

INSPECTION REPORT

ALMOND HILL JUNIOR SCHOOL

Almonds Lane, Stevenage

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique Reference number: 117221

Headteacher: Mrs J Lovelock

Reporting inspector: Mrs M Fitzpatrick
24326

Dates of inspection: 19 – 20 November 2002

Inspection number: 247741

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Almonds Lane Stevenage
Postcode:	SG1 3RP
Telephone number:	01438 233660
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Pourtahmasbi
Date of previous inspection:	6 October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Almond Hill School is about average size for a primary school, with 245 pupils and about equal numbers of boys and girls. There are three pupils who speak English as an additional language, all of them fluent in English, so there is no language barrier to their learning. The school population is predominantly white European, with a small proportion of pupils from mixed white and Caribbean, mixed white and Asian or Chinese backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is about the national average (11%). The percentage of pupils who are on the school's register of special educational needs is about average (22 %). There is one pupil with a Statement of Special Educational Needs, which is below the national average. The majority of special educational needs are associated with weak literacy skills. The vast majority of pupils who enter the school have reached the expected level in national tests when they were seven. In some years, a good proportion of pupils enter with higher than expected attainment. This fluctuation of attainment on entry is reflected in the schools own results when pupils are 11. Currently, the attainment of pupils in Year 3 is about average overall.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Almond Hill is a very good school, which places pupils' learning and achievement at the centre of its work. It is ambitious for its pupils to do their best and creates many opportunities in and out of the classroom for them to do so. Standards in the school are good, reflecting the impact of high quality teaching and close partnership with parents. The headteacher provides very good leadership for the school. Her vision of child-centred learning has been achieved through carefully developed methods for teaching and learning which ensure that children become confident, independent learners who are happy to take the initiative and accept responsibility for their learning. Given the amount the school spends and the very good outcomes it achieves, it is judged to give very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership for the development of the school.
- The quality of teaching is high; classroom assistants make a very strong contribution to pupils' learning.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good; their personal development and relationships are excellent.
- The rich curriculum provides very good opportunities for learning.
- The school develops highly effective partnerships for the benefit of pupils' learning.

What could be improved

- Strategies for the early identification of pupils' special educational needs in literacy and numeracy when they join the school.
- The space available for teaching information and communication technology.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvement since it was last inspected in October 1997. It has improved the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level in the national tests through providing more challenge and better teaching for higher-attaining pupils. Standards and the quality of provision for information and communication technology (ICT) have improved significantly and both are now better than is usually seen in schools of this type. However, there is an issue about the size of the computer room, which only allows for half classes to be taught at a time. Standards in art and religious education have improved to at least the expected standard. The quality of teaching and learning has improved very significantly: there is now no unsatisfactory teaching and pupils are expected to become independent learners from an early age. The range and quality of learning resources have improved and now make a significant impact on pupils' learning. The school's development planning is now on a longer time scale and spending is linked to raising standards by improving provision. Since the previous inspection the

headteacher and deputy have worked closely to develop systems to monitor the work of the school and have extended monitoring activities to all subject co-ordinators. The strong teamwork, clear expectations and effective systems for self-evaluation mean that the school is in a good position to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	A	C	C
Mathematics	C	A	C	D
Science	B	A	B	B

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

The percentage of pupils achieving the higher level in these tests was above the national average in English and well above the average in science. In mathematics the percentage of pupils reaching the higher level was average. The school's improvement in test results since the previous inspection has been higher than the national trend. Girls' performance in the tests has been better than that of boys over the last four years and has been above that of all girls nationally. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to exceed the national average in the national tests in English, mathematics and science in 2003, which in part reflects the attainment of this group of pupils when they entered the school as well as the impact of good teaching since then. In other subjects pupils achieve good standards, notably in ICT where they quickly acquire skills and are then given frequent opportunities to consolidate and extend them; and in design and technology where they have a very good understanding of the design process and have well-developed skills in evaluating and making products. One of the reasons pupils reach such good standards is the design of the curriculum, which is planned in such a way as to ensure that pupils use skills and knowledge from one subject to support their learning in others. The school has set appropriate and challenging targets for the national tests in 2003 based on good assessment of what Year 6 pupils are currently achieving.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils show great enthusiasm for school. They are eager participants in learning, both in and out of the classroom.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in all areas of the school. Some challenging behaviour in one class is being well monitored and supported.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent relationships provide a very strong basis for learning. Pupils' independence, awareness of and care for others and their contribution to the development of the school through the School Council are noteworthy.
Attendance	Excellent. Well above the national average, reflecting pupils' enthusiasm for school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	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.

Teaching is a strength of the school. During the inspection there was a very high proportion of good and very good teaching and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge in English and mathematics and make effective use of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies to teach well-structured lessons at a brisk pace. Some outstanding teaching was seen in a Year 3, mathematics lesson, where pupils of all abilities learnt at a very good rate because of the teachers sharp questioning and high expectations. In science, teaching and learning are of a consistently high standard. This is because of the strong emphasis that the school has placed on developing pupils' investigative skills. The result is that pupils have good observation skills, are confident about making predictions when they carry out investigations and remember what they have learned because they are so involved in the process. Teaching in ICT is good overall and is often very good. Both teachers and teaching assistants have good levels of knowledge in the subject, which they use to give clear explanations to pupils. While pupils' learning in the subject is good, with more access to the computers this would quickly become very good. In all other subjects teachers plan well to meet the needs of pupils and provide a very rich curriculum which enhances the overall impact of teaching. In all classes teachers and classroom assistants plan very closely to meet the needs of all pupils. There are a few pupils who enter the school with low test scores in English and mathematics and their needs should be more carefully analysed to provide more specific targets for their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school has worked hard to make links with local businesses and neighbouring schools to enrich and enhance pupils' learning. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very much better than is usually seen in schools of this size and gives pupils very good opportunities to develop personal interests and a wide range of skills.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision for pupils' learning, which is well supported by the work of classroom assistants. The school recognises the need to improve its strategies for identifying pupils' specific needs and has begun work on this.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils have rich experiences in their learning which allow them to see connections between subjects and develop an understanding of the many cultures in their society. These experiences give them a real love of learning and excitement about making discoveries for themselves. They also give pupils very good opportunities to socialise and to develop a strong moral code.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good care at all levels. Procedures for monitoring all aspects of pupils' development are very good and ensure that pupils are well known to their teachers. The monitoring of their academic progress is very good and pupils have a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses as learners.

The school has an excellent partnership with parents. This makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning and to the ethos of the school. The school's very good consultation procedures ensure that parents feel informed and involved 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	The headteacher sets clear and high expectations for all staff based on getting the very best for all pupils. She has been well supported in developing the school by the deputy headteacher. The English and mathematics co-ordinators, who complete the senior management team, set high standards in their work and provide good guidance for their colleagues to bring about improvements.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the school. They are active in promoting links that the school has made and are becoming skilled in school evaluation. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school has well-developed procedures for monitoring its own work and its performance in national tests. All subject co-ordinators are involved in monitoring standards and use their knowledge to contribute to the school's priorities for development.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The training and deployment of classroom assistants are a strength and have a notable impact on standards. The skilful use of part-time teachers to release staff for monitoring duties enriches the learning experiences of pupils. The school tries hard to get best value in what it does and what it buys. However, the limited space in the computer suite means that teaching in ICT is often inefficient since only half classes can be taught at a time. The school has a surplus in its budget which is earmarked to make further improvements to the site.

Accommodation is very well used and displays provide very good reinforcement for pupils' learning as well as showing how well their work is valued. The range and quality of learning resources are good, enhancing both teaching and learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress. • Their children are expected to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is well led and managed and all staff are approachable. • The teaching is good. • The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. • The school takes into account parents' views. • The school provides an interesting range of activities outside of lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of information they receive about their children's progress.

The inspection team fully agree with parents' positive views of the school. They do not agree with the few parents who felt they needed more information on their children's progress, because the school provides much higher quality information on pupils' progress than is usually seen. The school also

makes clear to parents that they are welcome to make an appointment at any time in the year to discuss their children's learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well

1. Standards achieved by pupils in the national tests improved faster than the national average in the last three years. Overall in the last three years, pupils' performance exceeded the national average in English, mathematics and science. This year's results show a dip in performance, reflecting the higher proportion of the pupils in Year 6 who had special educational needs. Tests results show that about half of these pupils missed the expected level in the tests by between one and three marks. The performance of pupils at the higher level in national tests has been consistently well above average in recent years and for the last three years has exceeded the national average in each of the subjects. Through its very good assessment procedures, the school has recognised the difference in rates of progress made by some groups of pupils; notably those joining the school with low test scores in reading and writing. By improving the analysis of these pupils' needs and providing appropriate support, the school intends to ensure that they make the same good progress as other pupils. The less good performance of boys compared with girls has also led the school to devise additional strategies to support boys' learning especially in reading and writing.
2. Standards in English, mathematics and science are good in all classes. In the current Year 6, standards in these subjects are above the expectation for 11-year-olds. All pupils are confident speakers, who are able to express their ideas clearly and develop those of others when called on to do so. They listen closely in all lessons and are very eager to answer the teachers' questions to demonstrate how well they have followed the teaching. They enjoy writing for different purposes and have good opportunities to write in different ways for subjects other than English. In mathematics they are very secure in their understanding of number and shape and they enjoy applying their mathematical skills in other subjects such as science or design and technology. Their design work is very well executed; pupils make detailed drawings of products they make, altering them as they improve their ideas after evaluating their designs. Their work seen on slippers and cam-operated toys showed high levels of care and very good understanding of the process and skills involved in making and designing. Pupils' use of information and communication technology to support their learning in other subjects is impressive. Pupils' standards in the subject have risen dramatically since the previous inspection and are now above the expectation for their age. They make very good use of ICT to research information for a wide range of subjects such as history, science and geography, as well as creating their own web pages for inclusion in the school's website. They are very competent users of ICT to redraft their work in English and science and apply their mathematical knowledge to create and interpret graphs. Year 5 pupils were delighted to be able to read a graph as it developed on a computer screen while they tracked a sensor's reading of water as it heated. Such exciting application of ICT is common in the school and pupils' enthusiasm for learning is stimulated by such interesting and lively activities.

The headteacher provides very good leadership for the development of the school

3. The headteacher provides very good leadership for the development of the school. She has a very clear educational vision, which is encapsulated in the school's motto, *Aim High*. This vision is very well communicated to those who work in the school, so that the aim of helping each child achieve his or her best in all areas is translated into effective action for learning by teaching and support staff. The headteacher has led the school through considerable improvement on a wide front since the previous inspection. Higher-attaining pupils are now well challenged and perform well in national tests. Standards in ICT have improved so that they are now above expectation for the majority of pupils. Standards in art and religious education have improved and pupils have a much richer curriculum in these subjects than at the time of the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved very significantly. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are now

consistently high throughout the school and the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and personal development is now very good. All of these improvements have been carried out at a steady pace, with very good consultation between the headteacher and teachers, governors, parents and pupils. The range and frequency of consultation that is carried out is a strength of the school and the headteacher's vision has been central to developing the very good strategies that the school now uses for improvement.

4. The headteacher has very high professional expectations of her colleagues and these are seen in their detailed job descriptions as well as in the consistently good quality of their work. She is alert to teachers' professional needs through her good understanding of their experience and through the information she gathers from the many monitoring activities that the school undertakes. There are well-planned opportunities, for teachers and classroom assistants, to improve their skills and the understanding of their role, both in the classroom and as subject managers. This professional development has created a strong team, which is receptive to new ideas and eager to improve its performance. The regular promotion of staff in the school to senior posts elsewhere reflects the effectiveness of this professional development. The headteacher has been well supported by the deputy headteacher, who is skilled in assessing appropriate timing for changes and developments. The English, mathematics and ICT co-ordinators give very good support to the development of the school through the very high standards they set in the quality of their own work and in giving very good support to teachers and classroom assistants to help them improve. They have brought about significant improvements in their subjects due to the effective use of good monitoring procedures which help them set priorities for development. The improvements in ICT are noteworthy because they have been so successful in developing staff confidence and raising standards. The inclusion of classroom assistants in the programme of development has given them the skills to lead lessons and give good support to pupils' learning in the subject. The work of these co-ordinators sets the example for all other co-ordinators, who also make effective use of monitoring to assess standards in their subjects and to decide where improvement is needed. The quality of teachers' planning is an area which has benefited from these procedures and the strength of this makes a very good contribution to the overall quality of teaching and learning in the school.

The quality of teaching is high; classroom assistants make a very strong contribution to pupils' learning

5. The quality of teaching is a strength in all classes. The proportion of good and very good teaching is higher than is usually seen in schools of this type. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to plan interesting and challenging activities for learning. In a very good English lesson, the teacher's crisp explanation and very good questioning about a complex poem led pupils to a very clear understanding of the writer's intentions and how he achieved his effects. The well-staged activities engaged the pupils and kept them well motivated as they attempted their own versions of personification of night. The class had benefited from high quality teaching in the subject as understanding of figurative language and use of imagery demonstrated. The work of the classroom assistant in this lesson was typical of that seen during the inspection. She gave very good support to pupils through sharp questioning and helped them achieve better standards than they would have managed unsupported. The quality of preparation and questioning seen in this lesson is typical of the lessons seen throughout the school. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and want them to do well. They conduct mathematics lessons at a brisk pace and place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' reasoning. In an excellent lesson in Year 3, pupils relished the teachers' rapid questioning at the start of the lesson when she tried to 'catch them out' with number problems. This set the tone for a lesson where pupils learned how to use a number line as a method for addition with impressive speed. The teacher's very good knowledge of the pupils' prior learning meant she was able to set appropriately challenging work for all pupils. In this lesson, as in many others, pupils were eager to get started on independent tasks to demonstrate how well they had learned.
6. Pupils' learning in science, ICT and design and technology benefits hugely from teachers' expertise at planning lessons which are designed to challenge pupils to draw on their learning in

other subjects to solve problems. Year 4 pupils thoroughly enjoyed using their existing scientific knowledge to devise a procedure to keep things cold. The use of magnifiers and computerised microscopes gave pupils a very good sense of how they needed to base their predictions on thorough investigations. Their understanding of materials from design and technology projects enables them to describe accurately what they see in the microscope, while their literacy skills help them to write instructions for other pupils to follow to repeat their experiment. Year 5 pupils made very good use of their mathematical skills during an excellent science lesson. They watched closely as the temperature graph on the computer screen rose steadily then used their calculations to predict how long it would take to reach boiling point and what the line of the graph would look like. Higher attainers effortlessly gauged the rate of increase because of their very good mathematical skills and their sharp observations during the investigation. Pupils' learning through ICT is very good. They are confident users of computers, who see the applications of this technology relating to all other areas of their learning. They research independently for history and geography and are able to redraft their writing because of their good word processing skills. Teachers have very good knowledge of their pupils from the thorough assessment methods they use. They make good use of this to arrange groups so that pupils receive well-targeted and challenging teaching. In this way the school makes the best use of its highly skilled teachers and classroom assistants for the benefit of pupils' learning. The excellent relationships that exist underpin the work in the classrooms and ensure a very positive and happy learning environment.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good; their personal development and relationships are excellent

7. All pupils show a high enthusiasm for learning and a willingness to be involved in activities. They are seldom away from school, a fact reflected in the school's excellent attendance figures. Parents attribute their children's love of school to the enthusiasm of teachers, who are held in very high regard both by parents and children. In lessons, pupils listen very closely and join in confidently with discussion and activities. They ask searching questions in their pursuit of knowledge and in mathematics lessons are able to explain their methods to the rest of the class with clarity. One reason that pupils have such an enjoyment of learning is that their opinions are sought and valued by teachers. This in turn generates deeper thought in pupils; good examples of this were seen in a Year 6 English lesson. Here, pupils were exploring the meaning and style of a complex poem as a model for their own writing. All pupils were confident about their writing as a result of having the opportunity to express their opinions and comments and hear their classmates respond to these. Pupils also enjoy learning when teachers place them under pressure to explore and discover for themselves. In a very good ICT lesson the pupils' enthusiasm was outstanding as they worked at a fast pace to construct their own web page. The challenging teaching had placed their decision making at the centre of their work. As a consequence they made very good choices about background colour, size of font, layout and graphics and were delighted with their results, which were, "All our own work". Pupils' behaviour is very good because the school places strong emphasis on this. The teachers' high expectations are very well met by pupils, who value and enjoy their learning and respect the rights of others to learn. Throughout the day pupils are seen being polite and considerate towards each other. For those few pupils whose behaviour is challenging, the school works very closely with the Education Support Centre to provide specialist support for them. This creates a very harmonious environment for learning and one in which pupils feel well supported and secure.
8. Pupils of all ages are confident and, responsible and show high levels of independence. This is because of the many opportunities that the school has provided for them to take the initiative, become involved in the work of the school and accept responsibility for the smooth running of their classrooms. The School Council is a well-developed forum for pupils to make suggestions for improvements and decisions about which charities they will support. Pupils who had been elected to the council spoke with great enthusiasm about its achievements since they had joined the school. They have improved facilities in the playground by providing seating, picnic benches and landscaping. The work was carried out with a grant that the School Council bid for from the local council, and this made them doubly proud of their achievements. They are currently taking suggestions from classmates for more flexible choices of where to spend the lunch break. Pupils

have a well-developed awareness of the plight of others through their charitable fund-raising activities. They have raised considerable sums for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Children in Need and enjoy making the fund-raising a fun event for all. They have become so successful at organising events that some parents suggested that they continue to fill the role formerly filled by the Parents Association, with parents giving additional support as it is needed. Pupils are confident and feel valued and respected; as a result they form excellent relationships with classmates and older and younger pupils as well as teachers and other adults working in the school. Teachers, pupils and support staff all hold each other in high regard and in this they are led by the excellent example of the headteacher. Because of these relationships pupils get great enjoyment from their learning and realise the importance of being aware of the needs of others if everyone is to gain maximum benefit from school.

The rich curriculum provides very good opportunities for learning

9. The rich well-planned curriculum contributes very strongly to pupils' breadth of learning. The leadership of the headteacher provides a strong impetus to enrich the curriculum through very careful planning for teaching, the organisation of visits out of school and visitors into school, and the recruitment of parental support to help run the many after school clubs alongside teachers, that are provided to develop pupils' interests. The school makes very good provision through its curriculum planning for effective links to be made between subjects and has theme weeks when one subject is chosen for concentrated attention. In the last four years these have included mathematics, ICT, design and technology and science weeks. Pupils enjoy working in one subject while applying the skills learned in another, as science and technology lessons testify. Pupils get a real 'buzz' from using ICT to track changes in water temperature during a science lesson, or applying their mathematical knowledge when measuring and estimating to produce nets for their slipper designs. The school is very successful at recruiting visiting experts to excite and enthuse pupils. Year 6 pupils spoke with great enthusiasm about their learning with a teacher-builder, who earlier this term had taught them a range of skills including bricklaying, plumbing and wallpaper hanging. This application of the skills they learn in design and technology gave pupils a real insight into the value of such skills as well as preparing them for more advanced work when they move on to secondary school. Regular visits from *real scientists* through the school's links with a local pharmaceutical firm provide further exciting challenges.
10. The school's extra-curricular provision is extensive, providing many opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and pursue their interests over a wide range of subjects. Games and sports are very well represented and the school enjoys success in local tournaments in football and netball. Music is very well promoted. Currently, about one third of pupils are involved in instrument tuition. The music specialist from the local secondary school teaches Year 6, to prepare them for their parts in a joint schools production later this term. French, art, ICT, drama, dance and stage management are among the other numerous clubs that the school organises. All are very well supported by pupils, some of whom also find time to join the weekly homework club. The school's provision of visits to support learning in the curriculum is impressive and pupils in all years benefit from well-organised trips to museums, art galleries, and local business, as well as field study visits in the locality. The provision of two residential journeys demonstrates again the school's commitment to both enriching learning for pupils and providing them with good opportunities to develop independence and good social skills. The school's annual musical productions provide another vehicle for pupils to develop their confidence and demonstrate the skills they have learned in school and at school clubs.

The school develops highly effective partnerships for the benefit of pupils' learning

11. Since the previous inspection the school has made very good progress in developing links with parents, partner institutions and local industry. The links with parents are of very high quality and are based on the headteacher's belief in regular and genuine consultation about what the school provides for its pupils. Parents spoke very favourably of the way the school values their contribution to their children's learning and consults them about proposed changes. They cited

the arrangements for homework as a good example of the school listening to parents' views. The setting of homework at the start of the week to be handed in at the end is welcomed by parents who can then organise other activities around this. Some parents give support either in class or by helping to run school clubs. Some also involve themselves in the frequent educational visits that the school organises.

12. The headteacher is highly successful in developing links to improve opportunities for learning. She has strengthened links with the neighbouring infant and secondary schools since the previous inspection and these are now very good. They make a very good impact on pupils' learning and their ability to deal with the transfer from one school to another. The school's partnership with these schools brings expertise and further support for pupils' learning. Links with the infant school ensure that pupils are well prepared for the move to the junior school. They also give pupils good preparation for the transfer so that they are confident and ready to move to a bigger school. Links with the local secondary school include a music link which provides expert teaching for pupils in Year 6 and involves them in singing in the annual Christmas production alongside senior pupils. There has also been a very effective teacher link with the secondary school in recent times, which has involved teachers from both schools sharing their expertise and knowledge in literacy, numeracy and science. This has led to an improved understanding of the pupils' experiences and made teachers better equipped to prepare them for the secondary school and to meet the needs of pupils after transfer. The links also extend to sharing expertise in design and technology and the use of science laboratories in the secondary school, so that older junior pupils have the opportunity to work with more sophisticated equipment.
13. The school's links with local business and industry bring considerable benefits to pupils' learning. Visits to the local pizza store are planned as part of the Year 3 pupils' food technology project. Pupils enjoy a visit that entails making their own pizza and selecting what they will top this with. They return to school and enjoy their pizza for lunch before evaluating their choices of topping. In Years 5 and 6 pupils have regular visits from scientists from a local pharmaceutical company, who give thrilling scientific demonstrations and show pupils how to use complex scientific equipment. During the inspection pupils were delighted with demonstrations showing how matter changed. They came to a very clear understanding of the different states of matter as a result of this exciting learning experience. Business links for Year 6 took a very exciting turn when the slipper design they produced was sent by a local store to manufacturers in China to be made up. They were thrilled to see the finished product and compare it with their handmade versions. The school's links to the Construction Industry Training Board through the Hertfordshire Business Partnership bring hands-on training in skills such as plumbing, bricklaying and wallpapering for Year 6 pupils, who were delighted to talk about their achievements during these activities. From all of these and many other links, the pupils derive great benefit in both their knowledge and understanding of the world as well as in the skills and confidence they acquire.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Strategies for the early identification of pupils' special educational needs in literacy and numeracy when they join the school

14. School assessment and tracking data shows that while pupils with weaknesses in basic skills make satisfactory progress during their time in school, it is often not as good as the progress made by those with sound knowledge of the basic skills. The school has become aware of this problem through the headteacher's analysis of assessment and has begun to look at ways of tackling the problem. At present there is no diagnostic assessment of specific weaknesses of pupils who join the school with low scores in national tests when they are seven. In order to deal effectively with low levels of literacy and improve the basic skills of these pupils more quickly, the school needs to implement strategies for identifying the specific needs of individuals through such assessment, then provide more appropriate learning opportunities for the pupils who join the school each year with these needs.

The space available for teaching information and communication technology

15. Since the previous inspection the school has converted a small classroom into an ICT suite of fifteen computers. The restrictions on space in this room mean that only half classes can be taught at a time, which is an inefficient use of teachers' time and the expensive resources. These arrangements mean that pupils only spend half the time on computers that they would if the room were large enough to take full classes. Even with half classes there is a lack of effective ventilation because of the size of the room, which is another consideration reducing the quality of this provision. Because of these difficulties, the full impact of the ICT provision on pupils' standards is not yet being realised. While pupils currently achieve good standards in the subject, this could move to very good standards if they had more access to computers.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

16. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should: *
- (1) Improve the basic skills of pupils who join the school with low test scores when they are seven by:
 - analysing their weaknesses in order to provide targets and teaching which will help them to make good progress;
 - sharing targets and progress regularly with pupils so that they are well motivated to work hard.(paragraph 14)
 - (2) Find ways of extending the space available for the teaching of ICT so that pupils gain the maximum benefit from high quality teaching and more regular use of the resources. *

* These issues have already been included in the school's current development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	27
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	2	9	12	4	0	0	0
Percentage	8	33	44	15	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	Y3– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	245
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	23

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	28

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7%
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 2 (Year 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	31	33	64

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	23	26
	Girls	26	26	30
	Total	44	49	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (89)	77 (84)	88 (94)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	24	25
	Girls	30	29	30
	Total	52	53	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (79)	83 (78)	86 (86)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	168	1	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	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	1	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	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	61	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: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.5
Average class size	31

Education support staff: Y3– Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	193

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002-03
	£
Total income	523,895
Total expenditure	525,292
Expenditure per pupil	2047
Balance brought forward from previous year	60,994

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	245
Number of questionnaires returned	91

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	27	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	34	1	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	44	1	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	51	43	7	0	0
The teaching is good.	64	33	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	27	8	2	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	16	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	23	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	55	32	10	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	73	23	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	32	1	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	71	26	2	0	0