

INSPECTION REPORT

**BIRCHANGER CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Birchanger, Nr. Bishops Stortford

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115127

Headteacher: Mrs Denise Howell

Reporting inspector: Mr Graham Lee
20959

Dates of inspection: 10 –11 February 2003

Inspection number: 247537

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Birchwood Birchanger Near Bishops Stortford Hertfordshire
Postcode:	CM 23 5QF
Telephone number:	01279 812362
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Elizabeth Godwin
Date of previous inspection:	2 February 1998

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	11
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	16
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	18
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	19

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Birchanger Cof E Primary School is a small village school with 85 pupils on roll aged between four and 11. There are slightly more boys than girls. The seven children in the reception year are in a class with some of the Year 1 pupils. Pupils come mainly from the village of Birchanger, although in recent years increasing numbers of parents from Stansted, Bishops Stortford and the surrounding area are choosing to send their children to the school. Most live in owner-occupied accommodation with a few in local authority housing. The school population is stable with little mobility, although there are a few more pupils in the school than at the time of the last inspection. Four percent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well below average. All pupils have their cultural roots in the British Isles and none speak English as an additional language. Four percent of pupils have special educational needs, which, again, is well below average. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. Children's attainment on entry has risen in recent years. Whilst it is wide ranging, for the past three years it has been above average overall.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Birchanger is a good school, with many strengths. Care for each individual member of the school community, based on strong Christian values, is at the heart of its work. The new headteacher is building on the work of her predecessor, in a very good partnership with all staff and governors, to provide a good quality of education for the pupils. Standards have been high in national tests in recent years, particularly in Key Stage 1, and pupils achieve well because of good teaching. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards have been high in national tests in recent years, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Teaching is good and consequently the pupils achieve well.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good and the pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
- All staff work very effectively as a team to provide a good quality of education for the pupils.
- The curriculum is enriched through a wide range of clubs, visits and visitors to the school.
- Staff and governors have provided a very stimulating learning environment for the pupils through the excellent use of resources.

What could be improved

- Expectations of the quality and quantity of recorded work in Key Stage 2, particularly for the oldest pupils.
- The partnership with parents.
- *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 progress since it was last inspected in February 1998. At that time it was judged to be satisfactory overall with some good features. Shortly after the inspection a new headteacher was appointed who gave a clear lead to staff in bringing about significant improvements. She has recently left and her successor is building on that work with a committed team of staff and governors. Standards have risen at faster than the national rate and have been high for several years. This was recognised when the school

gained a School Achievement Award in 2001. Teaching has improved significantly, despite changes in staff and is now predominantly good, with a number of examples of very good practice. Almost all the key issues for improvement raised by the last inspection have been tackled successfully. Geography and design and technology are now taught regularly and have a higher profile in the school. National guidance is now being used as a basis for planning in all subjects. This identifies the knowledge, skills and understanding that should be taught to pupils at different ages. The two-year curriculum map ensures that there is no repetition in mixed age classes. The school now has a good assessment policy with consistent systems, which identify what pupils know, understand and can do. Whilst the school has moved some way with the setting of individual targets for improvement this is not yet embedded in its practice. The school is in a good position to move forward even further because of the clear focus on improving teaching and learning.

STANDARDS

Standards achieved by the children by the time they reach the end of the foundation stage are well above average

Standards in Year 2 national tests and assessments have been high for several years. Over the past three years the rate of improvement in the school's performance has exceeded the national trend by some margin. For the past two years every child has reached the expected level 2 in reading, writing, mathematics and science, with significant numbers attaining higher levels. In 2002 the school's performance was in the highest five percent of all schools nationally in reading, writing and mathematics and very high when compared with similar schools¹. The majority of children reached the higher level 3 in reading and mathematics. Teachers' assessments of science also indicate that children are doing very well in comparison with the national picture and similar schools. In the current Year 2 standards continue to be well above average overall.

Standards in Year 6 have fluctuated rather more but have improved significantly in English, mathematics and science since 1999. There was a dramatic improvement in 2001 with some fall back last year. This is inevitable in a small school where the results of one pupil can make a considerable difference to the school's performance. Last year, for example, only six pupils took the tests and it is not possible to make sensible comparisons based on their performance. However, those pupils did do well in all three subjects, although none attained the higher level 5 in mathematics. Overall the school's results have improved at faster than the national rate over the past three years. In the current Year 6 standards continue to be above average overall, with a number of pupils working at higher levels. The school's targets for this year appear modest in view of recent results, but they take account of pupils with special educational needs. In the circumstances they are suitably challenging and likely to be met.

All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, achieve well because of the good teaching and sensitive support. In this short inspection the focus was on work in English and mathematics, although the work seen shows that standards have been maintained in other subjects, and are high in some, notably in art.

¹ Similar schools to Birchanger are defined as those where between 0 and 8 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and are enthusiastic about all activities. They work hard and concentrate well for the most part.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils generally behave well in lessons, assemblies and at playtimes.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils co-operate very well and support each other sensitively. They enjoy taking responsibility
Attendance	Very good. Attendance rates are well above the national average. Most pupils are punctual at the start of the school day.

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.

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good throughout the school. In lessons seen the quality of a large proportion of the teaching and learning was good or better and some was of high quality. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen. A particular feature of the work is the very effective partnership between teachers and teaching assistants. All staff know the pupils well and the warm and friendly relationships form a good basis for learning. Teachers plan very effectively for the needs of all pupils in their classes and challenge them at appropriate levels. In particular, those with special educational needs are supported well and in most lessons good provision is made for the more able pupils. As a result, the pupils achieve well and mostly make good progress in their learning. Teachers have a good understanding of the literacy and numeracy strategies and teach the basic skills well. Consequently, most pupils achieve high standards in these areas. Teachers also plan interesting activities, which capture the imagination of pupils and encourage them to work enthusiastically.

In a few lessons of satisfactory quality overall, teachers spend too much time talking at the beginning of the lessons, which leads to pupils losing focus. Whilst teachers are usually clear about what it is they want pupils to know and understand, this is not routinely shared with them in a way they can understand. As a result, the pupils cannot always identify the gains in their learning. Teachers give pupils good verbal feedback about what is that they need to do to improve but this is not reflected in the marking at Key Stage 2. Similarly, expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' recorded work in Key Stage 2, particularly for the oldest pupils, are too low.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is very well planned. A particular feature is the well thought out provision for pupils in mixed age classes. The curriculum is enriched by a range of clubs, visits and visitors to the school. Good use is also made of the local environment.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The few pupils with special educational needs are supported very well. They benefit from working in small groups alongside very effective teaching assistants.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Providing for pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school. Provision for moral and social development are particular strengths. Staff act as very good role models and this encourages the pupils to treat each other respectfully. There are many opportunities for pupils to work and play together and the new School Council is beginning to have an impact.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Well. All staff know pupils very well and the school does everything it can to keep them safe. There is an effective behaviour policy in place and there was no evidence of bullying. Assessment procedures are good overall but the use of assessment information is not firmly embedded in the work of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The new headteacher has a clear vision and is committed to building on the strengths of a successful school. She works in close partnership with her senior teacher and dedicated staff team. Strategic planning focuses very clearly on appropriate areas for development and improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors are very committed and have a wide range of expertise, which they use to good effect to support the school. All statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There are well-established procedures in place for checking how well the school is doing and for identifying areas for improvement. The new headteacher is committed to improving upon these systems still further.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The budget has been used creatively to develop a stimulating learning environment and good levels of flexible staffing to enhance the quality of education. The school is very well resourced and makes sure it gets best value when making its decisions about spending.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
Their children like school. The good standards of behaviour in the school. The good quality of teaching. Expectations that children will work hard. The caring attitudes and values engendered by the school. The good leadership and management of the school.	The range of activities offered by the school (49%). Homework requirements and arrangements (30%). Information about their children's progress (37%). The partnership between home and school (42%).

Eighteen parents attended a meeting held for them prior to the inspection and 43 out of a possible 85 returned questionnaires. The inspectors fully endorse the positive views of the parents about pupils' attitudes and behaviour, the teaching and the leadership. The negative responses in some areas were rather higher than normally found in a successful school (the percentages in the table refer to questionnaire responses). Inspectors do not agree with parents on the issue of additional activities, because for a small village school, the range of clubs, visits and visitors to the school is impressive. However, the school does acknowledge that it needs to think about offering more opportunities for younger pupils. The school does have a homework policy, but this is not followed consistently, particularly for the oldest pupils. The school provides regular consultations for parents and reports that are of satisfactory quality. There is not a great deal of information for parents about the curriculum and this is an area the school is looking to address. The new headteacher recognises the need to work more closely with parents to secure their confident support for all the good work that is going on in a successful school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards have been high in national tests in recent years, particularly in Key Stage 1

1. Standards in Year 2 national tests and assessments have been consistently high for several years. In 2002 the school's performance was in the highest five percent of all school's nationally in reading, writing and mathematics and very high when compared with similar schools. The majority of pupils reached the higher level 3 in reading and mathematics. Teachers' assessments of science also indicate that pupils are doing very well in comparison with the national picture and similar schools. For the past two years every pupil has reached the expected level 2 in reading, writing, mathematics and science, with significant numbers attaining higher levels. In the current Year 2 standards continue to be well above average overall.

2. Standards in Year 6 have fluctuated rather more but have improved significantly in English, mathematics and science since 1999. There was a dramatic improvement in 2001 with some fall back last year. This is accounted for by the fact that only six pupils took the tests and it is not possible to make sensible comparisons based on their performance. However, those pupils did do well in all three subjects, although none attained the higher level 5 in mathematics. In the current Year 6 standards continue to be above average overall, with a number of pupils working at higher levels.

3. As this is a small school, caution must be exercised when comparing the outcomes of national tests with other schools. Results are likely to fluctuate from year to year as the achievements of one pupil can make a significant difference. Inevitably, each year group is different in terms of the numbers of pupils with special needs or of higher ability. Nevertheless, it is clear that results have improved significantly since the last inspection and that the trend over the past three years has seen the rate of improvement in the schools' performance exceed the national trend by some margin. This was recognised in 2001 when the school won a School Achievement Award

4. There are a number of reasons for the improvements in standards in recent years:

- Following the last inspection there was a clear focus on improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. As a result a very strong ethos for learning has been developed throughout the school and pupils have good attitudes to learning.
- Very good planning. The school has adopted the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies very effectively. As a result teachers teach the basic skills well and pupils make good progress. This was illustrated in a very good lesson for the youngest pupils when phonic skills were taught imaginatively in the context of fruit.
- Flexible and creative arrangements to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. This allows pupils in Years 2, 5 and 6 in mixed age classes to be taught in small, single year groups for some of the time. This accelerates their progress.
- Those requiring additional help are also identified early and benefit from the support of teaching assistants in small groups.
- A rich and imaginative curriculum, which helps pupils to engage enthusiastically in all learning tasks.
- All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, achieve well because of the good teaching and sensitive support.

Teaching is good and, consequently, pupils achieve well

5. The quality of teaching is good overall and ranges from very good to satisfactory in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The teaching of the youngest children is consistently good or better. In the lessons seen four out of five were good or better and one in three were of high quality. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen. This is a better picture than at the time of the last inspection when there was an equal balance of good and satisfactory teaching with very little of high quality. This improvement is particularly impressive when the school has had a number of staff changes and two of the current staff are temporary.

6. An outstanding feature of the teaching is the very effective partnership between teachers and the well trained and briefed teaching assistants. All staff know the pupils well and the warm and friendly relationships form a good basis for learning. As a result pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and respond well to the adults. They persevere well, sustain momentum and develop new skills and understanding at a good pace.

7. Teachers plan very effectively for the needs of all pupils in their classes and challenge them at appropriate levels. A particular feature of the work is the well thought out and flexible teaching arrangements for the youngest and oldest pupils. This allows teachers to plan very effectively for the needs of pupils in different year groups. As a result, pupils work in small groups on challenging activities and this allows them to make faster gains in their knowledge and understanding. In particular, those with special educational needs or in need of additional support in literacy or numeracy are very well supported. For example, in Class 3 the teaching assistant worked very effectively with small groups on focused literacy support materials during the activity part of the lesson. Similarly, in most lessons, teachers design activities to provide a suitable challenge for the more able pupils in the class, such as in a Class 4 numeracy lesson when higher attainers were given an open-ended data problem to solve related to the filling of a bath. As a result, pupils achieve well and mostly make good progress in their learning. Teachers also encourage a variety of groupings in their classes and boys and girls work very well together in all classes.

8. In this short inspection, most of the lessons seen were in literacy and numeracy. Teachers have a good understanding of both national strategies and teach the basic skills well. Consequently, most pupils achieve high standards in these areas. Teachers also design interesting and relevant activities, which capture the imagination of pupils and encourage them to work enthusiastically. For example in a lesson on data handling in Class 3, the pupils rolled dice and recorded the outcomes on a frequency chart before constructing a bar chart. At the end of the lesson they repeated the exercise to illustrate its random nature, considerably enhancing their understanding of probability. In Class 1, there was an imaginative role play corner on 'Antartica', to develop pupils good speaking and listening skills by exploring the vocabulary of frozen wastes. In Class 4, work on persuasive writing explored the issue of the expansion of Stansted airport, so that pupils developed their arguments based on an issue that was immediately relevant to their own lives.

9. In a few lessons, teachers spend too much time talking at the beginning of lessons, which leads to pupils losing focus. Whilst teachers are usually clear about what it is they want pupils to know and understand this is not routinely shared with them in a way they can understand. As a result, pupils cannot always identify the gains in their learning.

Relationships throughout the school are very good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning

10. All staff know the pupils very well and form very good relationships with them. They act as very good role models and pupils feel comfortable and secure with the adults in the school. As a result, pupils treat each other with due consideration and respect. For example in a Class 3 lesson on performing poetry, more able children were very supportive of a child with special needs in their group. Pupils co-operate well and boys and girls work happily together as a matter of routine.

11. The youngest children settle quickly into the routines of school life. They clearly enjoy school and respond well to working with older pupils in their class. This helps them to become confident and happy in their new surroundings. This was illustrated in the way they arrive at school, choose books independently and settle down to read before responding to the register.

12. Pupils continue to have very positive attitudes to learning as they move through the school. They settle quickly at the beginning of lessons and are keen to contribute their ideas to class discussions or in response to questions. A good example of this occurred in Year 3 and 4 poetry lessons, when pupils were very keen to contribute their ideas and describe the mood evoked by the poems. They also gave sensitive and constructive feedback to one another on the reading of the poems, listening respectfully to one another. Pupils are enthusiastic when setting about their tasks and are keen to discuss them with visitors. They maintain concentration well and persevere in the face of difficulties for the most part. There were also several examples during the inspection of pupils helping one another to overcome difficulties, for example in a Year 6 maths lesson when pupils helped each other to interpret data.

13. The pupils take a pride in their school and are pleased with all it has to offer. They are pleased that the new school council gives them an opportunity to express their views about improvements in the school. Representatives of the council take their responsibilities very seriously and all pupils contribute thoughtfully and sensibly through the class councils, when pupils discuss issues such as school meals and the playground equipment. Pupils enjoy additional responsibilities, for example when the older pupils set up the hall for assembly.

14. Attendance is very good and much better than average. There is no unauthorised absence. The vast majority of pupils arrive at school on time each day.

All staff work very effectively as a team to provide a good quality of education for pupils

15. A strength of the school is the high level of commitment that it engenders amongst the staff and the ethic of teamwork that permeates the work. All staff, including the headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff work very closely together as a team. The governors, who have a wide range of expertise, support the staff well and contribute effectively to the partnership. As a result, there is a strong sense of purpose in the school and clear educational direction based on the ethos of Christian values.

16. The new headteacher has made a good start in building on the work of her predecessor. She has a clear vision for the school and this is supported through all its aims and policies. She is well supported by her senior member of staff. The headteacher has a commitment to teamwork and, whilst there are individual responsibilities for subjects, curriculum developments are moved forward by all staff working closely together. This works well in a

small school as all staff feel involved and are able to contribute. It also means that new staff are inducted well into the school. So far, the headteacher has had few opportunities for developing her monitoring role but that is planned in the immediate future to ensure that policies and procedures are being followed and that the good quality of teaching is maintained.

17. All support staff feel valued and are regarded as very much part of the team. Teaching assistants know the children well and work closely with the teachers. They are well trained and briefed and fully committed to the aims and values of the school. This enhances the quality of education for the pupils, particularly those needing extra support in some areas of the curriculum.

18. Governors know the school well and monitor its work effectively through their committee structure. All statutory obligations are met. Governors use their wide range of experience well for the benefit of the school. For example, one of the governors who is the local vicar, regularly takes assemblies in the school and the chair works very closely with the new headteacher.

Governors have worked closely with staff to ensure that excellent use is made of resources. Wise decisions have been made to secure very good learning resources and improvements to the building. There is a strong commitment to retaining the good levels of staffing. This allows pupils to be taught in smaller groups and enhances the quality of education. They apply the principles of best value well. For example, the premises committee in partnership with other local schools, has secured the services of a local architect who oversees all their building needs very successfully, resulting in imaginative improvements to the learning environment. This year a significant balance has been carried forward to finance the new computer suite and to retain the small classes.

The curriculum is enriched through a wide range of clubs, visits and visitors to the school

19. Inspectors do not agree with parents about the limited range of activities outside the normal school day. The school works hard to enrich the curriculum through a wide range of extra curricular activities, visits and visitors to the schools. This provision is very good.

20. Over the past year the school has run clubs for gardening, reporting (journalistic), basketball, athletics, cricket, science, art, Spanish and French, amongst others. Experts and visiting helpers make important contributions to enhance this provision. For example, during the inspection a visiting coach from Tottenham Hotspur Football Club was taking the children for football. The school has also taken part in local competitions with other schools, in football and rounders for example. Many of these activities are limited to the older pupils because of their nature or the times involved and the school is looking at providing more for the younger ones. These activities add considerably to the learning experience of the pupils and contribute significantly to their social and cultural development.

21. Pupils' learning is also enriched by visits and visitors to the school. For example, in recent times Class 2 have been to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Class 3 to the National Maritime Museum and Class 4 to the Harlow Outdoor Pursuits Centre. The school also offers a residential experience for the oldest pupils every other year. Indian dancers, African storytellers and visitors from Japan have helped to broaden pupils' cultural horizons. The regular performances are also a feature of the schools' work of which the pupils speak fondly. For example, last summer the performance was 'Jack and the Beanstalk'.

22. Pupils also have the opportunity to learn to play a variety of musical instruments such as clarinet, violin, keyboard, piano and recorders. Concerts are held at the end of each term and the school takes part in a local music festival. In the Autumn Term the choir will perform at the Albert Hall as part of a large concert connected with the Dr. Barnardos' charity. Pupils also have the opportunity to perform during assemblies. This range of musical activities considerably enhances their cultural development and their social skills as they work together for a common purpose.

23. The school also gets involved in the local village and has particularly strong links with the Church. For example, services are held in the church to celebrate Easter, Harvest and Christmas as well as to say farewell to the leavers each year. The local vicar, who is also a governor, regularly takes assemblies at school, which are greatly enjoyed and appreciated by the pupils. This makes a good contribution to their spiritual development as they are encouraged to reflect on Christian values and truths. The school also takes part in the village May Day celebrations. On a wider community level, pupils in Year 6 went to Stansted airport for an end of year trip. It is clear in talking to pupils that they take a pride in the local and wider communities, which helps them develop a sense of citizenship and belonging.

Staff and governors have provided a very stimulating learning environment for pupils.

24. When entering the school, the visitor is struck by the lively and well-presented displays in the entrance hall and the classroom. Teachers have worked hard to provide a colourful and stimulating environment for the pupils. Displays are informative and interactive. For example, the display in the hall on the workings of a vacuum cleaner is very creative and interesting. As a result, the environment is warm and welcoming for pupils and conveys the clear message that their work is valued.

25. The previous headteacher and governors have secured imaginative improvements to the building to make the most of the limited space. These include storage areas, a relocatable classroom and, most recently, a new computer suite. This latter addition has made particularly imaginative use of space and has added a new dimension to the facilities the school can offer. It will also help pupils to develop their skills by giving them more regular access to computers. The latest plan is to create a new library, which will enhance pupils' reading skills still further by giving them a dedicated and attractive environment where they can explore a wide range of books.

26. The grounds of the school have also been developed significantly. There is a range of interesting play equipment that the pupils can use throughout the year. During the inspection, pupils of all ages played happily and imaginatively together using the equipment. A herb garden has been created and a new wild area is in the process of being developed which will include a pond.

27. Pupils clearly take a pride in the development of the buildings and grounds and many commented on the impact of the play equipment and computer suite in particular. The school has been particularly good at securing funding for its various projects. Staff and governors have worked hard to secure a high quality learning environment for pupils and this has clearly had an impact on attitudes, standards and the quality of education overall.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Expectations of the quality and quantity of recorded work in Key Stage 2, particularly for the oldest pupils

28. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils are achieving good standards and the quality of teaching and learning in lessons is always satisfactory and mostly good or very good. This quality of work is not always reflected in pupils' written work, particularly for the oldest pupils. For this stage of the year there is not a great deal of work recorded in the core subjects. In particular, the school's practice of recording science work on sheets of paper for the most part does not reflect the status of science as a core subject. It is difficult for the pupils themselves, parents and visitors to track progress in the acquisition and application of concepts. Similarly, there is very little recorded work in the humanities. Consequently, pupils' literacy skills are not being extended sufficiently in other areas of the curriculum as they do not have sufficient opportunities for writing, in history, for example.

29. The quality of written work for the oldest pupils does not always reflect their abilities. Some of it is unfinished or very brief, particularly in the humanities. Also expectations of the quality of presentation of work are not sufficiently high. As a result, these pupils are not always achieving as well as they might. The school's practice of only using pens for 'best' work does not serve them well in developing the skills of using a pen that they will need as they move on to secondary school.

30. There was some good verbal feedback from teachers during lessons, which helped the pupils develop their ideas and challenge their thinking. This was not reflected in the marking of work in Key Stage 2. The school has a clear marking policy, which indicates that marking should take account of the learning intentions and highlight areas for improvement. There was very little evidence of this kind of marking in the books. Much of the marking consisted of ticks or correction of surface features such as punctuation and spelling. There was little reference to the original learning intention and very rarely were points for improvement included. Marking does not build sufficiently on the good verbal feedback to develop pupils' thinking and understanding. As a result, the pupils are not always sufficiently clear about how well they do or what they need to do next in order to improve.

The partnership with parents

31. The school enjoys a high level of support and interest from parents. More than half of them returned the questionnaires and another 18 attended the meeting held by the registered inspector before the inspection. Whilst it is clear that the school is regarded as a good school by the majority of parents, there was a high level of negative responses in a number of areas. This is unusual in a successful school such as this. It is clear that the school has some way to go in communicating its successes to all parents and securing the confident support of all.

32. Parents were very positive about standards of behaviour encouraged by the school. They were also clear that their children enjoyed school and that the attitudes engendered by the school encouraged them to be caring towards each other. Parents were also confident that the teaching was good and that their children were encouraged to work hard. Similarly, most had confidence in the leadership of the school although a number had no view, possibly because of the appointment of a new headteacher. Inspectors are very pleased to endorse these positive views in all of these aspects of school life.

33. The area attracting most parental dissatisfaction was that of additional activities with nearly half feeling that the school did not provide an interesting range of activities outside school. Examination of letters and photographs and talking to pupils, however, indicates that the school has run a wide range of clubs as highlighted in the previous section. This is an impressive range of clubs for a small village school but parents are not sufficiently aware of the extent of this provision. The new headteacher acknowledges the need to look at activities for younger pupils as many of the current ones are not suitable or available to them. The curriculum is also enriched by the visits and visitors to the school mentioned in the previous section. In view of this, the inspection team are of the view that the school enriches the curriculum in many ways and that parental concerns are unfounded. Indeed, the range of activities provided by the school is a strength rather than a weakness.

34. Another area of dissatisfaction concerns the amount of work that pupils are required to do at home. Whilst there was some disagreement about this, some 30 per cent of parents were unhappy with the current arrangements, particularly for the oldest pupils. Inspectors found that there is a homework policy setting out clearly the expectations for each year group. However, it is clear that not all parents are aware of the policy. Inspectors also found some inconsistency in the application of the policy. Whilst routines are clearly in place in most of the school, homework diaries for the oldest pupils indicate that homework has been spasmodic on occasions. There is a need to ensure that the policy is communicated to all parents and that it is followed consistently. Although pupils are getting plenty of homework in the run up to the national tests this has not been the case throughout the year.

35. The information about children's progress was a concern for some parents with 37 per cent feeling that they were not well informed about their children's progress. The school holds parents' consultation evenings in the Autumn and Spring and also an open evening at the end of the year when parents are invited in to see the work. They also have the opportunity to discuss the written reports at the end of the year. This is as much as most schools do and more than some. Reports are of reasonable quality, although sometimes describe the curriculum rather than the achievements of the pupils. Another useful device are the reading diaries, which many parents use to communicate with teachers on a regular basis. However, these are not used well where the oldest pupils are concerned. Inspectors are satisfied that the school does provide adequate information for parents about children's progress but much more could be done to inform parents about individual targets and the curriculum generally.

36. Finally, some 42 per cent of parents do not feel that the school works in close partnership with them. Certainly during the inspection exchanges between staff and parents were warm and friendly. Some parents were helping in school and their support was clearly valued. However, whilst a great deal of information goes out of school there is no regular newsletter or forum for parents to express their views. The new headteacher is committed to improving the partnership with parents and exploring ways of sharing its successes with them.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to build on the current successes of the school the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) improve expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' recorded work in Key Stage 2, particularly for the oldest pupils by:
 - ensuring that recorded work reflects the range of curriculum activities, particularly in science and the humanities;
 - requiring pupils to use their literacy skills more extensively in other areas of the curriculum;
 - agreeing and insisting upon high standards of presentation;
 - improving the quality of marking in Key Stage 2;
 - checking books regularly to ensure consistency.

- (2) improve the partnership with parents by:
 - clarifying and reviewing homework and diary arrangements;
 - providing more information about the curriculum and targets for improvement;
 - seeking ways of communicating regularly and effectively with all parents.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	10
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	4	4	2	0	0	0
Percentage	0	40	40	20	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 nine 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)	85
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	3
Special educational needs	YR– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	4
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	1

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	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	8	5	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	8	8
	Girls	5	5	5
	Total	13	13	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	8	8
	Girls	5	5	5
	Total	13	13	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

Results for Key Stage 2 (Year 6) are not included as the year group included fewer than ten pupils in 2002.

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	84	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	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

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.45
Average class size	21.25

Education support staff: YR - Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	101

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
	£
Total income	311101
Total expenditure	298980
Expenditure per pupil	4148
Balance brought forward from previous year	44748
Balance carried forward to next year	56869

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)	2
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	85
Number of questionnaires returned	43

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	28	7	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	42	9	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	40	5	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	49	21	9	2
The teaching is good.	33	51	2	2	12
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	14	42	28	9	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	35	44	5	16	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	51	5	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	23	33	26	16	2
The school is well led and managed.	42	42	0	0	16
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	65	7	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	26	28	21	7

Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number and may therefore not total exactly 100.