write. For example, pupils gave advice to characters in stories and wrote in the style of "Not Now Bernard" to create stories such as "Not Now John". When they wrote instructions on how to print out work from the computer, they used numbers to demarcate each direction. Their non-fiction books on "Forces" included essential features such as a contents page, introduction, glossary and index, but also gave well-phrased explanations of things seen as part of their science investigations. For instance, one pupil commented on how friction slows the ball more when the grass is long than when it is short.

10. The teacher also helps the pupils to structure their writing through her marking. The comments on their work tell the pupils exactly how well they have done and how they can improve. This is tailored to the pupils' needs. While the teacher prints her comments for the Year 1 pupils, she encourages the Year 2 pupils to use joined handwriting by using it to write her comments. In one good example, a compliment on the pupil's use of "then" to note time changes was extended by the suggestion to use a range, such as "meanwhile", next time.
11. A third factor is the effective use of the classroom to support the pupils' writing development through the display of key information and examples of writing types. Similarly, the pupils have access to a range of resources that encourage them to write and read their writing. The link between reading and writing is strong. This is very evident in the routine of pupils taking home Bruno the bear and compiling a diary of what he does with them. Pupils are then asked to read their diary entry to the rest of the class.
12. Such good provision, which was less evident in the work for reception and some Year 1 pupils, is highly effective in developing the older infant pupils' interest and skill in writing. There is some similar work in the junior classes that acts as a good starting point for the future. For example, "Ban the by-pass" proved a good stimulus for Year 5 and 6 pupils who wrote letters in support using effective, persuasive phrase such as "I suggest that ...", as well as newspaper articles and pamphlets. The marking of the Year 6 pupils' extended stories was also a good example of constructive guidance. The teacher made it clear how the pupils had met the criteria set for the task, by referring to their effective use of irony, imagery and humour, and how they could have been strengthened.

Pupils make good progress over time and many achieve well.

13. Pupils' attainment on entry to school varies considerably. While some show knowledge, skills and understanding typical of four and five year olds, others show limited skills in some aspects, such as early reading and writing. School evidence shows that in previous years a significant number of pupils started school with immature social skills and little development in number as well as reading and writing. Over the three years, most pupils have reached the level expected for their age at the end of Year 2, but few have done better than this. In the last two years, however, there is a developing upward trend of higher attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. This reflects good teaching and the school focus on target setting.
14. Similarly, in the junior years, pupils make good progress over time. The school's published test data shows that from the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6 pupils often make more than the two levels of attainment expected. The Year 6 pupils who left in 2001 made very good progress overall. As Year 2 pupils, they were on average more than a term's progress behind other pupils nationally in English and mathematics. In writing, the boys were nearly a year behind. By the end of Year 6, they had pulled up dramatically to be ahead of pupils nationally, particularly in English. The school was given an achievement award for progress between the years 1996/7 and 1999/2000, and then again for the year 2000/1.
15. In 2002, the Year 6 pupils have again made good progress since Year 2. Many pupils have achieved well and met their personal targets. The school's overall results in mathematics and science are not as high as in 2001 as there is not as much high attainment, but pupils have again done well in English. Their reading prowess shines through and takes the school above the national average for high attainment. Given

the larger number of boys in the year group, this is a good achievement for the school. Just over half of the boys attained Level 5, compared with one third of boys nationally.

16. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Parents praised the way the teachers recognised when their children were experiencing difficulties and gave them help which meant they did well. One parent's comment was that "the support is spot-on". The part time special needs coordinator advises the staff and ensures that the pupils' targets are realistic. She is assiduous in ensuring that pupils with statements of special need receive their full entitlement and monitors carefully all the pupils on the special needs register. The support staff and teachers work conscientiously together to provide relevant support. For example, Year 6 pupils with special needs worked with the teacher to select prepositions to complete sentences. Through using small whiteboards to try out their ideas the teacher built up their confidence to make choices and they succeeded in the task. Similarly, the close tutoring of a support assistant enabled one pupil to tackle new words and enjoy his reading. In several lessons seen, however, the focus was on giving adult support rather than providing resources and structuring the task in small steps so that the pupil could achieve success with minimal adult support.

Parents' help is welcomed and pupils benefit from their support in and out of class.

17. As in the last inspection, the school has good, productive relationships with the community. The parents' and carers' good support for the school is evident in the return of the questionnaire by 65 per cent of families. Although the responses raised some issues about homework, how well they were kept informed and their partnership with school, inspection and school evidence, including the school's own survey of parents' views, points to a much more positive picture. Parents collecting their children and others at the meeting were warm in their comments and highlighted many features that they valued and appreciated. One key aspect was "the open door" to the school and the friendliness of the staff. Many liked the daily contact with teachers as they came into the playground and the opportunities to share achievements and discuss any concerns. They felt that they were made welcome in school and that the staff would try and accommodate them whenever possible. All agreed that the new building had brought everyone together and that the school was living up to its prime aim of being "*a community in which everyone is valued and everyone values each other*".
18. As part of the school community, parents have helped and continue to offer help in many ways. There is a sense that if the school expresses a need, then the parents rally round and help out. For example, parents helped to move the Pre-school building into the school grounds. This has eased the transition from playgroup to school as the staff meet regularly and there are exchange visits by the children. Similarly, when the pupils commented that there was little for them to do in the playground, parents worked with them to develop seating areas, flower troughs, allotments and an adventure playground. These improvements have increased the range of options available to pupils and enriched the curriculum. The Friends of Abbey Town School also hold social events to raise funds. The average annual amount of £2000 is substantial given the number of pupils in the school and helps to subsidise educational visits and resources, such as books and ICT equipment.
19. A good number of parents are willing to help either in class or in ways that help the running of the school and extend what the school offers. Parents, for example, run football classes, gardening groups, hear pupils reading and accompany them when

they go to the swimming baths. They also support their children at home by hearing them read, helping them to learn spelling and to carry out research. Parents welcomed the recent guidance issued by the headteacher in response to parents' concerns about the regularity and amount of homework. Some have successfully completed a "Parents as Educators" course to guide their work with pupils in school and at home.

20. One fruitful initiative has been the introduction of an open evening hosted by the pupils when parents look at their children's work and take part in some related activities, such as marking handwriting using the national test criteria. Several parents commented that this was "a super evening" when they felt proud of their children and what they had achieved. It had given them a good grasp of what their children had done and also shown how mature and confident their children had become.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The achievement of the higher attaining pupils in science.

21. Standards in science at the end of Year 6 have risen year on year since 1999. In 2002, nearly all pupils attained the level expected for their age and the school did better than most schools nationally. However, far fewer pupils did well for their age compared with 2001 and this lowers the overall standard. There is a similar picture at the end of Year 2 where teacher assessment indicated that no pupil did better than expected for their age. Inspection evidence shows that there is the potential for higher attainment throughout the school and that teacher assessment, especially of what the younger pupils know and can do, may be too conservative. This raises some issues regarding the quality of teaching and the need to challenge pupils more.
22. The pupils have good scientific knowledge. Teachers' planning, pupils' work and their responses show that they are taught well key scientific facts. This reflects a high teacher focus on pupils acquiring and using specific vocabulary. Too often, however, the teacher directs the pupils' learning too much. In a lesson seen, the teacher explained how to make a test fair rather than using the pupils' knowledge and experience to draw out the key factors.
23. The use of published books to structure the junior pupils' work has been both a boon and a constraint. The books have given the pupils good experience in answering questions, interpreting given data and completing part-given information which is similar to the format of the national tests. However, because the books have been used to set the agenda, the pupils have not had the opportunity to follow up their own ideas and test out their own hypotheses. This has limited the progress of the higher attaining pupils, who often show a good ability to draw conclusions and deductions. For instance, in studying forces, higher attaining pupils wrote, "*We think things will weigh less in water because of the upthrust*" and "*The bigger the force, the further the car goes*". Other pupils find such concepts hard to grasp and the school's analysis of the pupils' performance in the 2002 tests shows that many pupils did poorly in this aspect.
24. The headteacher, as coordinator, intends to introduce more practical activities to bring a better balance to the science curriculum and give junior pupils more chance to carry out their own investigations and test out their own ideas. Such work already typifies the learning of the infant pupils but the challenge is not always high enough. The school is using national guidance to structure the science curriculum and to set targets for pupils' learning but does not always extend the challenge beyond the

targets and content recommended. In one lesson, the teacher missed the opportunity to take the pupils' learning further. Having been on a listening walk and explored how musical instruments made sounds, the higher attaining pupils showed a good understanding of the link between vibration and sound, but did not have the chance to explore aspects raised in the discussion such as volume and pitch.

25. The teachers keep records of how well the pupils have met the key objectives for each unit of science work. However, there is little to show how those pupils who do not achieve an objective have the time and opportunity to consolidate their learning.

The use of information and communication technology as a learning tool across the curriculum.

26. Standards in ICT were identified as a weakness in the last inspection. The school has joined with other small schools and prudently used designated funding to employ trained helpers to supervise groups of pupils using the small computer suite. The helpers are working with the teachers to ensure that pupils learn new skills and gain experience in the full range of ICT as required by the National Curriculum. New resources, such as a microscope linked to the computer, are gradually being introduced and pupils of all ages and abilities are making good progress. As a consequence, standards are rising. The work done last year shows that Year 2 pupils were doing as well as others of the same age in other schools. The Year 6 pupils, however, were competent in some aspects but not others, including control and modelling, because of limited experience in the past.
27. The teachers are conscientiously planning the ICT lessons that the pupils have in the suite and discussing with the helpers what they wish the pupils to achieve. The helpers are providing good quality support and instruction. A good feature is the "hands-off" approach where the adults explain to the pupils what they need to do rather than do it themselves. As a result, the pupils actively learn the steps needed to open up and operate programs. When a Year 4 pupil commented, "I don't remember how to shrink it", the helper gave just enough guidance to remind the pupil of what to do and why things had gone wrong.
28. The current system of each year group having weekly sessions over half a term with the helpers is enough to ensure they acquire new knowledge and skills, but not sufficient to develop increasing competence and pupils' assurance through familiarity with equipment and programs. While the reception and infant pupils make use of classroom computers, the junior pupils have very limited access to them. In most of the lessons seen, the classroom computers were not used in the junior classes. Chances are missed to provide contexts for the pupils to apply their skills in using the mouse or to develop their keyboard skills. For example, pupils used a paper version of a text compiled on the computer to highlight fact and opinions, but no-one used the computers to carry out the same operation. The school also has programs to help pupils perfect their knowledge of multiplication tables and spelling patterns but they are not being used regularly enough to hone the pupils' skills. The school is aware that this is an area for improvement and the increased use of ICT appears as part of the literacy and numeracy development plans for last and this year.
29. Similarly, the school has yet to make full use of the digital camera, tape recorders, programmable robots and sensors as learning tools and as a way to extend the curriculum. There is little reference to the use of ICT equipment in teachers' subject planning or in the school's plans to develop the use of the school's website and pupils' links with others through email or video conferencing.

The use of information to decide how well the school is doing.

30. The school has responded positively to the key issues in the last inspection that identified the need to improve the quality of strategic and curriculum planning. In line with two of the key issues, the headteacher has taken a leading role in curriculum development and worked with the staff to agree schemes of work and refine the quality and consistency of teachers' planning. This has provided a clear framework of the knowledge and skills to be taught and an agreed programme of topics that ensures pupils in mixed age classes do not repeat the same content. The coordinators have begun to use information from tests and annual reviews to identify where changes in curriculum emphases need to be made. For instance, the literacy coordinator has rightly pinpointed the need to develop pupils' skills in explaining and justifying their opinions. There is a useful link here with the weaknesses identified in pupils' performance in science. However, the action plan does not make clear the intended outcomes, how and when they will be achieved, and how progress will be monitored.
31. The generality of the literacy plan also typifies other subjects and also the school management plan for 2001/2. While an audit of the previous year identified areas of success, it did not indicate where further improvements were needed. This makes it difficult to see progression in the improvement of the school. Although the school has an improvement plan for the period 2001/4, there is little to show how the proposed focus on aspects including physical education and the Foundation Stage is to be carried out. Governors took the decision not to draw up a school improvement plan for the year 2002/3 until after the inspection. This means that one term of the school year has already passed before decisions are taken on key priorities.
32. As part of the ongoing programme of school improvement, the school is using key targets for literacy and numeracy for each year group. However, a continuing area for improvement is the need for coordinators to take a more highly active lead in making sure they are achieved. Many of the outcomes are monitored by consensus rather than as an assigned responsibility. As a result, some aspects lose a clear focus and improvement is difficult to judge.
33. The governors are supportive but have not yet met all statutory requirements, as the school lacks some documents to support its practice in the area of health and safety. The concise minutes of the governors' meetings give little indication of the content of discussions or of agreed outcomes and points for action. It is not clear how well the governors keep track of their own progress in following up agreed action or keep track of the school's progress in carrying out the school improvement plan. The minutes also show that governors rely heavily on the headteacher for information. The headteacher makes good use of information from tests to track pupils' progress at the end of the school year. This gives him and the staff a good picture of each pupil but the governors have little information to evaluate how well the school is doing, particularly in relation to similar schools in the local area. There is only partial critical analysis or evaluation of test results and progress indicators to determine the factors that may explain peaks and dips. The recent questioning by the finance committee of targets and achievements is a good step in developing the governors' role in holding the school to account and evaluating the benefits of action taken and monies spent.
34. The lack of a consistently critical edge is also apparent in the evaluations to date of teaching and learning. While the evaluations have identified aspects of effective

practice, they have been less helpful in raising the quality of teaching and learning through agreed points for action.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

35. In order to raise standards further and continue the programme of school improvement, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in science, and use information from their evaluations of pupils' learning to plan tasks that match the differing needs of the pupils and challenge the higher attainers;
(paragraphs 21-25)
- ensure pupils have increasing opportunities to use available ICT equipment and apply and practise their skills to support their learning across the curriculum;
(paragraphs 26-29)
- improve the quality of school self-evaluation and strategic planning by analysing more rigorously and critically all available information to identify more precisely what the school needs to do to improve and how to achieve it.
(paragraphs 30-34)

PARTC: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	16
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	0	0	5	11	0	0	0
Percentage	0	0	31	69	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	n/a	95
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	19

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	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	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	6.6
National comparative data	5.6

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.

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	88	0	0
White – Irish	0	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	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	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	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

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.39
Average class size	23.75

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	60

Financial year	2001-02
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	243,369
Total expenditure	251,494
Expenditure per pupil	2,466

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	n/a
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a
Total number of education support staff	n/a
Total aggregate hours worked per week	n/a
Number of pupils per FTE adult	n/a

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Balance brought forward from previous year	34,355
Balance carried forward to next year	26,230

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
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.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	76
Number of questionnaires returned	49

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	29	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	41	51	8	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	55	2	6	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	61	10	8	4
The teaching is good.	49	45	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	43	20	6	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	47	8	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	51	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	37	35	18	8	2
The school is well led and managed.	43	51	4	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	45	6	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	35	22	10	12