

INSPECTION REPORT

FAIRFIELD FIRST SCHOOL

Bromsgrove

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116675

Headteacher: Miss J Morris

Reporting inspector: Mr G Sims

28899

Dates of inspection: 30th September – 2nd October 2002

Inspection number: 247662

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: First school

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 – 9

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Fairfield First School
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R Groves

Date of previous inspection: 1st December 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fairfield First School is situated in the village of Fairfield to the north west of Bromsgrove. It has 113 boys and girls on roll between the ages of 4 and 9 and is much smaller than most primary schools. All of the pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. It is a popular school, and over half of the pupils come from outside the school's catchment area. The socio-economic backgrounds of most pupils are above average. Very few come from minority ethnic backgrounds or from homes where English is not the main spoken language. This is well below the national average. No pupils are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The percentage who join or leave the school, other than at the usual times of joining or leaving, is similar to the national average. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, and only two have been identified as having special educational needs. These figures are well below the national average. Most children have attended privately-run playgroups or nurseries before they join the school. They are admitted into the Reception at the beginning of the year in which they become five, with the younger children attending part-time for a term. When they start school, children's attainment is above average. Since the last inspection, the school has a new headteacher, the number of pupils on roll has grown by almost 30, and modifications have been made to the school's entrance, to provide better administration facilities. The school's staffing situation is very stable.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Fairfield First School is a good school, with some excellent features. Consistently good teaching enables pupils to make good progress in their learning and to achieve standards, which are generally well above average apart from writing. The school's outstanding strength lies in the way it promotes the personal development of the pupils. This is a very civilised community, marked by the pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour and the excellent relationships which exist throughout the school. This is achieved through the headteacher's very good leadership and management, and the commitment and enthusiasm of everyone who works in the school. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress and achieve standards, which are generally well above average.
- The headteacher manages the school well and provides very good leadership for a team of dedicated and enthusiastic professionals, who work together well and are helping the school to improve.
- The attention given to pupils' moral and social development and all aspects of their welfare, health and safety contributes to the excellent ethos which pervades the school.
- Teaching assistants and other adult helpers make a particularly valuable contribution to the teaching, pupils' learning, and the general smooth running of the school.

What could be improved

- The quality and accuracy of pupils' writing.
- Facilities for physical education.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents and carers of pupils in the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been a good degree of improvement since the last inspection in December 1997. The school has tackled its previous key issues effectively. The curriculum provided for the school's youngest children is now generally appropriate to their needs. They quickly become well-integrated members of the school community and make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and in the development of literacy and numeracy skills, although more opportunities could be provided to encourage greater independence. Procedures for monitoring classroom practice have improved significantly and have combined with a much greater emphasis on self-evaluation and school development to help staff to become much more aware of effective teaching methods and more critical of their own practice. As a result, the quality of the teaching is better now than at the time of the last inspection. Governors check the latest guidance to ensure that required information is included in the school's prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents. Various improvements have been made to the school grounds and to the school's main entrance, providing adequate toilet facilities for staff, new office accommodation and better security. The school has identified the need for staff to become more involved in decision-making, and co-ordinators have become much more effective in fulfilling their roles. In 2001, the school received a School Achievement Award for the improvement in its test results over the previous three years.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			similar schools	Key	
	all schools					
	1999	2000	2001	2001	Very high	A*
Reading	C	B	A*	A	Well above average	A
Writing	B	A	A*	A	Above average	B
Mathematics	D	A	A	A	Average	C
					Below average	D
					Well below average	E
					Very low	E*

Although they have fluctuated, the school's national test results at the end of Year 2 have improved since the last inspection. Over the last five years, the overall trend has been similar to the national improvement trend, but the improvement from 1999 to 2001 was better than in most schools. In 2001, the results in reading and writing were amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country, and they were well above the national average in mathematics. When compared to similar schools, all of the results were well above the national average. The results in 2002, for which comparative data are not yet available, were very similar in mathematics, but not as good in reading and writing.

The attainment of children when they join the school is above average. Despite the fact that some children in the Reception only attend part time, all children make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. By the time they start Year 1, nearly all achieve above average standards for their age. The inspection findings show that pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and that, by the end of Year 2, standards are well

above average in reading and mathematics. Although almost all pupils reach the national expectation of Level 2, which is better than in most schools, writing is the weakest aspect of pupils' work. Whilst over half of the pupils achieve above the expected level in reading and well over a third in mathematics, very few pupils achieve Level 3 in writing. The picture is very similar in Year 3 and Year 4, where standards are well above those found in most schools in mathematics and science. In English, standards are also high in reading, speaking and listening, but writing continues to be the weakest aspect of pupils' work. Standards in information and communication technology are improving, and pupils achieve the expected standards by the end of Year 4. The school keeps very careful track of pupils' progress and sets appropriate targets for each pupil. Staff are quick to provide additional help if pupils do not make sufficient progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and are eager to learn. They enjoy their lessons, participate enthusiastically, and show a very mature response to the very good range of learning opportunities provided for them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils behave extremely well, both within lessons and around the school. They are polite and friendly, and there is no evidence of disruptive, anti-social or oppressive behaviour of any kind. The school is a well-ordered and very civilised community.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The quality of relationships with the staff and amongst the pupils is first class. Pupils have a very good sense of responsibility; they are socially and environmentally aware, and have a very good sense of concern for others, particularly the younger pupils.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils are eager to come to school, and the level of attendance is well above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 and 2	Years 3 – 4
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 overall quality of the teaching is good and as a result pupils make good progress in their learning. Almost all of the lessons observed during the inspection were good, and a few were very good. All of the teachers demonstrate great commitment to their work; this is seen particularly in the way they plan their lessons to cater for the different age groups within each class. As a result, the school caters well for pupils of all abilities and ages. The teaching assistants play a vital role and carry out their assigned tasks extremely well, enabling the teaching within each class to be focused very specifically on pupils' needs. The teaching in mathematics, and in most aspects of English, is good, and pupils learn well in these subjects. However, the good teaching within the literacy hour is not always consolidated as effectively as it could be, for example, through the marking and correction of pupils' work or the development of pupils' writing skills through work in subjects other than English. Numeracy skills are consolidated well, particularly during the mental mathematics sessions. The teachers' confidence in the use of information and communication technology is improving rapidly, and good examples were observed during the inspection in which computers were used well to help pupils with their learning. The teaching of physical education is hampered by inadequate indoor facilities. Throughout the school, the excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the pupils' very positive attitudes to their work contribute significantly to pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a very good range of learning opportunities for its pupils, and the curriculum provided meets the statutory requirements. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, visits to places of interest and involvement within the local community. The development of pupils' environmental awareness is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school has very few pupils with special educational needs, but the procedures for identifying pupils' needs and providing additional support are very good. The school draws up good individual education plans which meet pupils' needs very well. The school maintains very good relationships with parents and with outside agencies.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good, and in some aspects excellent, provision for pupils' personal development. Personal, social and health education lessons and school assemblies help to raise pupils' moral and social awareness very successfully. Teachers and other adult helpers provide excellent role models.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a very caring school, which has very good procedures to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety. As a result, the pupils feel safe and well cared for. Staff know the pupils very well and keep careful track of their progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership. She provides staff with very clear educational direction and has helped the staff to focus on ways of improving the quality of education. She is supported extremely well by hard-working and loyal staff, who carry out their responsibilities well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its responsibilities effectively and provides good support for the headteacher. The governors maintain effective oversight of the school's development and provide practical support whenever possible.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its own performance very well. All aspects of the school are monitored and evaluated regularly, and the school is well aware of its own strengths and weaknesses. Although somewhat unwieldy, the school's development plan is thorough and provides a helpful tool for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its resources and manages its finances well. In seeking to provide best value, the school uses very good procedures to compare its performance with others and undertakes appropriate consultation before making major spending decisions. The school endeavours to overcome its inadequate indoor facilities for physical education, but the solutions are time-

	consuming and inconvenient.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children enjoy coming to school.• The quality of the teaching is good and their children are making good progress.• The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.• Standards of behaviour are very good.• They feel comfortable in approaching the school, which works closely with parents.• They like the intimate and friendly atmosphere of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An end to mixed-age teaching
[The views of parents are based on those expressed by the 10 parents who attended the parents' meeting and the 78 parents (68%) who returned the parents' questionnaire, some of whom enclosed their own written comments]	

Parents have a very high opinion of the school, reflected in the fact that around half of the pupils come from outside the school's official catchment area. The inspectors agree that parents' positive views of the school are well founded. They acknowledge the concerns parents have about the mixed-age classes, but find little evidence to show that pupils are disadvantaged by these arrangements because teachers work very hard to mitigate the difficulties. The size of the school and the number of available classrooms make it impossible for the school to avoid mixed-age teaching. A small number of parents felt that the school does not provide the right amount of or appropriate kind of homework, that they are not well enough informed about the progress their children are making and that there is not a wide enough range of activities outside of lessons. The inspection team feels there is little justification for these concerns, which were not reflected in the responses of the great majority of the parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress and achieve standards, which, for the most part, are well above average.

1. The great majority of the lessons observed during this short inspection were good, and a number were very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The quality of work seen in pupils' books from the previous year indicates that teaching is of consistently good quality during the year, as do the standards achieved by pupils in the national tests at the end of Year 2 and the school's own assessments at the end of Year 4. Although a number of parents expressed concern about the fact that all pupils are now being taught in mixed-age classes, the unanimous feeling expressed through parents' replies to the questionnaire is that the quality of the teaching is good. Parents feel that the school expects their children to work hard and to achieve their best. The pupils find their teachers helpful and appreciate the way they help them to learn. The inspection findings endorse these views. Although the overall level of attainment when pupils join the school is above average, the consistently good level of teaching enables pupils to make good progress and achieve standards in most aspects of their work which are well above average by the end of Years 2 and 4.
2. Although good features were noticed in the teaching at the last inspection, the school has worked hard to improve the quality of the teaching by developing teachers' awareness of different and more effective teaching methods. This has been achieved through thoughtful implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, opportunities for teachers to observe teaching in other classes, in-service training, and time set aside during staff meetings to consider the effectiveness of the school's teaching. Teachers evaluate their own lessons and have become much more reflective about their own practice. The staff fulfil the school's teaching aims well by working together as a team and ensuring that they provide effectively for the widely differing range of needs within each class.
3. In the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2001, the results in reading and writing were very high, amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country. In mathematics, they were well above the national average. In all three aspects, they were well above the average for similar schools. The school received a School Achievement Award for these very good results and the progress made over the preceding three years. The results in 2002, for which comparative data is not yet available, were slightly lower in reading and mathematics, and dipped in writing. These results were not unexpected, as the assessments of their ability made when these pupils started school were lower than in preceding years. Despite the fluctuation in the school's results over the last five years, the overall trend is one of improvement, at a similar pace to the national improvement trend. The inspection findings show that standards are well above average in reading and mathematics. Although standards in writing are above average, few pupils exceed the expected level, and the overall standard in this aspect of the pupils' work is lower than that achieved in reading and mathematics. The picture is very similar at the end of Year 4, where standards are well above average in mathematics and science, and in reading, speaking and listening in English. Standards in writing are above average, but lag behind other aspects of the pupils' work.
4. The inspection findings show that there is no justification for the parents' major concern, that younger pupils in a year group may not make as good progress as their

older peers because of the way pupils are divided into the mixed-age classes. Indeed, one of the major strengths of the teaching is the way that teachers cater for the different groups of pupils within their classes. Pupils in different year groups within the same class are frequently taught separately, thus ensuring that work is appropriately matched to their needs. This is made possible because of the very high quality support provided by the teaching assistants and other adult helpers. The school has very few pupils who are classified as having special educational needs, but the provision for them, and for pupils about whom the school has some concerns, is very well organised. Needs are identified at a very early stage, and appropriate additional help is provided where necessary. Comprehensive records are kept for each pupil, so that teachers know what pupils' needs are and what work is appropriate for them. A measure of the school's success is the fact that almost all pupils achieve the nationally expected standards by the end of Years 2 and 4, which represents good, and in some cases very good, progress for pupils who experience some difficulties in their learning. The school also provides well for its more able pupils who, with the exception of writing, achieve standards which are well above those expected for their age.

5. The teaching of mathematics is good. The subject has benefited from good leadership, and teachers' confidence has improved since the last inspection, particularly in the way they help pupils to understand different strategies for calculating answers. The subject is taught in a lively manner and made fun for the pupils, particularly in the mental mathematics sessions with which teachers start most lessons. The teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and this motivates the pupils to learn. In a good mathematics lesson for pupils in Years 2 and 3, for example, a lively introduction to the lesson helped pupils to consolidate their ability to double numbers and to use this knowledge to calculate the addition of two numbers that were near doubles. Pupils each had a pack of number cards spread on the table in front of them and held up the appropriate cards to show the teacher their answer. In this way, the teacher was able to see quickly if any pupils were experiencing difficulties. Pupils settled down to their individual tasks quickly and with enthusiasm, and separate teaching sessions provided for pupils in Year 2 and the larger group from Year 3 ensured that all pupils made progress during the lesson.
6. The teaching of most aspects of English is also good. Good reading habits are encouraged throughout the school and there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. Class texts are chosen carefully to interest the pupils and to help them develop their understanding of different styles of writing. In a very good lesson for pupils in Year 1 and Year 2, for example, a book entitled 'Do Not Open This Book!' was used very effectively to capture pupils' interest and imagination. Before the end of the text was reached, pupils had to discuss with a partner how they thought the story would end, and some pupils were then asked to share their ideas with the rest of the class. Pupils develop a good understanding of the characteristics of different types of writing. In a good lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, for example, pupils showed a good understanding of the characteristics of a play-script, contrasting features of this type of writing with other fiction and non-fiction texts, highlighting features such as the use of fewer adjectives, scenes instead of chapters and the absence of speech marks which are unnecessary because of the way the text is set out.
7. Although pupils' work and the teaching of other individual subjects were not inspected in detail during this short inspection, it is evident that there is good teaching in other subjects. Pupils cover a broad range of work in science and achieve standards which are well above average. The teaching of information and communication technology has improved significantly since the last inspection as a result of the training undertaken

by the staff. A portfolio of work undertaken in design and technology gives evidence of a broad range of challenging, interesting and motivating teaching. Pupils' comments show that additional activities, such as visits to places of interests and visitors to the school, enrich the day-to-day teaching and contribute positively to their learning.

8. The teachers plan their lessons carefully, have high expectations of the pupils, adopt appropriate teaching methods and use resources well in order to motivate the pupils and help them to learn. A particularly good feature is the clear guidance given to teaching assistants and other adult helpers which enables them to make a very effective contribution to the lessons. After the introductory session of a very good English lesson for pupils in Year 1 and Year 2, for example, the teacher worked enthusiastically with all of the pupils from Year 1, whilst the teaching assistant used an effective PowerPoint presentation on the computer with pupils from Year 2 to reinforce pupils' understanding of the occurrence of letter pattern 'ar'. Because all aspects of the lesson had been well prepared, the transition from one activity to the next was smooth, time was used well and all pupils had a positive learning experience.
9. The high standards expected of pupils' behaviour have a significant impact on pupils' learning and allow mature discussions to take place. In a good English lesson for pupils in Year 3 and Year 4, for example, many pupils contributed enthusiastically, but in an orderly manner, to a discussion on the characteristics of writing play scripts. A well-ordered discussion was also observed in an English lesson for children in the Reception and Year 1, as children took turns at speaking and listened well to what others had to say.

The headteacher manages the school well and provides very good leadership for a team of dedicated and enthusiastic professionals, who work together well and are helping the school to improve.

10. The previous inspection report commented favourably on the school's leadership and management. Since that time, a new headteacher has been appointed, and the school continues to receive very good leadership. Governors spoke enthusiastically of the headteacher's vision and drive, her concern to improve standards and her empathy with the pupils. They commented on her commitment and good managerial skills, and appreciated the way she keeps them informed about what is happening. Such qualities were also evident to the inspection team, particularly in the very good sense of teamwork, the staff's clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the way the school has improved since the last inspection. The day-to-day management of the school is very good. The headteacher is well organised and has effective procedures which help the school to run smoothly. Efficient, friendly and helpful support from the school office provides very good assistance for staff, pupils and parents.
11. Visitors to the school cannot fail to be struck by the good working ethos amongst the staff, all working well together and showing great commitment to the school and dedication to their work. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and there is a high degree of co-operation and willingness to carry out tasks which ensures that the school runs smoothly and pupils are given good opportunities to learn. Staff are willing to share their ideas and expertise, and this has had a positive effect on improving the quality of the teaching.
12. As a result of changes since the last inspection, co-ordinators now play a much bigger role and have become more effective as subject leaders. They discuss their subject areas, the effectiveness of the subject's scheme of work, half-termly planning and teachers' specific lesson planning with the rest of the staff each half term. They observe an increasing number of lessons and have compiled portfolios of work in a

number of subjects which illustrate the standards of work pupils are achieving. As a result, co-ordinators have a much clearer picture of what is happening in their subjects and are much better placed to advise and help other staff. Particular emphasis has been given to the co-ordination of mathematics and English, and the school's improving results indicate that the co-ordinators have been effective in helping to raise standards in these subjects.

13. The headteacher has introduced better procedures for monitoring, evaluating and developing the school's work. A three-year development cycle ensures that all subjects are reviewed regularly and that priority for implementing new developments is allocated to each subject in turn, to run alongside the school's main priorities for development. Co-ordinators meet with the headteacher twice a year in order to review progress within their subject areas and are expected to draw up, implement and keep track of detailed development plans. As a result, all staff are now involved in formulating the school development plan, which is broad in its scope and comprehensive in its detail. Priorities for development are also linked to the school's formal procedures for managing the performance of staff, all of whom successfully achieved their objectives for the previous year.
14. Better procedures for assessing pupils' work and keeping track of their progress have been introduced. The school now has a comprehensive record of the level of each pupil's attainment when they enter the school and at half-yearly intervals throughout their time at school. Staff use these regular assessments to set targets and to ensure that all pupils are making sufficient progress.
15. The leadership provided by the headteacher and the staff's dedicated commitment help to ensure that the school is continually improving. In addition to all of the aspects highlighted in the first section of this report, other innovations and changes have helped to enrich the experiences provided for the pupils. Involvement in the 'Eco-Schools Project'¹ has helped to raise pupils' awareness of the environment and led to improvements within the school grounds. Opportunities for pupils to staff the school office at lunchtime have not only solved the problem of answering the telephone when there is no adult in the office, but has taught pupils how to apply for a post of responsibility and broadened the experience of the successful applicants. For a recent parents' evening, pupils prepared a slide presentation on different aspects of the school for parents who were new to the school. The activity not only helped the pupils to develop their skills in using a computer, but provided helpful information for the parents and gave them a unique insight into the life of the school.

The attention given to pupils' moral and social development and all aspects of their welfare, health and safety contribute to the excellent ethos which pervades the school.

16. In their response to the parents' questionnaire, parents were almost unanimous in saying their children like school, that they are expected to work hard and achieve their best, that standards of behaviour are good and that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. Over half of the pupils come from outside the school's catchment area, and one of the main reasons cited by parents for choosing to send their children to the school is its friendly and caring ethos. These reasons and parents' views are certainly endorsed by the inspection team, which found that pupils'

¹ A project which encourages schools to educate children to develop a greater awareness of and to become practically involved in caring for both their local and the global environment.

attitudes, behaviour and relationships are excellent. Whilst the pupils must take great credit for this, the school's input has a significant impact on the pupils' personal development. The headteacher and her staff have helped to create an excellent ethos within the school. It is a friendly, happy, civilised community, in which pupils have fun, but are also keen to learn.

17. Pupils are equally positive in their views of the school. All of the pupils interviewed said they enjoy coming to school, where they feel safe. They know they can talk to teachers and other adults who will listen to them. They say that their teachers and assistants are helpful, and that they will always give them extra help with their work if they need it. Pupils are also helpful to each other. One pupil said, 'We look out for each other. We help others with their work or at play, including anyone who looks lonely.' Such attitudes were very much in evidence during the inspection. It is not surprising, therefore, that the level of attendance is very good, and well above the national average.
18. Daily assemblies are used very effectively to communicate important messages and instil appropriate values and attitudes. Themes for assemblies are planned carefully, and all teachers, as well as visitors, are involved in leading assemblies on a rota basis. In a very good assembly observed during the inspection, pupils were encouraged to work together, rather than having a selfish, non-helpful attitude. The pupils listened well because the assembly was presented in a lively way and the teacher encouraged the pupils to participate. Other planned activities, such as personal, social and health education lessons, religious education lessons and circle time² are used in similarly positive ways.
19. All of the staff have good skills in managing pupils in lessons. They have a nice, approachable manner, which encourages a good response from the pupils. Relationships are very positive and there is good use of humour in lessons. Teachers show that they value pupils' contributions in lessons, and this helps pupils to gain confidence in answering questions. Equal and appropriate attention is given to younger and older pupils in the same class, so that all feel they have an important part to play. The pupils respond very well to their teachers. In a mathematics lesson for pupils in Year 2 and Year 3, for example, the noise level rose as pupils were working in pairs. The teacher asked them to talk more quietly, and there was immediate co-operation from all pupils. In another mathematics lesson for pupils in Year 1 and Year 2, the teacher had stressed the need for pupils to work sensibly on their own. Pupils showed a high level of commitment and significant maturity as they tackled their tasks.
20. Very good management skills are also in evidence outside the classroom. Routines are well established, and the school's expectations are clear. As a result, pupils move around the school in an orderly manner. Behaviour at lunch-time is very good, and the pupils' response in assemblies is excellent. Considerable thought has been given to developing the school's outside play areas and facilities. When the weather permits, the pupils not only have a hard outdoor surface, but grassed areas, a quiet woodland area and climbing and adventure equipment. Other equipment, such as skipping ropes, balls and play houses, is available for the pupils to use. The play-times observed during the inspection were joyful occasions during which pupils engaged in a very wide range of

² During 'Circle Time' pupils discuss a wide range of personal and general issues. All pupils agree that no interruptions should occur and only one person at a time will speak. Respect for other pupils' views will occur at all times and, therefore, pupils feel confident that they can talk with ease and free from any form of interference or interruption from other children.

activities in a socially harmonious way, showing consideration for others. Very good attention is given to all aspects of pupils' welfare, health and safety.

21. The staff are good at finding other ways to promote pupils' personal development. Older pupils have the opportunity to become school telephone monitors. There are opportunities for pupils to serve on the school's environmental awareness committee or to be actively involved in looking after the school environment. Some have been part of a panel interviewing for a new lunchtime supervisor and others act as guides for visitors to the school. In all classes, pupils are expected to help with routine tasks, such as distributing resources or tidying up at the end of a lesson. In one class, pupils planned a PowerPoint display for the induction meeting for new parents. There are also opportunities for pupils to interact with others from the wider community, for example, talking and listening to visitors to the school or working with children from other schools, such as groups of pupils who are more able mathematicians or artists, or participating in musical and theatre workshops and performances.
22. A crucial factor in maintaining all of these positive features is the fact that all staff work very well together and are entirely consistent in their approach. Teaching assistants and other support staff are integral members of the staff team and uphold the same high standards as the teachers. All of the staff provide excellent role-models for the pupils. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them and feel totally secure within the school environment.

Teaching assistants and other adult helpers make a particularly valuable contribution to the teaching, pupils' learning, and the general smooth running of the school.

23. The school has a number of excellent support staff who make a very important contribution to the daily life of the school. Most of the teaching assistants also carry out additional roles, such as that of lunchtime supervisor, which helps to provide continuity in the management of pupils throughout the day, and to ensure that expectations expressed in lessons and school assemblies are fulfilled when pupils are not under the direct supervision of teachers.
24. Part of the reason for the successful use of the support staff lies in the fact that they are treated as equal partners and are integrated fully into all aspects of the life of the school. The headteacher meets regularly with the support staff, who also attend staff meetings and school training sessions. There is excellent collaboration between teachers and assistants. Class teachers meet with their assistants each week to review the week's work, identify strategies to reinforce pupils' learning and plan work for the following week. The teachers provide helpful notes with their planning so that assistants and other helpers know exactly what is required. In one class, for example, the teacher prepares questions in a separate book, which the assistant then uses when taking a group for group-reading activities. In another class, the teacher had prepared notes for a parent helper, including details of how to mark pupils' work.
25. Assistants play a full part throughout the lesson in all classes, either actively involved with a group or with individual pupils, or providing other assistance for the teacher. In one English lesson, for example, the assistant wrote a summary of the points the pupils were contributing to the discussion on the board, which enabled the teacher to focus her attention on the pupils and their responses. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher worked with pupils from one year group, whilst the assistant worked with pupils from the other year, which enabled work to be closely matched to pupils' needs and ensured that all pupils made progress during the lesson.

26. The support staff relate to the pupils very well. In one class, quiet words of encouragement to a couple of pupils helped them to maintain their concentration during the introductory part of a lesson. In another class, an assistant sat with a pupil who was having difficulties with his work and, through patient questioning and coaxing, helped the pupil to understand what was required and to make progress. The assistants use their initiative well. They see what is needed and step in to provide help. They help to make the transition from one activity to the next smooth. Although they do not help within the classroom, the office and caretaking staff also have a significant and helpful input into the daily life of the school and help to maintain the ethos which is set by the teachers and teaching assistants.
27. A large number of parents also provide valuable help in a variety of ways, which make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. In the Reception class, for example, a rota has been organised for parents to listen to children reading and to support activities within the classroom. The school also provides help for parents who are interested in becoming teaching assistants. In addition to providing a support role within the classroom, particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons and with activities such as cooking, art and crafts, parents also accompany pupils on school visits.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The quality and accuracy of pupils' writing.

28. The school's own assessments, observations during the inspection and the most recent national test results show that pupils do not achieve as high a standard in writing as they do in other aspects of their work, such as speaking and reading, mathematics and science. The school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2001 were the best ever achieved, comparing very favourably with results nationally, and were the outcome of a concerted effort to improve pupils' writing. However, the results in 2002 were not as good, and standards are not as high in other year groups and were not reflected in the samples of pupils' writing which were scrutinised during the inspection. Although almost all pupils achieve the nationally expected standard for their age, very few pupils exceed this standard, as they do in reading, mathematics and science. Whilst pupils have a good understanding of different types of writing and most have a good range of vocabulary, their writing is frequently inaccurate and not always structured as well as it could be.
29. The improvement of pupils' writing has been on the school's agenda for some time, and various initiatives have been introduced with varying degrees of success. Teachers have a much clearer idea than before of the standards pupils are achieving. Pieces of pupils' writing are assessed at regular intervals and in some detail. The co-ordinator takes part in moderation meetings with other schools which helps to ensure that staff are using similar criteria to evaluate pupils' work as in other schools. As a result, teachers are gaining a clearer picture of what pupils need to do in order to progress to the next level. The school has also changed the scheme it has used for many years to teach letter sounds to children in the Reception, and the new scheme is starting to have a noticeable effect on the children's writing. Children are gaining the confidence to attempt writing at an earlier age, with the result that they now start Year 1 with a much better preparation for writing than in previous years.
30. The teachers' planning, based heavily on the National Literacy Strategy, is detailed, thorough and comprehensive in its coverage of the National Curriculum for English. Aspects of writing, grammatical topics and spelling patterns are generally introduced very well during the whole-class sessions at the start of each lesson. However, the work is not consolidated as effectively as it could be. Aspects are not revised

systematically in subsequent lessons or later in the term in order to strengthen pupils' understanding. Whilst the work provided for pupils to complete on their own during the lesson provides some consolidation and reinforcement, it does not generally provide sufficient reinforcement on its own to embed new concepts into pupils' memories without the need for further revision. At times, the exercises given to pupils are fairly mechanical and do not challenge them sufficiently.

31. In their efforts to cover as much ground as possible, teachers often move on to new topics before extracting maximum benefit from the previous topic. Not enough time is allowed, for example, for discussing pupils' initial drafts for a piece of writing or for examining ways in which pupils' work could be improved. Although there are examples of pupils producing pieces of writing on a word processor, not enough use is made of this powerful tool to help pupils to improve the quality of their work. There is little to show that pupils use features such as the spellchecker or that they print draft copies of their work which they then review and modify in order to improve their final version.
32. A major factor which impedes pupils' progress is the school's approach to marking pupils' work. Whilst staff are diligent in marking pupils' work, they are not critical or rigorous enough and pupils do not gain a clear enough understanding of how they can improve. The marking is often limited to ticks, with only the occasional correction of mistakes. As a result, many mistakes are perpetuated, and the good work which is evident in the literacy hours is not reinforced sufficiently well when pupils put pen to paper. Teachers write encouraging comments at the end of most pieces of work, but this can sometimes lead a pupil to think that the piece of work was very good, whereas, in fact, there was much that could have been improved. Even when suggestions for improvement are made, they are frequently far too general and there is not enough specific comment, linked to actual examples within the pupils' work to show them how they can improve.
33. In some classes, the teacher occasionally provides opportunities for pupils to help each other check their writing. This is a good feature which helps to raise pupils' awareness of the importance of proof-reading and checking their work for accuracy. However, pupils are rarely required to follow up a piece of work by making their own corrections or improvements, with the result that many opportunities are lost for them to learn from their mistakes. The school needs to have a much more rigorous approach to marking pupils' work, by ensuring that pupils are always clear about how they could improve their writing and that pupils go back over their corrected work and learn from their mistakes.
34. There are some good examples of teachers providing opportunities for pupils to produce written work in subjects other than English, for example, by writing up a science investigation or producing a piece of writing on a topic in history. In general, however, more such opportunities could be provided and better use made of them in order to help pupils' develop their writing skills. Very little attention is given to the accuracy of pupils' writing within the context of other subjects. Even glaring errors in the heading for a piece of work and subject-specific vocabulary are left uncorrected. Because teachers do not correct such mistakes, pupils think that their writing is satisfactory, and repeated errors become embedded in their minds as correct practice.

Facilities for physical education

35. The school has a reasonable hard-surfaced area for outdoor games and easy access to an adjacent playing field. However, the facilities for indoor lessons in physical education are totally inadequate. The room which is used as the school hall is very small and has a very low ceiling. Although it is possible to use this room for some lessons for the smaller pupils where little movement is required, it is quite unsuited for gymnastics, dance or other indoor physical education lessons for most pupils.
36. The school endeavours to overcome this problem by using facilities at the nearest middle school and at the village hall. However, these arrangements are inconvenient and time consuming. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 are taken by minibus every other week to use the middle school's gymnasium. Whilst the facilities here are good, pupils only have limited access to them, and the time taken to travel there and back eats into the time available for teaching physical education and other subjects. The arrangement is also costly in terms of money, transport and staff, as more adults are required to transport and supervise the pupils than for lessons conducted on the school's own premises.
37. The village hall is near the school, but is only available at restricted times and apparatus has to be carried from the school to the village hall and back. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 spend 20 minutes of their lunch break and time during the afternoon session to carry apparatus back and forth for the younger pupils to use.
38. Despite the drawbacks of not having a suitable hall, the school endeavours to provide a full range of physical education activities, but standards inevitably suffer because of the restricted opportunities available to the pupils.
39. Although the school has an adventure playground and a variety of smaller equipment for use outdoors, there is no separate area for the youngest children and no large apparatus designed specifically for their age group. As a result, the school has limited opportunities to promote certain aspects of the physical development of its youngest pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

40. In order to improve the quality of education provided and the standards pupils achieve, the governors, headteacher and staff should work together to:

1) Improve the quality of pupils' writing* by:

- building in more systematic and frequent revision of skills which have been taught previously;
- ensuring that activities given to pupils to complete during the literacy hour are sufficiently challenging and enable them to consolidate their understanding of new concepts;
- paying greater attention to the process of drafting and redrafting and giving enough time to considering how pupils can improve the quality of their writing;
- providing more opportunities for pupils to use a word processor to review, modify and evaluate their writing;
- improving the quality of teachers' marking, so that pupils are always clear about how they could improve their work, and ensuring that pupils learn from their mistakes;
- making better use of opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills through subjects other than English;

2) Improve the facilities for physical education* by:

- pursuing every possible avenue to secure an adequately sized hall for indoor physical education lessons;
- providing an appropriate range of large apparatus to promote the physical development of the school's youngest children.

* These issues have already been identified as priorities in the school's development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	16
Number of formal discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils [In addition to this figure, there were many informal discussions with staff, other adults and pupils]	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	3	11	2	0	0	0
Percentage	0	19	68	13	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 – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		113
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	3.7	School data	0.0
National comparative data	5.4	National comparative data	0.4

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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	9	8	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	–	–	–
	Girls	–	–	–
	Total	17	17	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	94 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	–	–	–
	Girls	–	–	–
	Total	17	16	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	94 (1000)	100 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Details of boys' and girls' results are not published separately when there are 10 or fewer boys or girls in the year group.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
85	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
24	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 – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	28.3

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	52.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	253,246
Total expenditure	267,583
Expenditure per pupil	2,532
Balance brought forward from previous year	48,131
Balance carried forward to next year	33,793

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.2

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	115
Number of questionnaires returned	78
Percentage of questionnaires returned	68

Percentage of responses in each category³

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	33	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	66	30	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	70	28	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	44	7	0	4
The teaching is good.	77	23	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	36	7	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	29	1	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	25	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	58	40	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	60	35	1	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	38	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	37	8	1	7

³ Because of rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.