

INSPECTION REPORT

**SICKLINGHALL COMMUNITY PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Wetherby

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121415

Headteacher: Mrs Elizabeth Fox

Reporting inspector: Mr Keith Bardon
11807

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 3rd June 2003

Inspection number: 248256

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Main Street Sicklinghall Wetherby North Yorkshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Hartley
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd February 1998

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	16
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	17
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	18

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sicklinghall Primary is a small Junior and Infant school situated in a country village about three miles from the market town of Wetherby. Approximately one third of the school's 48 pupils live in the village. The remainder travel some distance from outlying areas, including other villages, Wetherby itself and the town of Harrogate. Parents often choose the school for their children because they value the education pupils receive in a small school setting. Year groups vary in size. Year 5 is the smallest with only three pupils and Year 2 the largest with 13. There are no pupils eligible for free school meals or from ethnic minority backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language. Eight pupils have special educational needs, mainly for learning difficulties. This is a broadly average figure for a school of this size. None of these pupils has a statement of special educational needs. Although the majority of children enter the Reception class with a good range of basic skills, the annual intake of pupils is often very small and profile of their attainment on entry varies considerably year on year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Sicklinghall Primary provides all of its pupils with a very good quality of education. It has a strong community spirit and a happy atmosphere in which pupils grow into confident and well-balanced individuals. Standards are high in relation to pupils' abilities and the quality of teaching is very good. The school is very well led and managed and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good teaching enables pupils to achieve well and to attain standards that are often above the national average.
- The school places strong emphasis on pupils' personal development and this has a very positive effect on their behaviour, attitudes to school and relationship with others.
- Pupils receive a well balanced curriculum that provides stimulating activities in a wide range of subjects and gives all pupils equal opportunities to learn.
- The headteacher provides the school with high quality leadership and with the support of the governing body manages the school extremely effectively.
- The school forges very strong links with parents and with the local community.

What could be improved

- At present the school lacks a well resourced library and pupils have limited opportunities to develop library and research skills.

This area for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since its last inspection in 1998 the school has made very good improvement. The last report identified many very positive features and these have been retained and built upon. The results attained by both Year 2 and Year 6 pupils in the national tests have fluctuated, as is common in a small school, but have often been above or well above the national average. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented successfully and the guidance for the Foundation Stage used constructively to enhance the learning of the school's youngest pupils. Systems for monitoring performance have been extended, increasing the school's ability to self-evaluate. Included in these is the effective introduction of performance management. The learning resources for information and communication technology have improved significantly and pupils are learning more. The staffing has been increased and a productive pattern of class organisation has been established. Improvements to the building have enhanced the accommodation and further development is about to commence. The school has continued to develop its links with parents and a very productive working partnership exists. Staff and governors continually look for ways to improve the provision the school makes for its pupils and there are strong indications that the school will continue to move forwards.

STANDARDS

As often occurs in schools of this size national test results fluctuate widely year on year. Only a small number of pupils sit the national tests and it is therefore inappropriate to make detailed comparisons with the national figures.

Individually, pupils achieve very well and make significant gains as they move through the school. Over half of the pupils currently in Year 6 have special educational needs, with particular difficulties in English. Consequently they are working at a level in reading and writing that is a little below that expected for their age while others are working at or above expectations. The most telling indicator of pupils' good achievement is the progress they have made over time. Records show that all the pupils currently in Year 6 are reading, writing and making numerical calculations at a much better level than they were when, for example, they were in Year 2 and are attaining very good standards in relation to their abilities.

Across the school as a whole, standards in literacy and numeracy are generally high. Most pupils read fluently and with understanding, write well structured pieces of text and make accurate calculations using a range of methods. This positive picture of standards extends across the curriculum. Pupils show well developed knowledge and skills in subjects such as information and communication technology and science and their attainment in art and design and music is well above that expected.

During their Reception year, children successfully build on the basic skills they had when they first joined the school, and move into Year 1 having attained or exceeded the national targets for the age group. Pupils who have special educational needs receive carefully structured teaching and they make very good progress. Pupils who show particularly high levels of attainment are given work that is appropriately challenging and they too maintain a very good rate of progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to learn and readily participate in all the activities teachers prepare for them. They show a pride in their school and put considerable effort into their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are polite to adults and to each other and have a strong sense of right and wrong. Children of all ages work and play well together and take pleasure in each other's company.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils are sensitive to the feelings of others and able to forge strong and long lasting relationships. They take on responsibilities readily and carry out tasks they are given diligently.
Attendance	Very good. Levels of attendance are very high in comparison with the national average and there is little unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The strength of the teaching lies in its high level of consistency which provides pupils with a continuity of learning that has a significant effect on their achievement and development. The teachers function as a

closely knit team, continually sharing information and using their complementary skills to the full

benefit of the pupils. The teaching of English and mathematics is very good and the national strategies for these two core subjects are utilised well in the daily lessons. This, along with the strong emphasis teachers place on reading, writing and number work in all subjects of the curriculum helps ensure that pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy is regular and effective.

Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and lessons are lively and interesting. The strong partnership between teachers and support staff helps ensure that pupils receive a high level of individual attention and encouragement to learn. All classes contain a mix of age and attainment but teachers plan carefully and well to ensure that all pupils have work that is suited to their needs and abilities. Consequently all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have equal opportunities to learn and to make the progress of which they are capable. The positive atmosphere teachers generate in lessons encourages pupils to put forward their ideas and answer questions. Pupils tackle the work they are given enthusiastically. They concentrate for long periods, think hard and make sensible and well considered contributions to their own, and others', learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Pupils are taught the full range of National Curriculum subjects and religious education and an appropriate amount of time is spent on each. All subjects are valued and the curriculum for the arts is particularly strong. The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of educational visits and by visitors to the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils receive well structured support for their learning which is carefully matched to their individual needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. The school makes highly effective provision for this important aspect of pupils' learning and as a result they grow into thoughtful, confident and responsible individuals with well developed social skills.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. All staff show very caring attitudes towards the pupils and make every effort to ensure their health and welfare. Pupils' academic progress and personal development are monitored closely and parents are kept well informed of the outcomes.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides the school with strong, clear and purposeful leadership and with the aid of the small team of teachers manages the school very well. Procedures are well established and the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The school benefits from a conscientious team of governors who support its work strongly and monitor its performance carefully. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and are able to participate fully in strategic decision-making. The governing body meets its statutory responsibilities very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Staff and governors make very effective use of information from a range of sources to measure and evaluate how well the school is doing and to look for areas in which further improvements could be made.

The strategic use of resources	Excellent. Finances are managed very efficiently and value for money principles are applied well. Careful decision-making ensures the funding made available to the school is spent wisely in the interest of pupils' education. Parents, staff and governors regularly raise large additional amounts of money to fund specific projects.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are very happy with the quality of teaching their children receive and find the staff very approachable. • Children enjoy school, behave well and make good progress in their learning. • Parents feel that they are kept well informed about the progress their children are making and that the school works closely with them. • The school is well managed and has high expectations of its pupils and of what they can achieve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant minority of parents feel that the school offers only a limited range of extra-curricular activities.

Inspectors share the positive views parents have of the school. The size of the school limits the range of extra-curricular activities it is possible for staff to provide and in the circumstances inspectors feel that the school enriches the curriculum very well for its pupils. Although a small number of parents identified homework as an aspect they would like to see improved inspectors found the amount and content of the homework pupils are given to be appropriate and typical of many other primary schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Very good teaching enables pupils to achieve well and to attain standards that are often above the national average

1. Only a small number of children join the Reception class each year and while, in general, most have a good range of basic skills, there is a significant minority who do not have the early attainment often found at this age. For example some children are already reading a range of simple words while others do not yet recognise their own name in print. The strength of the teaching lies in the way in which the individual learning needs of the pupils are identified and provided for. As a result, irrespective of their starting point, children are able to realise their full potential and to achieve well in relation to their abilities.
2. All pupils are taught in mixed age groups which vary in composition throughout the week. For lessons in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science the school divides into three classes, with the Reception children and Year 1 pupils working together. At other times Reception children work alongside Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. Whatever the arrangement, teachers take great care to ensure that the Reception children are provided with activities that are appropriate to their young age and which reflect the national guidance for the Foundation Stage of learning. As well as providing children with regular opportunities to develop the communication and number skills, teachers encourage children to question, explore and investigate and to work together collaboratively. For example, in a mathematics lesson seen during the inspection, while Year 1 pupils sat around a table learning about money, Reception children played board games together, programmed a floor robot and worked on number programs on the computer. The application the children showed and their willingness to concentrate until the task was successfully completed was a pleasure to see and was a clear reflection of the good learning habits engendered by the teaching. Children's progress during their Reception year is very good and they move smoothly on to the National Curriculum.
3. Very good teaching in Years 1 and 2 ensures that this rate of progress is maintained and pupils often perform very well in the National Curriculum tests. In the last three years (1999 to 2002) the school's results in the reading and mathematics tests have been consistently high. Results in writing have not quite reached this pinnacle but have generally been above average nonetheless. Nationally, pupils' writing tends to show lower results than other aspects of their English. The school has targeted this as an area for further development and teachers are starting to use ideas gained from training they have undertaken to give writing added impetus. Early results for this year's national assessments and the quality of work pupils are producing indicate that these initiatives are having the desired effect and standards in writing have strengthened significantly.
4. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 benefit from equally effective teaching which moves their knowledge and skills forward at a very good rate. In most years, the performance of Year 6 pupils in the National Curriculum tests is above or well above the national average, but as explained earlier in this report, small year groups mean that test results vary considerably. What is most significant is that when the work Year 6 pupils are doing now is compared with that they were producing when they were

much younger clear and sustained progress is very apparent. This applies to all pupils and is categorical evidence of very good achievement over sustained periods.

5. Literacy and numeracy are taught very well through a combination of well structured daily lessons and frequent opportunities for pupils to read, write and use numbers in the different subjects. As a result pupils become increasingly confident and competent in the use of words and numbers and are able to use their literacy and numeracy skills effectively in a wide range of different contexts. For example, in science lessons, pupils are able to construct written plans which effectively guide their investigations and they measure volumes of liquids accurately helping to ensure the fairness of their testing.
6. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and the different aspects of the curriculum are taught with equal competence. The specialist knowledge some teachers possess is used to very good effect to provide lessons of very high quality. In music lessons, for example, pupils learn to read a musical score and perform together to a high standard. They develop a very good understanding of composition and when playing or singing are able to maintain their own part while allowing for that of other contributors. Similarly the attractive and varied displays of pupils' art bear testament to the highly effective teaching and learning that takes place throughout the school, from which the pupils have gained significantly. Art lessons feature strongly when pupils are asked what they like doing best.
7. Teachers plan lessons carefully, making full allowance for the different age and attainment groups in the class. The extremely competent classroom assistants play a full and active part in the all lessons. They have clear roles and responsibilities and effective team work between the assistants and the class teachers provides an umbrella of support which has a very positive effect on pupils' learning. Knowing that there is an adult that they can turn to for help encourages even the shyest of pupils to ask questions and to seek guidance. Pupils with special educational needs are confident in the knowledge that help is at hand whenever they need it. This provides lessons in which time is used well because pupils are able to focus on the task in hand and to move systematically towards the objectives they have been set.
8. The quality of the resources teachers employ and the thought they put into their construction has a marked effect on the level of interest lessons generate amongst the pupils. For example, Reception and Infant pupils are currently looking at islands as part of their geography work. The model the teacher has constructed using a combination of synthetic and natural materials, including living plants, has generated a high level of discussion and given pupils a clear understanding of the composition of this geographical feature.
9. Staff forge excellent relationships with pupils and this makes for an atmosphere that is pleasant and industrious. Pupils regard all staff in the same light, as people who are there to help and guide them, and this has a very positive effect on their learning. The tasks pupils are set offer a high level of challenge, but because they feel comfortable and supported, pupils are willing to try hard. The comments teachers make when marking pupils' work are constructive and helpful. What the pupil has achieved is celebrated and areas in which further improvements could be made are clearly but tactfully pointed out.
10. Teachers make learning enjoyable and the very high levels of pupils' attendance are clear evidence of this. One parent at the meeting held before the inspection remarked that there were no difficulties persuading children to come to school, it was getting them to come home at the end of the day that was the problem. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is very apparent and provides a strong and secure base for their future education.

School places strong emphasis on pupils' personal development and this has a very positive effect on their behaviour, attitudes to school and relationships with others

11. Pupils' personal development is given a high priority and promoted very effectively by all members of staff. As a result, pupils develop into sensible, caring and considerate young people with a well defined sense of responsibility. At the centre of the school's very positive ethos lies a strong sense of community. This is embedded firmly in the school's clearly stated aims which successfully promote all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning.
12. The school respects the individuality of its pupils and encourages them to make the best of their particular abilities. Consequently all pupils achieve success and in doing so gain a strong sense of self-worth. Their very positive attitudes to learning and willingness to attend on a regular basis bears testament to the enjoyment they gain from being a member of the school. Year 6 pupils transfer to a number of different high schools, often as individuals but take with them a range of well developed personal skills. Parents report on the confidence pupils show when they move to their new schools and how quickly they are able to integrate and make new friends.
13. The school has a small number of sensible school rules which are fully understood by the pupils and supported strongly by the emphasis staff place on self-discipline. Pupils respond very well to this approach, behaving maturely and gaining much from the social interactions that are a prominent feature of the school day. On the infrequent occasions when pupils' behaviour is not quite as it should be the response to teachers' reminders is immediate and lasting. When asked about the school's most positive features, the consideration staff show for each of them is high on pupils' list. The very positive relationships that ensue are reflected fully in the friendly manner in which pupils respond to staff and to each other. As a result the school is an orderly and pleasant place to be.
14. Pupils of all ages get on extremely well, stating that they enjoy coming to school "because you meet all your friends". Older pupils respond well to younger ones, showing tolerance and care in their contacts with them. The responsibilities pupils are given around school gradually increase as they grow older. There is a general acceptance and understanding amongst pupils of all ages that this is their school and they are all responsible for making it what it is. Consequently, tasks such as tidying up, closing down computers at the end of the day and ensuring that drinking water bottles are filled and ready are carried out diligently and without fuss. Pupils readily support those less fortunate than themselves and have donated to UNICEF, raised money for Save the Children and participated in Comic Relief, further evidence of the very positive social skills that they develop.
15. Pupils are given regular opportunities during class discussions and in school assemblies to consider the views of others and to reflect on what things mean to their own lives. Important messages are raised in thought provoking ways. In an assembly in which the headteacher was asking the pupils to consider the impact of what they said to others, story, discussion and modelling were used extremely effectively to illustrate the points and to encourage individual reflection.
16. The school council provides pupils with an opportunity to voice their collective or individual opinions and to put forwards their suggestions for improvements. From this they are learning the realities of social democracy and also how different factors

may affect decision-making. Minutes from the meetings are used by council members to feed back to the rest of the school and are also shared with parents. On reading how the council had debated the need for a new roof for the patio but deciding it was beyond the school's finances, one was provided by parental response. A clear lesson that only by raising issues can solutions be found, even unexpected ones. Pupils state that they feel they have a real impact on the school. By listening to pupils and responding positively to their views the school further increases their sense of belonging and of being part of something that they can be proud of. Pupils' pride in their school and in each other is clearly evident.

17. The school provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities for cultural development. From celebrating festivals throughout the year in the local church to participating in an Indian music day and enjoying an evening of African dance, pupils' learning and appreciation of the richness of different cultures is successfully enhanced. Exchanging letters with children in South Africa gives pupils an understanding of the different lives that others may lead and celebrating events such as the Golden Jubilee and visiting a local convent provide them with regular opportunities to meet those with whom they share the village community.
18. At the end of their time in school a book of memories is compiled for each Year 6 pupils, with contributions from a cross-section of the school, both staff and pupils. The cohesion of the school community is very evident in the content of these mementoes. One younger pupil wrote "J... is kind to me" and the pupil himself concluded "Sicklinghall has been the best foundation for moving on I could want".

Pupils receive a well balanced curriculum that provides stimulating activities in a wide range of subjects and gives all pupils equal opportunities to learn

19. The strength of the curriculum lies in the very constructive way in which pupils' learning in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is balanced with the lessons they receive in all other subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. As a result pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills develop on a broad front and increase progressively as they move through the school.
20. Teachers structure the curriculum carefully to ensure that all pupils in the mixed-age classes have activities and experiences that are appropriate and build on the ones they have had previously. The curriculum for Reception children is based on the recently introduced national guidance for the Foundation Stage of learning and takes full account of their young age. Stimulating activities, often involving games and educational play, encourage children's involvement and give them a secure and enjoyable start to school life.
21. Music and art feature prominently in the curriculum and pupils gain much from the experiences they receive in these two creative subjects. The art curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to develop a wide range of skills and techniques and to learn about and emulate the techniques of famous artists. Pupils' efforts adorn the walls throughout the school, enhancing them with colour and style. Junior age pupils, for example, have used impressionist techniques in the style of Monet to produce attractive waterlily pictures, and younger pupils have produced very effective planet compositions using a limited range of colours. From Reception upwards the high quality of pupils' work is a clear indication of an effective curriculum. The same can be said of music, in which pupils' creative instincts are utilised well and their enjoyment of performing, composing and appraising is developed at a very good pace.

22. The curriculum is frequently enhanced through visits to places of educational interest and visitors to the school. These include a visit to a Mosque, residential visits for Junior age pupils, music workshops and talks by visitors in the role of characters from history, such as Florence Nightingale. During the inspection older Juniors received a visitor who, as a teenager, had witnessed the events of the coronation procession first hand from a London pavement. His colourful description, supported by artefacts and video, brought the event to life for the pupils and they sat enthralled at the pageantry of the day. During the summer term older Juniors benefit from introductory French lessons provided by a visiting teacher, which add further experience and help prepare them for their modern foreign language studies at the high school.
23. In the spring term the whole school visits the baths in the local town for swimming lessons, providing an extra dimension to the physical education curriculum. Although, because of its size, the range of extra-curricular activities the school can provide is limited, pupils enjoy competing in sporting events against neighbouring schools. Extra-curricular provision is the one aspect of a small school that a significant number of parents find problematic, but they recognise that there is only so much the school can do. The school has attempted to operate an after-school club but has to curtail it due to the lack of interest.
24. A very positive aspect of the curriculum is its cohesion and the manner in which teachers forge productive links between the different subjects. For example, the model island with growing plants described earlier brings both geography and science to life for younger pupils. Throughout the school information and communication technology features prominently in the curriculum, sometimes as a taught element of a lesson and often as part of another subject. During a literacy lesson, Year 2 pupils used the word-processing facilities of the computer very productively to write sentences and highlight in colour the adjectives they were using to add interest for the reader. Year 5 and 6 pupils used an art program in mathematics to set challenging reflective symmetry problems for each other, and in science the Year 2 and 3 teacher used a computer-linked microscope to extend pupils' understanding of the structure of materials.
25. The school monitors pupils' progress carefully to ensure that the curriculum is meeting the needs of all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs receive a carefully constructed programme of work based on the targets teachers have identified for their learning. Teachers review pupils' targets regularly and adjust the curriculum accordingly. This ensures that the work these pupils are given is relevant to their needs and appropriate to their development. Consequently, this group of pupils maintains the same very good rate of progress as others in the school. Similarly, pupils who show high ability are provided with a curriculum that challenges them at a suitable level and enables them to make the best of the gifts or talents they possess. Teachers make excellent use of the advantages a small school can provide to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to learn and are fully included in all aspects of the curriculum.

The headteacher provides the school with high quality leadership and with the support of the governing body manages the school extremely effectively

26. The headteacher leads the school extremely skilfully and purposefully and promotes a strong sense of teamwork amongst all who work and learn there. Under her clear and secure guidance the school makes the very best use of the resources available to it and continually provides its pupils with a very good quality of education.

27. Despite being the only full-time teacher, the headteacher manages her classroom and organisational commitments extremely well and utilises the skills of the teaching and support staff very effectively. As a result the school runs smoothly and the advantages a school of this size can provide for its pupils are fully maximised. The efficient and productive manner in which pupils are grouped differently at various times of the week stands as a good example of the creative thinking that goes into many of the decisions that are made.
28. Regular review and evaluation of policies and procedures helps to ensure that the school's practices are current and efficient. Established procedures plus the small size of the school ensures that frequent assessments of the quality of teaching and learning are made, with observations by officers from the local authority providing an additional perspective. This openness and willingness to stand up to scrutiny says much for the confidence and professional approach that the headteacher promotes.
29. Management responsibilities are delegated to all teachers and at level a that is appropriate in a small school. The allocation of responsibilities is linked carefully to the skills of the individual, and the quality of the work of subject leaders is reflected fully in the breadth of the curriculum and in pupils' achievements. This positive view of subject management was strongly substantiated when a local teacher training college asked for help with the music element of their course from the teacher who carries responsibility for this area in the school. The school secretary provides very effective support for the headteacher, staff and governors and makes a very positive contribution to school management.
30. The headteacher and governors use a well balanced set of procedures to measure the school's performance. These systems effectively combine data from outside sources and information the school collects for itself. Parent governors add to the picture by providing the views and opinions of parents and the perceptions of the local community. Consequently, those with responsibility for making strategic decisions do so from a well informed position.
31. The school's improvement plans, which are soundly structured on a two year cycle, focus on its most pressing priorities and provide for on-going development across a number of aspects of the school's work. For example, developments in the teaching and learning of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are designed to further the academic curriculum, while establishing links with a multi-ethnic school in Bradford is intended to help to broaden pupils' cultural understanding and appreciation.
32. The governing body is diligent and very well organised. An appropriate committee structure is in place and utilised as and when necessary. Governors with specific responsibilities, for example for literacy, numeracy and special educational needs, contribute to the action plans for those areas helping to ensure a close working relationship between the governing body and school staff. Governors are very supportive of the school while at the same time monitoring its work closely. The governing body meets its statutory responsibilities very effectively.
33. Through careful financial planning and management the headteacher and governors make very efficient use of the funding made available to the school. They have a solid grasp of principles of best value and the expertise that many governors bring from the commercial world hold them in good stead when balanced decisions have to be made. The intricacies of managing a small school are fully understood and all

decisions are taken with pupils' best interests as the prime objective. The school budget leaves little room for manoeuvre but the popularity of the school with parents and the hard work of the Friends of the School enable relatively large amounts of additional funding to be raised to supplement the school's finances. The current healthy surplus showing on the balance sheet is earmarked for an additional extension to the school building to further enhance the learning environment for pupils.

The school forges very strong links with parents and with the local community

34. Almost two thirds of the questionnaires the school sent out were returned and parents expressed extremely strong support for the school and for the provision it is making for their children's education. A very high proportion of those who completed the questionnaire and / or attended the meeting prior to the inspection felt that they had close ties with the school and enjoyed its family atmosphere. Because of this they would be comfortable approaching the school if they had a matter they wished to raise, and find staff very open to suggestions and responsive to their concerns.
35. The school makes parents welcome by operating an open door policy and frequently inviting them to a variety of events including performances by the children, services in the local church and cultural evenings. The Parents and Friends Association enhances the sense of belonging with frequent social and fundraising events, many of which involve both parents and children, but there are also others that are solely for the adults. The response from parents is very positive and they willingly support the school in many ways. For example, readily raising large amounts of money to ensure the school has the funding it needs for building work and giving their time to decorate the school hall. Attendance at events and at consultation evenings is high and parents readily volunteer to accompany the children on educational visits, one parent commenting that there was a waiting list of those wanting to go.
36. The comments parents write on the reports they receive annually, express an appreciation for the hard work of the staff. They particularly welcome the targets the reports contain as this provides them with an opportunity to participate and support their children's learning. Such support has a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes to school and on their willingness to attend regularly and punctually.
37. Although only about a third of pupils actually live in Sicklinghall, the school is a firmly established part of village life. It has its own section in the parish magazine and has close links with the nearby church. Following the harvest festival, children take their offerings to the elderly nuns at local convent and very shortly the school will join with the village hall and local church in an 'open gardens' fundraising event. These ties add to pupils' sense of belonging and strengthen further the community spirit that is at the heart of the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

At present the school lacks a well resourced library and pupils have limited opportunities to develop library and research skills

38. In discussion, pupils were extremely positive about the school and the enjoyment they derived from their learning. However, when the pupils were asked if there was anything they would like to see improved they identified a better library, including regular access to the Internet. Currently, books are located in classrooms and on shelves in the corridor. This severely restricts the teaching of library skills and

reduces the opportunities that can be provided for pupils to carry out individual research. The small amount of space the shelves provide limits the number and range of books that pupils can have access to and there is no space to incorporate a computer into the library facilities. Work is about to commence on the building of an extension to the school, part of which is to accommodate the school library. This provides an ideal opportunity to bring the quality of the provision in this area up to that of the rest of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

39. In order to further enhance the provision the school makes for pupils' education, the headteacher, staff and governors should provide a well resourced library and build time into the curriculum for pupils to acquire a full range of library skills. The school is aware of the need for this development and is already formulating plans to address it. (Paragraph 38)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	11
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	5	4	0	0	0	0
Percentage	18	45	36	0	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 over nine percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/a	48
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/a	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/a	8

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	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	2.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Total number of education support staff	N/a
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/a
Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/a

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0.4
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	48
Number of questionnaires returned	31

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	16	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	61	35	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	65	35	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	48	13	0	0
The teaching is good.	65	35	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	39	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	87	10	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	23	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	74	23	3	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	87	13	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	84	13	3	0	0

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

26	35	29	3	6
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