

INSPECTION REPORT

CHILTERN LOWER SCHOOL

Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121924

Headteacher: Mr R. Brant

Reporting inspector: Mr J. G. Quinn
15676

Dates of inspection: 11th-13th March 2002

Inspection number: 198888

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Chiltern Way Northampton
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr S. Marsh
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in Duston, a suburb comprising mainly privately-owned homes situated on the north western outskirts of Northampton. It is a first school which admits pupils between the ages of 4 and 9 years. Under local authority plans for reorganisation the school will change to a full primary school in 2003. Few pupils are from the immediate area and the majority attend from surrounding districts. Parents are attracted by the school's good reputation locally. With 175 pupils on roll the school is smaller than average. There are similar proportions of boys and girls overall although there is an imbalance in certain year groups. Of the few pupils from families of ethnic minorities a small number speak English as an additional language. Languages spoken in addition to English are Japanese, Shona and Punjabi. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs at 25 percent. One pupil has a Statement of Special Educational Need. Five pupils are entitled to free school meals which is well below average.

Children begin part-time in Reception in the September following their fourth birthday. Although there is considerable variation, attainment on entry tends to be similar to that normally found.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school in which parents have considerable confidence. It is very well led and there is a high proportion of successful and very successful teaching. These strengths, together with pupils' positive attitudes, contribute to standards that are above average overall. Taking into account the school's context, the standards that pupils attain, the strong leadership and effective teaching, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides very good leadership. He has successfully built a committed team of teaching and non-teaching staff. Together they create a positive ethos which supports pupils' learning very well.
- Standards in mathematics are above average at Key Stage 1 and there is a strong and successful emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills throughout the school.
- There is a high proportion of effective teaching with well over one lesson out of three that is very good and occasionally excellent.
- Provision for children in reception is consistently very good and as a result children make very good progress in all areas of their learning.
- Support staff work closely with teachers and provide valuable assistance to pupils in their learning.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and to the tasks they are set in lessons. They relate very well to one another and to the adults with whom they work.
- The school supports pupils' personal development very well and as a consequence most pupils value themselves and their work highly.

What could be improved

- Higher attaining pupils are not consistently presented with work that extends them fully in mathematics and science at Key Stage 2 and in writing at Key Stage 1.
- Insufficient consideration is given to planning strategically and evaluating important changes, in terms of their intended impact on pupils' learning and standards of attainment.

The school has many significant strengths and few weaknesses. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since it was last inspected, in December 1997, the school has made good progress in improving the minor points for enhancement highlighted in the report. There were no weaknesses identified and therefore no key issues to be addressed. In addition, the school has identified further deficiencies itself, in each section of the report and has set about rectifying them methodically. The quality of teaching has improved and there is now a significantly higher proportion of very good and occasionally excellent practice.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
reading	A	B	A	A
writing	A	A	A	B
mathematics	A	C	A	A

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

Results in national tests are well above average in all three subjects compared with all schools nationally. In comparison with schools in a similar context, results were well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. Although there was a dip in reading and mathematics results in 2000, over time the school's improving trend compares favourably with the national picture. The school has identified the group of pupils who took the tests in 2001 as being particularly able and that is why they attained well above average standards in national tests.

Inspection evidence indicates that pupils achieve well in their lessons and attain above average standards overall. Pupils currently in Year 2 achieve above average standards in writing, speaking and listening and mathematics. There was insufficient evidence of standards in reading for a secure judgement to be made. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4 pupils attain above average standards in English and average standards in mathematics.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards targets outlined in their individual work programmes. The few pupils whose first language is not English are supported well and make similar progress to that of other pupils.

All children in the reception classes make very good progress in all areas of their learning. Consequently most children are set to exceed the nationally prescribed Early Learning Goals¹ for pupils of this age, by the time they enter Key Stage 1.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to school and this has a positive impact on the quality of their learning. They apply themselves very well in lessons and most concentrate fully on the tasks that are set for them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well indeed in lessons and around the school generally. They are courteous, polite and helpful. Parents believe behaviour to be good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils relate very well to one another and to the adults with whom they work. Most share resources sensibly when required to do so and work independently when the need arises. Most pupils take a pride in themselves and in the work they produce.
Attendance	Attendance is good. Very few pupils are late at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions and consequently lessons begin punctually.

¹ [Early Learning Goals - these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They mainly refer to achievements children make in connection with: communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; and physical and creative development.](#)

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching is good overall and most pupils learn successfully as a result. There is a very high proportion of effective teaching with a significant proportion that is very good. Teaching was best in reception where most of the lessons were very good and sometimes excellent.

Teachers throughout the school clearly understand the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy and teach these subjects well.

In the most successful lessons teachers have high expectations of pupils and good understanding of the subjects they teach. They organise their classrooms and their lessons to support pupils' learning effectively. Teachers manage pupils very well and make good use of well qualified and committed support staff to assist specific groups of pupils particularly in literacy and numeracy. In a small number of otherwise successful lessons teachers do not make sufficient use of the time available which slows the pace of learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is thoughtfully planned to enrich pupils' learning. It is broad, balanced and meets the needs of the school well. The school does not systematically plan to extend higher attaining pupils sufficiently. Although the school undertakes regular educational visits to support class work, there is only a narrow range of extra-curricular clubs to enhance the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well. The school's sensitive approach to ensuring that all pupils are able to take a full part in lessons, results in these pupils making good progress in their learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The few pupils whose first language is other than English receive good support. This ensures that they are fully included in lessons and enables them to make similar progress to that of other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal development is a significant strength. There is a climate of openness and trust which emanates from the headteacher, influences relationships throughout the school and has a positive effect on pupils' perceptions of themselves as valued individuals.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils very well. Systems for ensuring health and safety are rigorous and all members of staff are vigilant in matters of pupils' safety and welfare.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led and managed. The clear sense of direction and purposeful leadership provided by the headteacher is very good and a strong contributory factor to the success of the school. He has successfully built a committed team of teaching and support staff who contribute to a very good climate for learning in which pupils flourish.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They have a clear view for school improvement as the school moves towards full primary status. Several visit the school regularly to become better acquainted with the work in the classrooms.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school reflects on important aspects of its work well, such as teaching and standards over time. However, it does not consider carefully enough the effect of new initiatives or how the performance of different groups and individuals might be improved to raise attainment even further.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of the resources and finances available to it. Procedures for budgetary monitoring are thorough and the school bursar administers finances very efficiently.

The school seeks to provide best value well. It consults outside agencies regularly and parents occasionally, in order to improve provision. It considers different quotations on most major purchases and services. It compares itself frequently with schools nationally and locally and thereby challenges itself to improve further.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Thirty eight per cent of questionnaires were returned completed and six parents attended the pre-inspection meeting.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching is good. • The school is well led and managed. • The school helps children to become mature and responsible. • Staff have high expectations of pupils and expect them to work hard. • They would feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem. • Children's behaviour is good. • Children like school and make good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities provided outside lessons. • The amount of work pupils are expected to do at home. • The information which they receive about their children's progress.

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of parents but does not support the areas thought to be in need of improvement. Although there is only a limited range of extra-curricular clubs, the school compensates through educational visits to places of interest in order to bring an additional dimension to pupils' learning. Of the two more minor areas of parental concern, the amount and variety of homework is good and the information which parents receive about their children's progress is sufficiently frequent. Pupils' reports provide a good indication of pupils' attainment, progress and effort.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The headteacher provides very good leadership. He has successfully built a committed team of teaching and non-teaching staff and together they create a positive ethos which supports pupils' learning very well.

1. The quality of leadership provided by the headteacher is very good as it was at the time of the last inspection. He has a strong philosophy based on creating a stimulating and interesting environment, a climate where all are valued and where the meaningful quality of pupils' learning is central to the all that happens in school. This gives very clear direction to the school's work and is a major contributory factor to its effectiveness. He has successfully built an effective team of professionals and earned the confidence of staff by teaching regularly himself. He consults them on important decisions and provides opportunities for those with particular responsibilities to be released from their regular teaching commitments in order to carry out essential aspects of their roles. This style of management encourages a sense of teamwork where views are listened to, respected and accommodated. Although the school is currently awaiting the arrival of a newly appointed deputy headteacher, the headteacher works very effectively with certain well-established members of staff as a senior management team. They monitor teaching regularly and provide general feedback on areas for improvement at staff meetings and specific feedback to individuals. As temporary mathematics co-ordinator for example, the headteacher has recently spent time observing the introductory sessions to lessons involving mental calculations. His observations revealed a lack of pace which he has brought to the attention of individual teachers, as appropriate.
2. There have been very few changes of staff in recent years. However, where there have been opportunities to make new appointments the headteacher has thought carefully about the school's needs and has taken considerable time and trouble to help governors select what he regards as the school's most important resource – its teaching and non-teaching staff. For example, the school's impending change to full primary status in 2003 means that successful experience in teaching Years 5 and 6 is an important criterion in selecting a new deputy headteacher. In any new appointments the headteacher visits candidates in their current situations in order to advise governors on the suitability of applicants who will best support or enhance the school's ethos.
3. The school grounds have also been developed sensitively over time, in keeping with the headteacher's philosophy. There are spaces where pupils can play boisterously and shaded areas with seating which can be used for quieter and more reflective activities. This responds effectively to pupils' different needs and fosters positive attitudes and good relationships. In addition there is a marsh area, a butterfly garden and a wooded area all of which are used for science and other investigative tasks. Pupils are proud of their school grounds and treat them with respect.
4. Staff, parents and governors identify strongly with the school's values and have a clear sense of what it means to be part of Chiltern Lower School. Pupils also are aware of the part they play and understand the school's expectations that they will always do their best. Their work is valued highly and the many carefully mounted and colourful displays of pupils' work around the school send important messages to the pupils about the importance of their work. In lessons many are keen to share what they are doing with visitors, which is a clear indication of their confidence and feelings of self-worth. The school's effectiveness is clearly reflected in the quality of relationships, the high emphasis placed on supporting learning and a strong sense of common purpose.

Standards in mathematics are above average at Key Stage 1 and there is a strong and successful emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills throughout the school.

5. In the most recent National Curriculum statutory tests for pupils aged seven, results were well above average in reading writing and mathematics. The school has identified the group that took the tests as being particularly able with approximately twice as many pupils attaining the higher Level 3 than was found nationally. Results in science were very high.
6. Pupils currently in Year 2 attain above average standards in mathematics and make good progress in developing their numeracy skills. For example, they understand that subtraction is the inverse of addition and use this knowledge confidently when working out simple problems mentally. They can add and subtract two-digit figures in their heads and a few develop this well to working with three-digit figures in their books.
7. The school has been particularly successful in developing pupils' spoken communication and their literacy skills throughout the school. Consequently by Year 2 and the time pupils leave the school in Year 4 standards are above average. A minority of pupils attain well above average standards in their written work.
8. The supportive culture that permeates the school promotes pupils' speaking and listening skills well. Pupils' views are valued, which encourages them speak out, secure in the knowledge that they will be listened to and that they will not be demeaned for making mistakes. There is a climate of respectful listening, which emanates from the headteacher. This was strongly evident in a whole school assembly where pupils were enthusiastically recounting the main events so far in the Christian Easter story.
9. In the two reception classes, there are many opportunities for pupils to develop their conversational language in imaginary play situations and also specific language connected with other activities. In the current topic on babies, for example, children play at being in a maternity hospital, taking it in turns to be doctor and patient. They used language to recreate roles and experiences following the visit from a parent with a very young baby during which they enthusiastically answered and asked questions. Children enjoy listening to stories and rhymes and join in with familiar words and phrases.
10. Children begin to appreciate the relationship between pictures and text in reading. They hear and repeat initial sounds in words, such as 'b' for *bath* and *bottle*, when devising a list of things a new baby might need. They find the page that they need in a big book, with the help of the class teacher and proceed to write a list of things for a baby.
11. Standards are above average in speaking and listening at the end of Key Stage 1. Insufficient reading was sampled to enable a reliable judgement to be made. As they pass through Key Stage 1 pupils' confidence increases. They listen carefully to their teachers and to one another, for example when counting together or discussing payment and giving of change in a mathematics lesson in Year 1. When preparing to write a poem on the theme '*I am happy when...*' in Year 2, pupils were keen to volunteer their ideas and went on to change the subject of their sentences, offering suggestions such as '*A tiger is happy when he is running around*' and '*my mum is happy when I'm in bed*'.
12. Key Stage 1 pupils develop their writing skills well and many achieve above average standards by the end of Year 2. Their handwriting becomes increasingly well-formed, fluent and, in the case of higher and middle attaining, pupils' handwriting is often joined. Spelling of simple words is accurate and those that are more complex if not correct are usually recognisable. Many pupils begin to use capital letters and full stops to indicate the beginning and end of sentences, although not all do so consistently or confidently. They retell familiar stories well and recount visits undertaken in school time or with their families. Several pupils are beginning to write imaginatively and clearly. Colourful phrases such as

'...the waterfall of her beautiful hair' are occasionally incorporated and bring a lively dimension to pupils' writing.

13. There is a strong emphasis on practical learning with partners and in groups, throughout the school. This provides many incidental opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills in addition to those that are planned in lessons. In a good design and technology lesson at Key Stage 2, for example, pupils working with partners discussed animatedly, which materials they would use to complete the simple torches they had started previously. They listened to one another's suggestions and responded appropriately, negotiating the next stage in the process. Many can explain the workings of a simple electrical circuit although they do not always use correct terminology. More formally, pupils adapt their speech to the wider audience for example, when they are invited to explain their methods of working in mathematics or the results of an experiment in science to the whole class.
14. Standards in reading by the time pupils leave the school in Year 4 are above average. Pupils appear to enjoy books. Many read a range of texts independently and with understanding. Pupils can talk about what they have read, the characters in their books and can identify the favourite parts in a story. More able pupils find information from non-fiction books with assistance. They use an index and understand the purpose of the glossary in finding the meaning of specialist terms. Pupils begin to find and make use of information as in a guided reading session on different materials and to use dictionaries to support their writing.
15. There is a well-stocked, carefully organised and accessible school library located centrally in the school building. It has a good range of fiction and non-fiction books which are readily available to pupils. They are well displayed to capture pupils' attention and to promote an interest and appreciation of books and reading, as sources of information and pleasure.
16. Pupils' written work at Key Stage 2 is above average with a minority of pupils achieving well above. Many of the pupils in Year 3 achieve as well as their Year 4 classmates. There is a good balance between grammatical exercises and purposeful writing in a variety of forms, which helps them practise their skills. For example, pupils wrote letters to the author Ted Hughes about the book *'The Iron Man'*, stories about adventures in space and *'Rumpelstiltskin's Revenge'* - a new slant on a traditional tale. They interpreted poems written during a different time such as *'Up in the Morning'* by Robert Burns. Pupils used terms such as 'historical', 'classical' and 'modern' when explaining their interpretations. Most pupils clearly take pride in how they present their work. Handwriting is well formed and fluent and for many pupils has improved markedly over the past two terms. Pupils use punctuation accurately including apostrophes, exclamation marks, commas and speech marks. A minority use paragraphs regularly. They use language imaginatively to good effect, for example in describing the main character in a story, *'Jake was very honest and calm, but when he was angry he was furious!'*

There is a high proportion of effective teaching with well over one lesson out of three that is very good and occasionally excellent.

17. Teaching is good overall with a many lessons that are very good and occasionally excellent. This has a direct impact on the standards which pupils attain. In seven lessons out of ten teaching was at least good and in almost four lessons out of ten it was very good and occasionally excellent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only one lesson. This is an improvement on the position at the time of the last inspection when there were proportionally fewer very good or excellent lessons. The best teaching was in reception where most lessons were very good with examples of excellent practice. Significant features of the best teaching were teachers' good subject knowledge, the range and

variety of teaching methods used, the effective way in which teachers manage pupils and the productive use of resources and support staff.

18. Throughout the school teachers understand the subjects they teach well. The shortcomings in dance and music noted in the last inspection report were not apparent in the lessons observed on this occasion. Secure subject knowledge enables teachers to question pupils incisively in order to build on what they have learnt previously. This was apparent in a number of successful lessons. For example, in a guided reading session at Key Stage 2, where the class teacher was working with a small group of pupils finding information from non fiction books, she took their learning forward at a good pace. Her skilful questioning - *'What does ...mean?' 'Where would you find...?'* - encouraged pupils to think carefully about the subject under consideration and promoted a good appreciation of the purpose of a glossary and of an index when searching for information. They read the information which they had found, aloud, clearly and with sound understanding.
19. Teachers employ a good range of methods to secure and maintain pupils' interest in learning. Most lessons comprise a mixture of whole class, small group and individual work with a strong emphasis on pupils using and applying their knowledge in subjects such as mathematics and science. In a very good numeracy lesson in Year 1, for example, pupils used real coins and vegetables to practise calculating change from a pound. This provided an additional and more meaningful dimension to the lesson which promoted pupils' interest well and encouraged their sustained concentration. Also, in science at Key Stage 2, the arrangements whereby all three classes are divided into year groups and taught in smaller groups by four teachers, facilitates practical activities. For example, pupils explored magnets and tested the effect of friction using different surfaces during the period of the inspection.
20. Teachers manage pupils very well. The general ethos and expectation that pupils will work hard and try their best, permeates the school and there are few discipline problems. This means that teachers need to spend little time maintaining order and can concentrate fully on the content of their lessons. Where there are minor infractions, they are dealt with quickly and effectively with the minimum disruption to learning. Teachers also deal effectively with misbehaviour outside the classroom. For example, a pupil who had been fighting during the afternoon break time was dealt with swiftly and firmly prior to the class assembly.
21. Teachers manage practical activities very well and ensure through thorough preparation that little time is wasted on organisational matters during the lesson. In such circumstances there is a good and productive pace to learning. This was clearly evident, for example, in a Key Stage 2 design and technology lesson where pupils were designing torches. The teacher had prepared well beforehand which enabled the pupils to set to the task quickly and work industriously throughout the lesson.
22. Teachers make very good use of resources and of the learning support staff with whom they work closely. They value the support that their assistants in the classroom provide and have confidence in their abilities. Consequently they deploy them very effectively on the most important task of working directly with individuals and groups of pupils in order to improve the quality of their learning. The school is well resourced and teachers make good use of the materials and equipment available to them. For example, in several lessons pupils were working with computers on programs that were related to the work being undertaken by the remainder of the class.
23. Teachers who are most effective are those who think critically about their teaching. They reflect on lessons thoughtfully and evaluate what has worked well and where improvements might be made in the future.

24. The high proportion of effective and very effective teaching is the most important contributory factor to the good progress that pupils make in their learning and to the standards they attain.

Provision for children in reception is consistently very good and as a result children make very good progress in all areas of their learning.

25. The school provides very well for children in reception and this creates a very secure foundation on which to base future learning.
26. The quality of teaching is very good and sometimes outstanding. Here teachers have a very clear understanding of the educational needs of the young children with whom they work. This gives rise to thorough planning of activities which challenge and stimulate children in all areas of their learning and promotes good progress. The two teachers work very closely together as a team which ensures that all children are stimulated and challenged in all aspects of their learning. They plan and prepare their classrooms well to provide an engaging environment which successfully captures the interest and imagination of the children. This was clearly evident in the work which is currently undertaken on the theme of *Babies*. Pupils were enthralled and there were many expressions of delight and surprise at the newborn baby who had been brought in by a parent.
27. Teachers manage the children very well indeed in a supportive and positive way which builds their self esteem well. For example, in one whole group session a particularly exuberant and articulate child who was calling out persistently and keen to have his say at the expense of other children was asked by the teacher to keep his 'special' news for a 'special' time later. The child accepted this well and sat quietly, his self-esteem intact. The teachers have high expectations of the children and seldom miss an opportunity to extend their learning further through timely and challenging intervention and questioning. For example, one outstanding numeracy lesson was packed with opportunities for children to practise counting. The intervention of the class teacher pushed expectations of the higher attaining pupils even higher. Consequently these children concentrated well, worked independently on simple number problems set by the teacher and then some went on to explain what they had done.
28. Teachers check regularly how well children are learning which enables them to modify or adapt their methods where necessary to make them more effective. They also keep meticulous records of children's progress in all areas of their learning which are updated regularly to give a clear indication of each child's progress over time. The marking of children's work is perceptive and of high quality. Although many will not be able to read them without the help of an adult, teachers' written comments give important subliminal messages to the children about the value of their work and of the place of writing in communicating between one person and another.
29. The quality of the curriculum planned for children in reception is very good and provides many opportunities to enrich children's experiences and for them to be actively involved in their learning. For example, the opportunity to watch a real new baby being bathed and also planting flowers in the new outdoor area are productive experiences. The classrooms are well planned and resources used very well to support the curriculum, with many interesting activities. These preoccupy pupils effectively and there is little, if any, reaction to an additional adult visitor in their classrooms. There is a very good focus on developing children's confidence in speaking and in answering questions. This was clearly apparent in an exceptional session where pupils were watching a video on baby animals. The curriculum was so planned that there were many invaluable interruptions where the teacher's very good questioning constantly drew on children's own experiences most productively.

30. The provision for children in reception is a significant strength within the school and ensures that children make good and often very good progress in their learning. Consequently, by the time they enter Key Stage 1 most are likely to exceed the nationally defined Early Learning Goals for children at the end of reception.

Support staff work closely with teachers and provide valuable assistance to pupils in their learning.

31. The school spends an above average proportion of its budget on staff to support pupils' learning and the number of hours worked is proportionally more than that found in most schools. This is a good investment. These assistants are valuable and valued members of the school team who provide good quality support to individuals and groups of pupils. The school has focussed on the improvement of pupils' writing recently and has deployed support assistants accordingly to good effect.
32. Support staff provide very good assistance for pupils with special educational needs and to others who need additional support in lessons. This enables pupils to make good progress towards the individual targets which are planned for them. All support staff are hard working, perceptive and committed. They implement teachers' plans effectively whether working with individual pupils or with small groups. They are skilful in meeting the needs of the pupils in the small groups with whom they work regularly, and support them well in numeracy and literacy throughout the school. Consequently these pupils make good and sometimes very good progress in their learning as a result of the concentrated attention they receive.
33. There were many examples of good practice during the inspection. For example, in a literacy lesson with a small group of Year 4 pupils, the support assistant had a very caring and supportive manner which encouraged pupils to give of their best. She spoke slowly to explain some of the conventions of written speech and used good open-ended questions to encourage pupils to think hard about what they were doing and to develop their thinking. Consequently, by the end of the session, not only could all pupils place speech marks '66' and '99' confidently to indicate the beginning and end of conversation, but they also had some idea of how a comma was used and of the term '*reporting clause*'. Also, in another literacy session on using dictionaries, the support assistant working in the computer suite with a group of Year 3 pupils provided good guidance. She was clearly familiar with the computer program and could move pupils' learning on quickly as a result. Pupils evidently enjoyed the session and were keen to continue into playtime. One pupil had particularly enjoyed the session and stated at the end, '*That was wicked!*'
34. Support staff also respond sensitively and with patience to the youngest children in the school and to those who have more specific needs. For example, one assistant working with a group of reception children on preparing a vegetable soup carefully developed their conversation and vocabulary as they cut and sliced vegetables together. On a separate occasion an assistant providing individual literacy support for a Year 1 pupil in connection with a traditional tale, was thoughtful and skilful. She was aware when his attention was waning and changed activities regularly during the session to maintain the pupil's interest. Consequently he continued to apply himself well and made good progress.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and to the tasks they are set in lessons. They relate very well to one another and to the adults with whom they work.

35. Pupils respond very well indeed to the good and often very good teaching they receive. This is similar to the position at the time of the previous inspection. They clearly understand that they are expected to behave well and to do their best in lessons and most are eager to learn. Pupils work with good concentration, sometimes for fairly lengthy periods and there is little casual discussion or behaviour that is not related to the task in

hand. They are keen to answer teachers' questions in whole class sessions, in assemblies and in small groups with learning support assistants. Pupils often think carefully to provide well - chosen responses. This was clearly evident in many lessons such as where pupils were considering the sentences for a poem in Year 2. They offered their own ideas when invited to do so. The teacher praised them well, which encouraged them to greater efforts and led them on to devising their own poems individually. Pupils are aware of the personal targets that are set for them on the inside covers of exercise books. Some enjoy the challenge that these targets present.

36. Pupils listen attentively to each other and are encouraged in this by the example set by staff. Teachers and support staff listen carefully to pupils' ideas. This sends an important message to pupils and affects the way they behave towards one another. Consequently pupils express themselves confidently, secure in the knowledge that they will be listened to and that their views are important.
37. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are very good and contribute strongly to the quality of pupils' learning. Most pupils discuss tasks sensibly as they work together and disagreements are few. In a design and technology lesson, for example, pupils co-operated very well with partners in the practical activity of making a torch. They discussed which materials they would use, how they would join them together and what modifications they might ultimately need to make. There was evident delight amongst those whose torches worked and those whose torches did not work the first time were stoical in their disappointment. Undaunted they went on to consider what changes might be necessary to get their models working successfully. Teachers provide very good role models. They treat pupils with respect and pupils are respectful in return, towards all adults and towards one another.
38. Pupils' very good concentration in lessons and their very good relationships contribute significantly to the school's success.

The school supports pupils' personal development very well and as a consequence most pupils value themselves and their work highly.

39. This is an inclusive school which consciously seeks to ensure that all pupils are respected as individuals. This contributes strongly to pupils' very positive attitudes to school, their very good behaviour and to the quality of relationships.
40. There is a climate of openness and trust to which the headteacher provides a strong direction through personal example. In a whole school assembly on the Christian theme of *Easter*, for example, pupils offered their individual contributions clearly and confidently when asked to tell the different events in the story so far. They were enthusiastic in their responses and waved their hands vigorously, keen to be chosen. Each was listened to respectfully by the headteacher and consequently all pupils followed his lead. Incorrect answers were not dealt with dismissively and so pupils' sense of self-worth was supported well. Pupils listened closely to the story of *The Last Supper* and considered briefly the idea of how difficult it might be to identify a false friend.
41. There are many similar examples of pupils' personal development being effectively supported throughout the school. For instance, in a very good class assembly in reception children listened attentively to the story entitled '*Peter's Chair*'. The teacher asked the children to put up their hands to '*...tell me what you are thinking*'. It was clear that the story had engaged the interest of the children well and by the end of the assembly many had some idea of the meaning of jealousy. Every class provides planned lessons to support pupils' personal, health and social education; weekly 'Circle Time'² sessions give

² During Circle Time pupils discuss a wide range of personal and general issues. It is agreed by all pupils that no interruptions should occur and only one person at a time will speak.

pupils valuable opportunities to discuss social and moral issues. This was demonstrated well in a Year 1 class where pupils were thinking about how medicines could be helpful if used properly. The lesson was very well led by the class teacher who used questions sensitively to promote discussion. They understood the need to listen to one another, not to fidget or call out and consequently all contributed with confidence.

42. The many colourful displays of pupils' work send an important message to pupils about the value of that which they undertake in the classroom. Pupils are encouraged by this to give of their best consistently. Also, displays which arouse pupils' curiosity are used well to stimulate interest and to encourage a response. For example '*The Investigation Zone*' has many interesting natural and man made objects, together with resources such as magnifying glasses and microscopes with which to explore them. The headteacher regards the harnessing of pupils' natural curiosity to be an important ingredient in effective learning.
43. Pupils are offered a good variety of everyday jobs to foster trust and reliability. They respond to these responsibilities well. For example, most take the role of resource '*managers*' seriously and carry out the tasks diligently to ensure that all pupils within their group have the materials that they need. Older pupils have the opportunity to work as library monitors which involves scanning books into the computer. Such tasks are shared out fairly to ensure that all pupils have a chance to develop the personal qualities involved. In addition, the awards for good work and for citizenship are valued by pupils. They promote positive self-esteem well and have the approval of parents. These awards take the form of gold and blue certificates which are presented to pupils in assemblies where individual achievements are celebrated publicly with the whole school community.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Higher attaining pupils are not consistently presented with work that extends them fully in mathematics and science at Key Stage 2 and in writing at Key Stage 1.

44. Although most pupils receive work that challenges them effectively, the school does not routinely plan its curriculum to extend the highest attaining pupils and as a result their progress is suppressed. In mathematics and science at Key Stage 2, for example, insufficient consideration is given to the fact that many pupils have already attained well above average and very high results in National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 1 and are now ready to move on in their learning at a greater rate. Work tends to be pitched at too low a level for these pupils and not enough is expected of them. This was evident in a mathematics lesson at Key Stage 2, for example. It was a good lesson characterised by effective teaching methods but the content was not sufficiently challenging and limited the progress that highest attaining pupils were able to make in their learning. They completed mental calculations very quickly, but on being questioned it was obvious that they could work out more difficult calculations with relative ease.
45. In science there is a strong and successful emphasis on learning through investigation. Most pupils are able to carry out experiments with assistance but work is insufficiently structured to encourage independence amongst the highest attaining pupils. Where teachers regulate and direct learning too closely, as in a lesson at Key Stage 2, on the effect of friction on a toy car, pupils do not have enough opportunity to decide on suitable methods of working and to select and use appropriate equipment and methods of recording their results. Consequently higher attaining pupils do not build sufficiently upon the well above average standards they attain in Key Stage 1 statutory tests. They make average, rather than good progress in their learning as a result.
46. In writing at Key Stage 1 standards of the majority of pupils are above average. However, work is not regularly planned to extend the highest attaining pupils fully. Consequently, in

some lessons work for the whole class is directed towards pupils of average attainment. Pupils who need extra assistance are supported well by teaching assistants but average and higher attaining pupils work at similar levels. The progress of higher attaining pupils is inhibited as a result. This was reflected in past work where exactly the same exercises in handwriting and grammar were completed by all pupils on more than one occasion. This was regardless of the fact that the higher attaining pupils were already writing in a fluent, joined, grammatically sound style in their general written work and had no need to practise something in which they were clearly already accomplished.

Insufficient consideration is given to planning strategically and evaluating important developments, in terms of their intended impact on pupils' learning and standards of attainment.

47. The school does not think critically enough about important aspects of its work and of the effect of new developments on pupils' learning.
48. There is a satisfactory development plan to which staff and governors have contributed. It incorporates proposed improvements on a range of fronts. However, some important initiatives are omitted. In others, the intended outcomes are not precisely enough defined, in terms of the impact they are to have on pupils' learning. Also, the implications of other very recent decisions have not been fully considered.
49. The arrangement whereby pupils at Key Stage 2 are grouped by ability for literacy and numeracy, for example, is a successful initiative which meets the needs of most pupils. However, this was a major organisational change which was not included in the school development plan and has yet to be evaluated by the school in terms of the effect it has on the attainment of different groups of pupils. More thorough and timely evaluation would have revealed that some pupils are under challenged. Also, the deployment of learning support assistants to work with particular groups of pupils in writing is appropriately contained in the English co-ordinator's action plan. However, the intended outcome and the criteria for measuring success are insufficiently precise in terms of pupils' learning and not related closely enough to one another. This is a major investment of a very important resource. Although these assistants are highly valued and committed they have yet to be observed teaching in their own right or receive regular feedback on their contributions.
50. Some changes are insufficiently thought through and have a negative impact on pupils' learning. For example, too little consideration was given to the very recent change to lengthen the taught week for Key Stage 2 pupils. In order to have the same amount of teaching each week as found in most schools, it was decided to cancel the afternoon break time for Key Stage 2 pupils and make no other adjustments to the timetables. Consequently the pace in some otherwise successful science lessons was too slow as the content was extended to fill the extra time available. Teachers commented that these lessons now went on for too long which adversely affected the rate of pupils' learning.
51. The school development plan contains a number of appropriate initiatives in a variety of areas. Most significantly the school is beginning to consider the implications of a move to full primary status in 2003. Much of the development plan is carefully thought through but some initiatives identify targets which are too imprecise and so are more difficult to measure in relation to pupils' learning. For example, 'To *develop an outdoor curriculum area for reception*' is a laudable action, but is more a mechanism to improve children's learning than a measurable target in terms of children's attainment. Also '*acceptance by governors*', whilst important, is not the most important criterion for judging the success of the venture.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. In order to raise standards further, as the school moves towards full primary status, the governors, headteacher and staff should address the following:
- ensure that more able pupils are regularly presented with suitably challenging targets in writing at Key Stage 1 and in mathematics and science at Key Stage 2 (*See paragraphs 44-46*);
 - improve the quality of strategic planning by reflecting critically on all aspects of the school's work and ensuring that major initiatives are considered carefully and fully evaluated in terms of their intended impact on pupils' learning and standards of attainment (*See paragraphs 47-51*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	27
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	2	8	9	7	1	0	0
Percentage	7.4	29.6	33.3	25.9	3.7	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 three percentage point[s].

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR-Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	175
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	5
Special educational needs	YR-Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	44
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.6

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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	20	21	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	20
	Girls	21	21	21
	Total	40	40	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (88)	98 (98)	100 (98)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	20
	Girls	21	21	21
	Total	40	40	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (93)	98 (98)	100 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	133
Any other minority ethnic group	5

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR-Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.3
Average class size	25

Education support staff: YR-Y4

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	124

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	403,150
Total expenditure	382,810
Expenditure per pupil	2,176
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,870

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.6
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 37.7%

Number of questionnaires sent out	175
Number of questionnaires returned	66

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	27	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	70	26	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	53	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	52	9	1	0
The teaching is good.	64	36	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	55	9	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	21	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	36	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	33	59	6	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	68	32	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	52	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	11	52	20	14	3