

INSPECTION REPORT

SHEEPY MAGNA C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Atherstone

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120158

Headteacher: Mrs D Bailey

Reporting inspector: Mr M H Cole
3369

Dates of inspection: 9th – 11th December 2002

Inspection number: 248103

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior
School category: Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils: 5 to 11 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Main Road
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Atherstone
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr T Gooding

Date of previous inspection: March 1998

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a small rural infant and junior school serving 70 pupils aged four to eleven. Pupils start at the school in the reception year in September or January depending on their birth date. The area served by the school is one of above average social and economic circumstances. Pupils start at the school with attainment which, overall, is a little above average. Presently, two pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, a relatively very small number. Almost all pupils are of white British origin and all speak English as their first language. The school has a new headteacher who took up her post three months before the inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school where good teaching helps pupils to achieve good standards of work, develop very good attitudes and behave very well. The school is well led by a new headteacher who is successfully bringing about needed improvements in the management of the school. Taking account of pupils' progress and the level of available funds, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well and the oldest pupils' results in National Curriculum tests of English, mathematics and science are well above both the national averages and the averages for similar schools.
- Teaching throughout the school is of good quality.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are all very good.
- Very good provisions are made for pupils' moral and social development and there are good arrangements for pupils' welfare.
- The new headteacher has a very clear vision of how the school can improve and is giving strong leadership to a hardworking and committed team of staff in achieving improvement.

What could be improved

Although matters are now improving significantly, further development is needed in:

- planning of the curriculum to ensure a better balance between the parts, and to ensure pupils' work always builds on previous learning;
- assessment of pupils' progress as a basis for planning the teaching;
- the management processes used by staff and governors for planning the work of the school and keeping a check on its effectiveness;
- provision of resources of books and equipment, and the use of the accommodation.

All of these improvements are already included in the school's new school improvement plan

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the previous inspection in March 1998 the picture of school improvement is mixed. The previous inspection reported strengths in the good standards of English and mathematics, in pupils' good attitudes and behaviour and in the good quality of the teaching. These strengths were also apparent during this inspection. In addition, the standard of science work has improved so that it, too, is now good. The previous inspection required the school to attend to two areas for improvement: planning of the curriculum and assessment of pupil progress. These remain areas in need of improvement today because little was done to improve matters for nearly four years following the previous inspection. Many other areas of less serious weakness noted at the previous inspection, such as the shortage of books and weak financial planning and management, were also not tackled. This was clearly unsatisfactory.

Following a period of ill-health the previous headteacher retired at the end of 2001. Subsequently, a senior staff member acted as temporary headteacher for two terms and, with support from the local education authority, made a start on improving curriculum planning and assessment. This process of improvement has accelerated since the appointment of the new permanent headteacher from September 2002. Her determined leadership of school improvement represents a clear improvement over the situation in the years following the previous inspection and a very good start has been made to improvement in many areas of school life. The school now has a good capacity for further improvement.

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 ¹
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A*	B	n/a	n/a
Mathematics	A	A*	n/a	n/a
Science	A*	A	n/a	n/a

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

¹ Similar schools are defined by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals; this measure has been found to be significantly related to the levels of attainment normally found in schools nationally.

n/a denotes numbers of pupils taking tests too small for comparison and therefore not applicable.

Where numbers of pupils in each year group are small, as in this school, fluctuations in results from year-to-year are likely and the results in any one year have limited significance. In 2002 the number of pupils taking the tests was too small to be significant and is not, therefore, shown. Putting together the test results for the last four years (a total of 49 pupils) shows them gaining results well above both the corresponding national averages and the averages for similar schools. Results in 2002 exceeded the official targets the school had agreed with the local education authority but these targets appear to have been set at a modest level. Small numbers of pupils taking the tests make trends difficult to identify reliably but such evidence as is available points to high standards being maintained.

Pupils aged seven taking the 2002 national tests of writing and mathematics achieved average scores in writing and mathematics but below average scores in reading. In reading, 93 per cent of the pupils reached the level of attainment expected nationally for their age, but overall results were below average because relatively few pupils exceeded the expected level. Overall, the seven-year-olds' results in 2002 were not as good as in the three previous years when they were above average or better in all three areas of reading, writing and mathematics. The difference in results partly reflected the profile of ability and special needs in the year group. Comparing pupils' test scores with their attainment on starting school, these pupils achieved satisfactorily.

Evidence during the inspection, from lessons and from pupils' recent written work, shows them achieving well, though with some variations across the curriculum. Examples of pupils achieving well were seen in English, mathematics and in some aspects of science, information and communication technology, music and physical education. In English, speaking skills and the lively content of pupils' writing are particular strengths, while in mathematics a sure understanding of numbers and the ability to manipulate them is impressive. Throughout the school, pupils make at least the progress to be expected in relation to their earlier attainments, and some do better than expected. This is because pupils respond with enthusiasm and endeavour to the challenging tasks that teachers set. The very small number of pupils in the reception year at the time of the inspection were also achieving well and they are well on track to reach, and in some aspects exceed, the nationally recommended early learning goals by the end of their

reception year.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and interested in their work. They are keen to succeed in all that they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Both in lessons and at other times, pupils behave co-operatively and sensibly with little need for adult direction.
Personal development and relationships	Good. When given opportunities to show responsibility and independence pupils respond well. They make very good relationships.
Attendance	Very good. The rate of attendance is well above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching in English and mathematics is of good quality and some very good lessons are given. In English, the work often promotes good speaking and listening, teaches basic reading skills well and inspires pupils' enthusiasm to write, but the approach to teaching spelling, punctuation and handwriting is not sufficiently consistent and systematic. Teaching provides well for the range of abilities and needs. In mathematics, pupils, including some of high ability, are often challenged particularly well so that they make good progress. Teachers manage pupils very well, generating interest and enthusiasm and securing a very well-behaved and attentive response from pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The quality of provision is patchy. It is generally good in English, mathematics and science but with variation between aspects within these subjects. There are also areas of weakness within geography, history and religious education. Too little use of information and communication technology is made across the curriculum. Indoor aspects of physical education suffer from shortage of space. Though now improving, past weakness in planning has resulted in some lack of continuity in the curriculum as pupils progress through the school. A good range of good quality activities outside lessons extends learning opportunities significantly.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The very small number of pupils concerned is given satisfactory support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision is made for moral and social development. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Too little is done to help pupils appreciate the range of cultures beyond their own locality.

How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of care is good. Welfare arrangements are good and the care of pupils benefits from the very good relationships within the school and the good relations between the school and most parents.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the new headteacher is good. She has quickly made a good analysis of the school's strengths and of where it can improve. She has a clear vision of how the school can maintain key strengths and bring about improvement. Well considered plans are matched by a determination to implement them. A very good start has been made on much-needed improvement in management processes.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactorily. Almost all governors are new to the role and they are beginning to improve their procedures. They are working with the headteacher to bring the school fully into line with several statutory obligations which have been neglected.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Checks on the effectiveness of the school's work have been unsystematic and have lacked rigour. Some improvements have recently begun to be made.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory. Financial planning has lacked care and precision in relating priorities to spending patterns. As a result there are some shortages in the school's resources, such as library books, and the accommodation is not well used to meet the needs of the curriculum. Procedures for checking that the school achieves the best value from its financial and other resources have been poor.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>That their children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> like school; make good progress; behave well at school; and become more mature and responsible. <p>That the school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is well led and managed; provides good teaching; expects pupils to work hard; and is approachable with questions or problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About a quarter of parents would like to see an improvement in homework arrangements. <p>A small minority have concerns about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how closely the school works with parents; information about their children's progress; the range of activities outside lessons.

The inspection findings support all of the positive views expressed by parents. They also support parental concern about homework where parents are unclear what is supposed to be done and there is some inconsistency in practice. Inspectors agree that school reports could give clearer indications of how well pupils are doing and of how they can improve. Inspectors judge the range of activities outside of lessons to be good. Although parents pay for some activities, where external providers are involved, the range of free activities is still good, especially for a small school. Some parents regret the withdrawal of some adventurous physical activities, necessitated by the loss of staff expertise to run them, but others recognise that present provision (together with art and drama clubs planned to begin after the inspection) provides a better-balanced programme than previously.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils achieve well and the oldest pupils' results in National Curriculum tests of English, mathematics and science are well above both the national averages and the averages for similar schools

1. Because the numbers of pupils in each year group are small there are inevitable fluctuations in results of national tests from year-to-year. However, a clear overall picture emerges when the test results for the last four years are put together. Results for pupils aged eleven show clearly that the standards of English, mathematics and science achieved by the oldest pupils are well above the national average. Results in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils aged seven over the four-year period are above average.
2. That pupils achieve well is shown by the fact that the oldest pupils' test results are also well above the averages achieved by similar schools. Good achievement is also indicated by measures of pupils' progress as they move through the school. Pupils start at the school mostly with some playgroup experience but no formal nursery education and the overall profile of pupils' abilities when they join the reception class is a little above average. However, by the time they leave the school pupils' attainment is generally well above average. Comparison of pupils' national test results at age seven with those they gained later at age eleven in 2002 shows that, overall, pupils made better progress than might be expected. However, within the general picture of good achievement there are some variations because achievement is not so good in some parts of some subjects where the curriculum is sketchy, as described later in this report.
3. Just as small numbers in year groups produce variations in test results, so too, the work seen during the inspection showed variations between year groups that reflect the particular profiles of abilities in each group. The work of pupils presently in both Years 4 and 5, taken as a whole, is well above average. However, the work of the present Year 6 pupils is broadly of average quality. This year group is somewhat unrepresentative, however, in that it includes a significant proportion of pupils who have only recently joined the school and some instances of special learning needs.
4. Pupils achieve well for a number of reasons. Their progress benefits from the fact that they approach school and learning with positive attitudes and very good behaviour. They want to learn and are keen to succeed. This in part reflects teachers' success in providing interesting and stimulating activities and in their skills of managing pupils. Teaching also sets generally high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils respond keenly to these challenges.
5. Stimulating teaching is effective in promoting a good feature of pupils' achievement in literacy which is not measured by national tests: the quality of their speaking and listening. Throughout the school pupils listen attentively and with understanding and they speak with confidence and clarity, a good many making contributions in class discussions that are both well formed and of substantial length for their age.
6. Pupils' lively response to the good stimulus provided in the teaching is also evident in their writing in English and sometimes in other subjects. The content of pupils' writing is often lively and engaging. The oldest pupils develop a good sense of the need to adapt style for different purposes such as to persuade, report, instruct, describe, or simply to

tell a gripping story. A good deal of the writing shows the ability to employ a variety of sentence structures, thoughtful use of devices such as dialogue to enliven stories and a wide vocabulary. The oldest pupils' writing shows them using words like *thrust*, *vigorously*, *embedded*, *demolished* or *devastated* with a sure sense of their meaning. Some imaginative writing, including some poetry, shows sensitivity supported by well-chosen words. Although, overall, writing is of a good standard, some inaccuracy in spelling, punctuation and handwriting is a relative weakness for a good many pupils. Also, although the oldest pupils have good basic skills of reading, their more advanced reading skills are a relative weakness. They are not certain about techniques of using libraries or books to research information and they are not as enthusiastic about reading as might be expected considering their generally good attitudes and abilities. These disappointing qualities are consistent with the school's poor resources of library books and accommodation.

7. In mathematics, too, pupils generally achieve well throughout the school. In particular, pupils' basic understanding of numbers and their ability to manipulate them quickly and accurately, both in mental and written calculations, is very good. Pupils enjoy rising to the challenges teachers set them to solve number problems and they show confidence, understanding and initiative in exploring a range of strategies that can be used to find the answer. The oldest pupils' achievement has shown some unevenness between different parts of the subject, but in recent weeks the new headteacher has taken effective remedial action that has improved the oldest pupils' understanding and skills in aspects of the subject concerned with shape, space and measures and with data handling. Some good work has recently been done, for example in calculating the areas of irregular or complex shapes and in constructing graphs and using co-ordinates. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 continue, though, to feel less certain about choosing the right mathematical operations to apply to real-life problems, such as deciding how many rolls of wallpaper to buy when decorating a room.
8. Although the inspection focused particularly on the priority subjects and skills of English and mathematics, evidence during the inspection from lessons, from pupils' recent written work and from discussions with pupils showed some other areas of good achievement. Some good understanding in science emerged from discussion with some older pupils. They could, for example, explain some processes in plant reproduction, causes of condensation and evaporation or how a mixture of liquids and solids might be separated. Asked to evaluate an imaginary scientific investigation described to them, they could explain why the test was not fair, identifying the variables that had not been controlled in trying to establish cause and effect.
9. Another example of pupils achieving well was their development of musical understanding and skills. Years 3 and 4 pupils showed good rhythmic awareness, as they clapped complex rhythmic sequences set by the teacher, a good awareness of pitch and a growing understanding of conventional musical notation. The many pupils who receive tuition in recorders and other musical instruments exceed the national expectations for their age in musical understanding and skills. Singing in school assemblies is of exceptional quality. It is musically very accurate, including some singing in two parts, and it is very expressive, adding greatly to the sense of community and celebration appropriate to the occasion.
10. Samples of teaching and learning in information and communication technology showed pupils making at least satisfactory, and in some cases good, progress. Their growing grasp of basic procedures for using the computer, operating programs, making selections and for accessing, saving or printing their own work was appropriate to the range of their ages. The youngest pupils (Years 1 and 2) were able to use a paint

program effectively to create pictures. Year 3 pupils were seen confidently exploring the use of different layouts and fonts to create attractive and effective posters advertising the school Christmas play, incorporating graphic elements (clipart) with their own wordprocessed writing. Year 6 pupils were seen making confident and successful use of search engines to research information from the Internet about the different ways Christmas is celebrated around the world.

11. At the time of the inspection there were only three pupils in the reception year. They were taught alongside the Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. Sometimes, where appropriate, they joined in similar activities to their older classmates and sometimes they were taught separately by the class teacher, or by the classroom assistant working under the teacher's guidance. Effective co-operation between these staff ensures the reception pupils are well supported and undertaking appropriate activity. However, there is a shortage of accommodation and resources, both indoors and outdoors, to support the more practical, physical or creative aspects of their learning needs. This shortage is likely to be more significant when a larger number of reception pupils are present in the second and third terms of the school year. However, the school's planning makes improvement of accommodation and resources for reception pupils a priority, once funds become available. During the inspection, the small group of reception pupils were progressing well in achieving good skills of counting, for example, and they showed a growing knowledge of letters, their sounds and how they are written. They are well on track to exceed the early learning goals for communication, language and literacy and for mathematical development by the end of their reception year. They are also progressing well in their personal development and are fitting happily and confidently into school routines. During the inspection, the reception pupils joined Years 1 and 2 on the carpet for a story, which the teacher read and discussed with the class. The reception pupils joined in well. When, afterwards, the teacher asked the class to return to their tables to do some drawing and writing related to the story, all did so quickly, quietly and enthusiastically, but none more so than the three reception pupils!

Teaching throughout the school is of good quality

12. All of the lessons seen during the inspection were of good quality and some were very good. In all cases lessons were well planned with well-designed activities relevant to the intended learning and to the range of pupils' abilities and needs. Teachers were clear and precise about what they intended pupils to learn and they shared their intentions with the class, helping pupils to adopt a responsible attitude to their own learning. Teachers showed a good knowledge of the subject-matter concerned, so that they were able to explain and demonstrate clearly and to ask well-designed questions to probe and draw out pupils' knowledge and understanding.
13. The management of pupils is a consistent strength of the teaching and results in pupils who are very well behaved, attentive to teachers, eagerly involved in lessons and keen to succeed. Lessons are calm, relaxed but purposeful and productive events. They take place at a good pace and pupils get plenty of work done. Teachers make the work interesting and stimulating and they also make it challenging, keeping pupils on their toes. Pupils enjoy the challenges offered and take pride in their ability to surmount them. In a very good Years 5 and 6 mathematics lesson, pupils worked with intense concentration as they tackled increasingly difficult multiplications of large numbers by combining the results of doubling smaller numbers. A marked feature of two very good literacy lessons, one with reception and Years 1 and 2 and another in Years 3 and 4, was the enthusiastic response of almost every pupil to the teachers' questions, with pupils sometimes speaking with commendable confidence, clarity and vocabulary for their ages. A sign of pupils' eagerness and initiative is the number of their own thoughts

they volunteer in class discussion; they do not have to wait for teachers' questions to be thinking about matters under discussion. Initiative and self-confidence were positive features of two lessons in information and communication technology where pupils worked independently, in one case to research information from the Internet and in another to experiment with layouts of text and graphics while creating a poster advertising the school's play.

14. Teachers have a sound understanding of their pupils' progress on a day-to-day basis which helps them to group pupils suitably and match their tasks to their abilities. The school shows some effective flexibility in grouping pupils, as when some more able Year 4 pupils join literacy and numeracy lessons for Years 5 and 6 so that they can work at a suitably challenging level. Similarly, pupils finding difficulty with the work are given additional help, sometimes from support staff working alongside particular groups or individuals, either in the classroom or separately. In the class for reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils a member of support staff collaborates effectively with the class teacher in making separate provision when appropriate for the reception pupils (a small group of three at the time of the inspection).
15. Evidence from pupils' exercise books shows some inconsistency in the quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work. In some good examples, comments are given that acknowledge pupils' achievement and pointers for further improvement are stated. However, this is not always the case and there are few examples of teachers setting clear targets for pupils to aim at in future work and then following these up when marking later work. The setting of homework, too, is inconsistent in practice. These areas of inconsistency reflect the lack of clear and consistently implemented whole-school policies on such matters and are an area where teaching could be improved.

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are all very good

16. The very good attitudes which pupils show in their learning in lessons are also found in other aspects of school life. Very many pupils, for example, choose to take part in activities outside lessons at lunchtime or after school. Some of these activities are quite challenging but, as in lessons, pupils participate with enthusiasm and endeavour. During the inspection, the school was celebrating its success in an inter-school cross-country running event on the previous wintry Saturday, when almost a third of the school turned out to compete on its behalf.
17. Behaviour, too, is as good around the school, in assemblies, playtimes and lunchtimes, as it is in lessons. Pupils play together in a way that is both high-spirited and well-meaning. No thoughtless or unkind behaviour was seen during the inspection. Instead, the very good behaviour reflects pupils' positive attitudes. They can be relied upon to do the sensible thing and have little need for adult direction.
18. Pupils relate very well to each other. They are kind, respectful and supportive and co-operate well with each other when given tasks in pairs or groups. Boys and girls relate well to each other, and older pupils show very caring attitudes toward younger ones. In the playground during the inspection, an older boy accidentally bumped into a younger one who fell and was hurt. The older boy was clearly upset and concerned to help, while several other older pupils were also quick to offer comfort and accompany the younger boy into the school to seek first aid.

Very good provisions are made for pupils' moral and social development and there are good arrangements for pupils' welfare

19. Moral development is good and there is a well-developed ethos of respect and kindness within which pupils' efforts and achievements are valued. Through the very fine examples set by the headteacher and other adults in the school, pupils learn the principles of right and wrong and what high standards of behaviour and care for others are expected. Staff constantly remind pupils about this and it permeates everything. Assemblies convey strong moral messages about the importance of kindness and goodness. Circle times also promote moral development well when pupils consider 'myself' or 'the value of good friendship'. They explore moral issues like 'how can I make myself a better person?'
20. Social development is also good. The skills and personal qualities required to become more mature and take on greater responsibility as pupils get older are promoted very well. The personal, social and health education programme teaches pupils some important life-skills such as adopting a healthy lifestyle, general safety at home and on the road, personal safety if pupils ever get lost and some early good citizenship skills. Charity-drives extend social awareness and help pupils appreciate and value others. Pupils have nominated a children's cancer charity they want to support this year. Other experiences, such as leading and taking part in assemblies, sporting events, clubs and musical and dramatic productions also extend social development well. Pupils were excited during the inspection about their Christmas play 'Master of the Time Vortex and his Magic Christmas Show'.
21. There are good procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare and these are very well backed-up by the very good relationships teachers make with pupils. Pupils say they feel well cared for and are sure that they can turn to any member of staff for help. Each class has its own set of rules, agreed with pupils. Pupils' participation in agreeing rules has helped them to understand the principles of right and wrong beneath the rules and promotes self-discipline. The agreed rules are referred to when there are transgressions and there is pressure by staff and peers alike to be more considerate. Although the school sometimes uses rewards to reinforce its expectations, these are appropriately unobtrusive. Pupils choose to behave well as a matter of course and it is a mark of the school's success in managing pupils that school staff need to take little overt action to guide pupils' behaviour.
22. Development of thoughtful behaviour and a sense of community is promoted by the newly established 'children's committee', elected by the pupils and with its own officers including chairperson, secretary and banker. At the time of the inspection the committee was organising a Christmas disco. The seriousness of the committee's function has been emphasised by providing them with a small budget which they recently voted to spend on playground games equipment. This is being well used and is further enhancing the constructive and co-operative quality of play. The committee is also working on a questionnaire with which it intends to ask all pupils for ideas for further school improvement.
23. All of the oldest pupils have responsibilities for helping around the school and younger pupils also take turns with classroom jobs. The school has a good range of ways for helping pupils to think and behave as responsible and helpful members of the community. A good many of the school's provisions for moral and social development have been introduced by the new headteacher and they are having a positive impact. Part-time staff who supervise pupils at lunchtime report an improvement in pupil attitudes, behaviour and relationships in recent weeks.

The new headteacher has a very clear vision of how the school can improve and is giving strong leadership to a hardworking and committed team of staff in achieving

improvement

24. Within a very short time of her appointment the headteacher arrived at a very thorough, clear and accurate analysis of both the school's considerable strengths and the areas where it needed to improve. This led to the presentation to governors of a new school improvement plan and a curriculum development plan for the school to follow. These documents provide a long-term strategic view for the next three years and a detailed set of precise proposals for the first year of operation. Both plans deal thoroughly with the key school weaknesses identified during the inspection. These plans are commendable for their very clear, comprehensive and systematic approach to the improvement of the school.
25. The headteacher was faced on appointment with difficult choices as to the priorities to pursue in improving the school and as to the pace at which to proceed. Inspectors judge that appropriate choices were made. Accordingly, action has quickly and effectively been taken to bring the school more fully into line with its statutory obligations, to improve some key aspects of curriculum planning, and to tackle issues connected with finance and resources. Some of this action has required a great deal of hard work by all school staff and they are to be congratulated on the marked progress made in a very short time. Credit is also due to the permanent staff members for their part in sustaining the school's good standards of work and behaviour over the last year when the former headteacher's illness and retirement led to a succession of many staff changes and temporary arrangements.
26. As the parents' pre-inspection questionnaire shows, the great majority of parents approve of the leadership of the school but the pace of recent change has led a few to express uncertainty about some developments. This suggests that there is some room for improvement in communication between governors, headteacher and parents to promote understanding about change.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Although matters are now improving significantly, further development is needed in:

Planning of the curriculum to ensure a better balance between the parts, and to ensure pupils' work always builds on previous learning

27. At the previous inspection in 1998 it was reported that there was 'some imbalance in what is taught and some key skills are not systematically developed'. Inspectors also said that the school 'needed to establish its long-term planning on a stronger footing ... and provide greater direction and support for ... the achievement of continuity and progression between classes and from year to year'. These remarks are still applicable today, reflecting the fact that in the years following the previous inspection little was done to attend to these weaknesses. Only in the last year, firstly under the leadership of the acting headteacher and more recently with the strong leadership of the new headteacher, have these matters been tackled. A good start has been made to establish principles and proper procedures for planning the curriculum but these have yet to achieve full implementation or the desired outcome.
28. The legacy of past inadequacies in curriculum planning is seen in a number of ways. While some parts of the curriculum are well covered and taught, others are dealt with superficially. Within English some aspects of writing have been well covered, such as the effective matching of content and style to audience and purpose, and the writing of stories and poetry. However, spelling, punctuation and handwriting have been paid too

little attention. Within mathematics, basic number skills have been thoroughly taught but other aspects of the subject have been relatively neglected until the new headteacher introduced a change of emphasis to compensate for past inadequacy. Within geography, skills of using maps have received too little attention. Within religious education, Christianity has been well covered but work on other world faiths has been sketchy. In physical education, games and other outdoor activity has been very well covered but gymnastics and dance have been relatively neglected, partly because appropriate resources have not been acquired and the use of school accommodation has not been well organised. Information and communication technology has been an area of past weakness, though this has begun to improve significantly in the last few months following establishment of the computer suite. In addition to a lack of balance, the school's curriculum has also continued to show what inspectors in 1998 described as 'a lack of continuity and progression'. This has meant, not only some gaps in the curriculum provided, but also some repetition. Some history topics, for example, have been revisited several times by the oldest pupils while other aspects of the subject, including enquiry skills, have been given too little emphasis. In this, and in other subjects, there has not been a clear enough system for ensuring that, regardless of their age within the class, pupils develop skills in the proper sequence. The school has lacked a sufficiently reliable approach to the challenge of providing a curriculum for all pupils in its mixed-age classes that constantly promotes new knowledge, understanding or skill that builds on previous learning.

29. Outside of the National Curriculum, provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development, too, has lacked clarity of policy, planning and guidance for teachers. As a result, there are missed opportunities within the teaching and curriculum for contributions to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. There is also an imbalance, in that pupils receive good opportunities to develop awareness of the culture that is most immediate to their own lives and surroundings, but too little is done to help them appreciate less familiar cultures represented either within their own society or further afield. However, a notable exception to this general picture is the commendable pen-pal link pupils have with a South African school with which e-mails are exchanged.
30. In recent months the school has begun to tackle the weakness in curriculum planning. This has included making use of national guidance that has not previously been followed. Matters have begun to improve but it will take some time to make all the adjustments that could ensure that all pupils will leave the school having experienced, in a full and balanced way, the curriculum to which they are entitled.

Assessment of pupils' progress as a basis for planning the teaching

31. In many respects, the weakness in assessment of pupils' progress goes hand-in-hand with the weakness in curriculum planning described above. The curriculum has not always matched pupils' entitlements and needs, partly because the school has not been clear enough about the prior attainment on which pupils' future work should be based. Some parents at the pre-inspection parents' meeting felt that their children, who had recently graduated from one year group to the next, were not being challenged by the work given to them and that they were sometimes repeating previous tasks needlessly. In addition, weak areas of the curriculum, such as in spelling and handwriting, have persisted because assessment procedures have not been strong enough to show where pupils' progress has needed to be better and given more attention. Where some assessment information has been available, as in the case of pupils' performances in the statutory national tests at ages seven and eleven, the data has not been analysed with sufficient care to show where individual pupils need more help or to identify areas in teaching and learning that need improvement. However, the

new headteacher has made a start on such use of test information. Aside from the statutory tests in English, mathematics and science the school has not developed its own systematic measures of pupils' progress across the curriculum. It has not, therefore, been able to set targets for year-on-year progress for teachers and pupils to aim at. However, such developments are provided for in the new school improvement plan.

The management processes used by staff and governors for planning the work of the school and keeping a check on its effectiveness

32. It is clear from the school's previous inspection report and from the comments of parents, that a long-established strength of the school has been the firmly held values of a committed staff which have resulted in a strong ethos of positive pupil attitudes, very good behaviour and supportive relationships. This good ethos has provided a very beneficial basis for effective teaching and learning and for pupils' personal development. However, the school has lacked firm enough procedures to see that shared aims and values are always effectively and consistently translated into day-to-day action. Two of the consequences of this situation are the weaknesses in curriculum planning and assessment of pupil progress which are described above.
33. A further weakness in management processes has been the past lack of adequate analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the taking of action necessary to make improvements. Governors and senior management have made few systematic checks on the work of the school. They have not, for example, made use of the detailed information available on pupils' performance in national tests. School staff, in their roles as subject co-ordinators, have not been sufficiently encouraged or guided in processes they could use to evaluate the work in the subjects for which they are responsible. Only quite recently have governors and senior management begun properly to employ national procedures for appraising the performance of staff. In this respect, and in several others, the school has failed to meet its statutory obligations.
34. Lacking an accurate evaluation of the school, governors and senior management have in the past made decisions that have failed to tackle longstanding weaknesses and, on occasion, have created fresh problems. An example of the latter is the making of staffing decisions with financial implications that have left a legacy of excessive staffing costs resulting in too few funds for other needs like purchasing books and equipment.
35. Financial planning and procedures have been an area of weakness in management and earlier this year local education authority auditors found many aspects in need of improvement. An example of weak procedures is the lack of clear and formal agreement over financial and other matters between the school and the private playgroup to which part of the school accommodation has been let for a very small rental for part of the week. There has been a lack of rigour in matching financial decisions to the priority needs of the school and in making checks that funds are spent in the best and most efficient way to benefit the full range of pupils' needs and their entitlements within the curriculum. Past financial records have been poor. This has made it difficult for those responsible for monitoring the school to be sure that special grants, such as those for staff training in information and communication technology, have been properly spent for the designated purposes.
36. During the last year a start has been made on improving management procedures. With the appointment of a part-time bursar a few months ago, day-to-day control of the budget is much improved and is now satisfactory. Very prompt action by the new headteacher has already brought the school into line with several statutory obligations

previously neglected and good progress is being made towards full implementation of others. Governors, too, almost all of whom are new to their roles, are beginning to grow in effectiveness. They have begun to participate in relevant training, have established committees to focus on specific aspects of the school, have made links between individual governors and curriculum subjects and one governor has observed some lessons. Although a good start has been made on improving the management of the school, much remains to be done to make all aspects satisfactory and to resolve financial and resource problems which are a legacy of past mismanagement.

Provision of resources of books and equipment, and the use of the accommodation

37. The school generally has poor resources to support teaching and learning. It lacks the library and the quantity and range of fiction books that its many able readers need if they are to develop their skills. During the inspection, a teacher needed to go out and buy specially the simple resources of mirrors and torches she required to conduct an investigation of light in a science lesson. Suitable resources for learning by the youngest pupils in the reception year are meagre, especially in relation to outdoor physical development. For all pupils, there is little equipment to support gymnastics. The school has sound resources of computers, thanks to receipt of national funds earmarked for such use and parents' fundraising. However, the school has yet to acquire the full range of software and peripheral apparatus necessary to teach the full curriculum for the subject.
38. The school does not lack overall space but parts of the accommodation are not well used to meet the needs of the curriculum or the pupils. The school hall is barely large enough for indoor physical education, especially when part of the area has to be used for storage of equipment. There is a general lack of storage space, partly exacerbated by the additional pressure created by the private playgroup's use of the school accommodation. The letting of space to the playgroup also imposes constraints on the layout of the library area and its use by pupils. Pupils have underdeveloped skills of enquiry and research from books partly because the accommodation and resources to support such activity are poor. In a school with a good many pupils of high ability, and where pupils generally show the maturity to work independently, the lack of spaces and books where they may research and read independently is a significant disadvantage. Older pupils' relative lack of enthusiasm for reading also reflects the fact that the library area is not an inviting place to read or browse.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

39. To raise standards and improve the quality of education further, the school should press ahead with its published school improvement and curriculum development plans, in order to:
- (1) Improve planning of the curriculum to ensure a better balance between all subjects and within subjects, including:
- greater attention to more advanced reading skills, spelling, punctuation and handwriting in English;
 - greater attention to the use and application of number skills to solving real-life problems; and
 - more use of information and communication technology in work across the curriculum.

(Paragraphs 6, 7, 28)

(2) Make more precise and systematic assessments of pupils' progress across the curriculum and use the information gained to:

- plan teaching that provides for the next steps in learning each pupil should take;
- set targets for pupils' future achievement; and
- identify areas for improvement in teaching and learning.

(Paragraph 31)

(3) Improve processes for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, and for planning action for school improvement, through:

- improved use of assessments of pupils' progress to analyse relative strengths and weaknesses;
- closer checks on planning of the curriculum and teaching, on the effectiveness of lessons, and on the consistency with which policies across the breadth of school life are implemented; and
- closer and more informed involvement of governors in evaluating the school, contributing to planning for its improvement, and scrutinising the alternative costs and benefits of financial decisions.

(Paragraphs 32 - 36)

(4) Improve provision of learning resources of books and equipment, and the use of the accommodation:

- ensuring that there are adequate learning resources to support the full breadth of the curriculum and to provide for teaching appropriate to the full range of pupils' abilities and needs; and
- making the most effective use of all parts of the school accommodation to support the teaching and the curriculum.

(Paragraphs 37, 38)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

12

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

14

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	3	9	0	0	0	0

Percentage	0	25	75	0	0	0	0
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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 eight percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	70
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
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	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.8
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)*

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	10	5	15

National Curriculum Test/Task Results	Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	n/a
	Total	14	14
Percentage of pupils	School	93 (92)	93 (92)

at NC level 2 or above	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)
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Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	14	13	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (92)	87 (92)	93 (92)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	5	5	10

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	n/a	n/a	n/a
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	n/a (89)	n/a (89)	n/a (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	n/a	n/a	n/a
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	n/a (89)	n/a (89)	n/a (89)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

* **n/a** indicates that the number of pupils is too small to be significant.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
68	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	23.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	39.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	218,185
Total expenditure	190,922
Expenditure per pupil	2,195
Balance brought forward from previous year	5,806
Balance carried forward to next year	33,069

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.5
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
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	70
Number of questionnaires returned	27

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	33	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	41	4	4	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	67	33	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	48	22	4	0
The teaching is good.	52	41	4	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	44	7	7	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	33	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	44	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	26	59	15	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	22	59	7	0	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	44	4	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	41	11	4	0