

INSPECTION REPORT

Skyswood Primary School

St. Albans, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117240

Headteacher: Mr A Willison

Reporting inspector: Alan Andrews
6436

Dates of inspection: 13th – 14th January 2003

Inspection number: 247747

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery, infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Chandlers Road
St.Albans
Hertfordshire

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R Morris

Date of previous inspection: 12th January 1998

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Skyswood is an average sized primary school on the outskirts of St. Albans. It serves an area of mainly owner occupied housing. There are 234 girls and boys on roll aged from three to eleven. They are divided into eight classes, including a nursery and a reception class. The nursery was established two years ago and, at the present time, is made up of 35 children who attend part-time. Children begin the nursery in the academic year they become four. Most have attainment above that expected for their age. There are two admission dates. Those children whose fourth birthday is before the end of February are admitted at the beginning of September and those who are four before the end of August are admitted at the beginning of January. Each of the six infant and junior classes are made up of discrete year groups. Overall, the school has an equal number of girls and boys. There are a small number of children from ethnic minorities. The percentage of children identified as having special educational needs is below the national average and includes three children with a statement of special educational need. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The inspection focused on children's attainment in English and mathematics as well as the provision for the Foundation Stage and for brighter children.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Skyswood is a largely effective school that cares for its children really well. The headteacher and staff promote a good climate for learning. Together with the governors they work successfully to raise standards. The curriculum for the nursery is rich and varied. Standards in English and mathematics have risen considerably since the last inspection. They are currently very good at the end of the infant stage and good at the end of the junior stage. However, the school's small number of children with special educational needs do not always make the progress they should. Overall, teaching is good. It is very good in the nursery class, in Year 2, Year 6 and in music. Children's attitudes and behaviour are very good. Parents are supportive of the school, although a significant number have concerns about the way the school works and communicates with them. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Achievements are high in English and mathematics at the end of both the infant and junior stages.
- Teaching in the nursery class, Year 2, Year 6 and in music is very good.
- Provision within the nursery class is of a high quality.
- Children are cared for really well. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good.

What could be improved

- Provision for children with special educational needs.
- Partnership and communication with parents.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made some important improvements since the last inspection in 1998 that have led to much higher attainment. Key issues in the previous report have been dealt with successfully. Sufficient attention is now given to design and technology at the junior stage and children's attainment and progress has improved. Increased opportunities are now provided for children to develop their investigation skills in both mathematics and science. In addition, brighter children are given more challenging tasks in these subjects and, as a result, make better progress. They perform well in national tests. A new nursery class was established some two years ago and the younger children add much to the daily life of the school. Recent national guidelines have been adopted successfully in planning programmes of work for the Foundation Stage.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A*	C	A	C
mathematics	A	C	A	A
science	A*	B	A	A

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

In 2002 the school's results in national tests for eleven year olds in English, mathematics and science were well above the national average. In all three subjects, the percentage of children reaching the higher levels of achievement was better than in most schools. When compared to schools in a similar context, the 2002 results were well above average in mathematics and science and in line with the average in English. Over the four year period 1999 to 2002 a high standard was maintained, although there was a dip in 2001. The school was expecting this because of the differences between cohorts. The English and science results in 2000 were in the highest 5% nationally. In spite of some fluctuation, the overall picture is of a school doing really well.

The school's 2002 reading and mathematics results in national tests for children aged seven were well above the national average. Its results in writing were in the top 5% nationally. In all three subject areas, the percentage of children reaching the higher levels of achievement was above the national average. In writing it was more than double the national average. When compared to similar schools, the 2002 results were all well above the average. During the period 1999 to 2002, the school's results in reading and writing were consistently high compared to the national picture. Indeed, the 2001 reading results were in the top 5% nationally. In mathematics, the trend over the same period has been up, with well above average results in 2002. The overall picture is of a school doing really well compared to the national scene and to schools in a similar context.

Lesson observations and scrutiny of work in the current Year 2 show that standards in English and mathematics are well above that found in most schools. Standards at Year 6 are slightly lower than previously, but still above average. This is due to variations in cohorts and the school's targets for test results have rightly taken account of it. Most children at the Foundation Stage are on course to exceed the early learning goals by the age of five. However, some of the school's children with special educational needs do not make the progress they should because their individual targets for improvement are not precise enough and insufficient account is taken of them when planning and delivering lessons.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children enjoy school and take pride in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Children behave very well at all times. They are polite, well mannered and respectful to others.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development and relationships are very good. Children take on responsibilities in a sensible way.

Attendance	Satisfactory. The school is working hard to improve this.
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Children are eager to learn. They arrive at school on time, settle quickly to work and take part in activities with enthusiasm. These features help to create a calm and orderly atmosphere and contribute positively to children's learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	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.

In lessons observed, all teaching was satisfactory or better. 40% was very good, 33% was good and 27% was satisfactory. All the very good teaching was seen in the nursery, Year 2, Year 6 and in the specialist teaching of music. Features of this high quality teaching include very good subject knowledge, the systematic building of skills and high expectations of what children can achieve in the time available. Teaching in the nursery provides children with challenging activities that captures their interest and motivates them to do their best. The specialist music teaching enables children to achieve high standards and helps to ensure that the subject plays an important part in the life of the school. Literacy and numeracy are taught effectively at both the infant and junior stages and this has a positive impact on children's attainment. Children with special educational needs do not always make the progress they should. This is because their individual targets for improvement are sometimes not precise enough and not all teachers take them into account when planning and delivering lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Children engage in a rich and varied range of activities, particularly in the nursery class and in music.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. The curriculum for children with special educational needs lacks rigour and precision in some classes.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school has a small number of children with English as an additional language and they progress well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for children's personal development is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively in lessons, assemblies and at other times.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Children's general well being is catered for really well.

Parents are supportive of the school, but a significant number are not satisfied with the way it communicates and works with them. There is good provision for children's personal, social and health education. Daily assemblies make a valuable contribution to the life of the school. Courtesy and good manners are important and modelled well by staff. The curriculum is enlivened through the use of visitors and visits to places of interest. There is good provision for school clubs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Standards have been raised successfully. There is clear educational direction and the school runs smoothly on a day to day basis.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and act effectively as critical friends.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Careful analysis of the school's results enables it to take appropriate action to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There is a clear view of priorities for development so that money is directed to raising standards.

Strengths in leadership stem from the headteacher's positive approach to the implementation of national initiatives as well as an emphasis on high standards and quality in children's work. The headteacher and governing body work together well and, in managing the budget, the principles of best value are applied effectively. However, a significant number of parents are concerned about the school's partnership with them. They do not feel that enough has been done to improve communication.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • The good standards achieved. • The friendly and supportive atmosphere. • The high standards of behaviour. • Children are helped to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership and communication with parents. • The provision for brighter children and those with special educational needs. • Information about their child's progress. • Homework arrangements. • More activities outside lessons.

Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents. The school has worked hard to improve its communication and partnership with them, but has not yet managed to satisfy a significant number. Inspectors find that homework arrangements and information provided about children's progress is satisfactory. However, more needs to be done to convince parents that this is so. Brighter children are catered for well, but the provision for children with special educational needs does not ensure they all fulfil their potential. Inspectors judge that the school provides a good range of activities outside lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Achievements are high in English and mathematics at the end of both the infant and junior stages.

1. The previous inspection in 1998 found that children's attainment in English was mostly in line with the national average. Since then the school's performance, as measured in national tests, has improved significantly. From 1999 to 2001 its results in the reading and writing tests for children aged seven were consistently high compared to the national average. During the same period, the English results for children aged eleven fluctuated, but were mainly high. In 2002 the results for children aged seven and eleven were all well above the national average. Indeed, the results in writing for children aged seven were in the top five per cent nationally. At the end of both the infant and juniors, the percentage of children reaching the higher levels of attainment in the tests was above that found in most schools. In writing for children aged seven it was more than double the national average. When compared to schools in a similar context the 2002 results were well above the average for children aged seven, but in line with the average for those aged eleven. These improvements have come about because of a determined approach to the raising of standards and the successful implementation of the national literacy initiative.
2. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work show that, currently, the children's overall attainment in English at age seven is well above average. There is a fall in the overall attainment of the children aged eleven as compared to last year, but it is still above average with a significant minority of the children exceeding this. The school monitors children's performance carefully and was expecting the overall fall because the year group includes a higher than usual number of children with special educational needs.
3. At both the infant and junior stages, most children are articulate and pleased to talk to visitors about their work and interests. They listen attentively, answer questions sensibly and contribute well to class discussions. Some children use their own experiences to illustrate a particular point they want to make. Their very good listening skills do much to enhance their learning. They listen carefully to introductions to lessons and know what they have to do. This means time is used productively and work often moves forward at a good pace. By the age of seven, many children are able to offer opinions and to express preferences. An example of this was seen at the end of a literacy lesson when children were confident enough to explain to a visitor why they liked particular animals in the text they had been studying. At age eleven, most children are able to ask sensible questions of their own and to communicate meaning clearly using a wide vocabulary.

4. Children enjoy reading and listening to stories. They like reading aloud together in lessons and teachers set a good example in the way in which they read to the class. A significant number of children have reading skills of a high level. Many read regularly at home and this helps them to improve. Home school reading records are used well as a means of dialogue between parent, child and teacher, although they are more effective with the infant children than the juniors. The importance of recognising and using letter sounds when tackling new words is appropriately emphasised and this helps children to make good progress in their reading development. For example, in a Year 2 lesson children were encouraged to sound out and then read the word particular, which they did successfully. At age seven, many children read with growing confidence and fluency. They often show a very good understanding of texts they have read and they have their own favourite stories. Some older children read particularly well and with real expression. They benefit from opportunities to read a wide range of literature, including Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, The Diary of Ann Frank and Cider with Rosie.
5. Children write for a variety of purposes and often show good skills when doing so. Infants know the importance of sequencing events in the right order. By the age of seven, their understanding of basic sentence structure, including the use of capital letters and full stops, is developing well. Junior children show a growing understanding of grammatical structure. By the age of eleven, they are beginning to use question marks, exclamation marks, speech marks and commas with increasing confidence. Appropriate attention is given to spelling and many children use dictionaries competently. In a Year 6 literacy lesson, words such as eventually, abused and published were spelt correctly. Children's work is usually set out well and handwriting is generally of a good standard. There are examples of creative thinking and imaginative use of vocabulary in some children's writing.
6. The co-ordinator for English is in her first year at the school. She has reviewed its policy statement for the subject and is beginning to monitor lessons to support teachers and so raise standards. The National Literacy Strategy has been introduced effectively and is having a positive impact.
7. Children's attainment in mathematics is very good at age seven and good age eleven. This is reflected in the school's national test results, scrutiny of children's work over time and lesson observations in Year 2 and Year 6. Teachers, especially in these year groups, have high expectations that children can achieve well. Work is set at a level above that normally expected for children aged seven and eleven. Children respond very well to these high demands and make good progress. Essential mathematical skills in the four rules of number and mental arithmetic are taught very well giving children the confidence to apply their knowledge to problem solving.
8. The mathematics curriculum is covered thoroughly so that children often achieve at a level that is well in advance of others of the same age. For example, in Year 2 children are challenged to work with numbers up to 1000. They carry out investigations, such as finding out the different and least number of coins that can be used to make purchases of set values.

9. In Year 6, children have a secure grasp of multiplication tables. They know about negative numbers and how to record co-ordinates using a combination of positive and negative numbers. The children set their work out neatly and this helps them work accurately. Teachers set children clear targets for improvement and check that these are achieved. Children in Year 6 are involved in checking their work and this gives them a very clear idea of how well they are doing. Homework is set regularly and this plays an important part in enhancing the rate of children's progress.
10. The mathematics coordinator has a very clear idea of the strengths and areas for development in the mathematics curriculum. National test results are analysed thoroughly to bring about further improvements. There have been a number of improvements since the last inspection. Many staff have attended extended courses to raise their knowledge, skills and understanding. Children's work is scrutinised to check that they are making the progress they should. Resources have been improved and the National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented successfully.

Teaching in the nursery class, Year 2, Year 6 and in music is very good.

11. Teaching in the nursery is very good. The teacher and support staff work very well together to provide a calm, purposeful and secure environment for learning. They are very knowledgeable about the ways children of this age learn and provide many different, appropriate and challenging activities to capture their interest and motivate them.
12. Each session is planned thoroughly to cover all the areas of experience¹ and enable children to make decisions about their work. For example, children are informed about the range of activities available for them. They are then asked to decide the activity that they wish to take part in. Once they have made the decision, they are encouraged to stay at the activity until they have completed it on their own, with a friend or with the help of an adult. As the children get older they plan their programme of activities during the session. These high expectations enable children to develop their concentration, perseverance and independence as well as work productively at a good pace. During one session that was observed, two children built complex models, one of them a rocket from recyclable materials using glue and sticky tape. The children chose their materials and the ways to join them. All the materials were easily available for the children to select and they did this sensibly and without the help of an adult.
13. Staff use a wide variety of very effective teaching methods to enable children to acquire basic skills. In small group sessions, children are taught to recognise numbers and count forwards and backwards to ten. The youngest children have learned to recognise the numbers 1, 2 and 3 in a fun way. The teacher introduced a dinosaur puppet that needed to learn to count. The children corrected the dinosaur's mistakes and described the shape and colour of the numbers. In this way, all the children were involved. In addition to numeracy skills, the children learned social skills, such as how to take turns, share ideas, listen carefully and speak confidently in front of others.

¹ Areas of experience for children in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception classes) are personal, social and emotional development; communications, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge, understanding of the world; physical development; creative development.

14. Children are managed very well so that their behaviour is really good. Staff enable children to learn routines quickly. New children are inducted over time and each one is introduced to the other children in a friendly and helpful way. Children who have been in the nursery longer are proud to show the new children what they have to do. Relationships between staff and children and between the children themselves are excellent so that the atmosphere is a happy one. Often routines are introduced to the children through songs that capture their attention. Questions support the opportunities for children to make decisions and be independent. For example, *What are you going to choose to do? What shall we stick on your picture?*
15. Time, resources and support staff are used very effectively so that children enjoy a wide range of experiences during each nursery session. Children know that when they have removed and hung up their coats and changed their shoes, they join their friends sitting in a circle in a small room. At this time they learn basic literacy or numeracy skills together. During the activity session, support staff play memory games with small groups, enable children to extend their speaking and listening skills in role play, develop cutting and sticking skills or extend their physical development in outdoor activities. Praise and discussion means the children know how well they are learning. Teachers use these informal as well as more formal assessments to track children's progress and plan work that meets various needs, especially for the brighter children.
16. Scrutiny of children's work and observations of literacy and numeracy lessons show teaching is also very good in Years 2 and 6. As a result, many children acquire knowledge and skills quickly. The teachers' written plans are clear and lessons usually begin with an explanation of what is to be learned and how. Relationships are very good and resources are readily available when required. Features of this very good teaching include:
 - high expectations that children will learn quickly, behave appropriately, sustain their interest and work happily together. This teaches children to work productively and to complete tasks in the time available;
 - well chosen activities that build effectively on children's previous learning. This ensures that they gain skills, knowledge and understanding in a systematic way. An example of this was seen in a Year 6 lesson when children were considering the difference between a biography and an autobiography. They successfully used their knowledge of famous authors, such as Jane Austen, to help them do this;
 - very good use of questioning to assess children's understanding as well as challenge their thinking. An example of this was observed during a Year 2 mental arithmetic session in which children added numbers up to 100. The children were expected to work rapidly and to record their answers on whiteboards. Their understanding of how they had carried out the calculations was assessed through the use of well directed and skilful questions;
 - good on-going support during practical and written work to ensure that children know what they need to do to improve;
 - plenty of opportunities for children to contribute their ideas to discussions. This helps build their confidence, extend their vocabulary and develop views of their own;
 - a good mix of hard work and humour that motivates children to consistently give of their best, which they do;
 - very good use of time so that lessons have pace and a real sense of purpose.

17. Music plays a very important part in the life of the school. The headteacher makes a significant contribution to the subject and many children benefit from visiting musicians and extra-curricular activities. Resources are good and most lessons take place in a music room separate from the main building. The part-time specialist teaching of the subject is very good and helps to ensure that standards are high. The teacher concerned has considerable expertise and shares this very effectively with the children. She generates real enthusiasm for music and this is evident in the way in which children are keen to begin lessons and to participate fully. The programme of work includes opportunities to explore and enjoy the music from a variety of cultures and times. For example, during the inspection children from Year 5 were introduced to the use of stomping tubes in music from the Solomon Islands. Activities include opportunities to appraise, compose and perform a wide range of music. The children rise to the challenges set and their work is often very good. The teacher has high expectations of what they can achieve and much is accomplished in lessons. Children enjoy the work, make really good progress and acquire skills quickly.

Provision within the nursery class is of a high quality.

18. The nursery opened two years ago. It is housed in a building that has been adapted well and allows children appropriate space to work in all the areas of experience. The room is colourful, welcoming and secure. Displays value children's efforts in artwork and photographs remind them of the work they have done. A noticeboard for parents keeps them informed about what their children are learning and other useful information. Outside there is a paved area for the children to ride tricycles, scooters and small cars. There is also a garden area that is used well for environmental studies. There are plans to improve the outside area further, to provide shade and enhance its use in the curriculum. Resources are good and organised so that the children can choose what they need easily and take responsibility for putting them away.
19. The curriculum in the nursery is a very rich and interesting one. It is imaginative, innovative and planned thoroughly to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the Curriculum for the Foundation Stage introduced nationally in September 2000.
20. Strong emphasis is placed on developing children's personal, social and emotional development. *Snack time, Firework and Christmas pyjama parties* provide very good opportunities for children to acquire social skills of good manners when eating and drinking together. Speaking and listening skills are extended as staff interact with the children asking questions that stimulate extended and imaginative replies. Children take turns to talk and listen carefully to their friends and adults working with them. New children are introduced into the nursery very well so that they soon learn the routines and where everything is kept. This enables them to become independent, confident and make decisions about their work. Work involving religious festivals, such as Christmas and Divali, enable children to develop an understanding of the faiths and beliefs of others. In one activity, two children were acting out the Nativity using the characters from a wooden nativity scene. Joseph said, *Oh darling, you have had the baby!* In another, children made diva lamps, painted rangoli patterns and dressed in saris. They were assisted in these activities by a parent from the Hindu faith. The children also learned something about the Chinese culture by celebrating The Chinese New Year.

21. Communication, language and literacy skills are promoted through imaginative tasks. Letters to Father Christmas encouraged children to apply their developing writing skills in a real situation. Small group sessions help children to recognise and learn the names of letters and the sounds they make. An attractive book area encourages children to browse through their favourite stories, recognise the sounds letters make and increase early reading skills as well as recall previous work from photographs. Role-plays, such as *A winter night at home*, *The night before Christmas* as well as finger puppets and doll's houses do much to extend children's communication and literacy skills.
22. Mathematical development is often linked closely to other tasks. For example, children were invited to include the need to order an Indian, Chinese or Italian Takeaway meal into their role play of being home on a winter's evening. The children had to find the correct number on a list and tap it out on the telephone. Staff involve children in discussions to develop mathematical vocabulary, such as *taller, longer, shorter* when children are making models. On other occasions, children sing number songs and rhymes that help them to count forwards and backwards up to ten. Some able children demonstrate their knowledge of higher numbers and staff make the most of these opportunities to extend the learning of other children.
23. There are many opportunities for children to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. These include:
- keeping a daily record of the weather;
 - putting plants in tubs and looking after them;
 - using computers to draw pictures, play number and reading games;
 - listening to stories on tapes;
 - finding out how to look after pets such as fish, rabbits and dogs;
 - incubating fertile eggs and watching them hatch;
 - taking a walk in newly fallen autumn leaves;
 - watching and identifying birds that visit the nursery garden;
 - investigating looking through binoculars, magnifying glasses, different coloured perspex filters,
 - learning about people who help us, such as the police and firefighters;
 - finding out about transport, going on holiday, healthy eating;
 - experimenting with different ways to move water and objects from one water tray to another;
 - cooking and visiting the local shops.
- These activities also link to other areas of learning. For example, when children were learning about road safety, the *lollipop person* visited the nursery to talk to the children. The children then drew paths and pedestrian crossings on the playground, role-played adults helping them to cross the road safely and designed road layouts, including roundabouts to drive their cars and bikes. These tasks give the children a clear understanding of the world about them and also develop their imaginative, creative, physical and communication skills.

Children are cared for really well. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good.

24. Throughout the school, children's attitudes to learning are very good. Almost all enjoy school and show an enthusiastic approach to their work. A similar picture was found at the last inspection. During lessons children readily understand the need to concentrate and to do their best. They take a pride in their work and the way it is presented. Children's positive response helps them to make good progress in their learning. They listen carefully, contribute sensibly to discussions and work hard at the tasks set. An impressive feature is the way they co-operate with one another. This contributes effectively to their social development and enables them to benefit from the sharing of ideas and equipment.
25. Children's behaviour is very good during lessons and as they move in and around the school. For example, they move to the music room for lessons and to the hall for assemblies in an orderly and calm manner. This helps set an atmosphere conducive to thinking and concentrating hard. Children know what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and are quick to respond to instructions from teachers and other staff. They are alert to the feelings of others and have a good understanding of what is right and wrong to do or say. They are pleased to talk about their work and are polite, well mannered and helpful to visitors. Lunch times are pleasant occasions that are organised and supervised well. Bullying very rarely arises and there were no exclusions last year. Parents are rightly pleased about the high standards of behaviour. In particular, they see for themselves how well children behave during educational visits and special events.
26. Children are cared for very well and this helps them to feel happy and secure at school. Health and safety is monitored carefully by governors and staff. This includes regular risk assessments with follow up when appropriate. Relationships are very good and there is a real sense of community. No racial incidents have been recorded and children from ethnic minority groups are enabled to play a full part in the life and work of the school. Teachers and other staff are friendly and approachable. This helps set a good example and children respond well during lessons and other activities. They readily support and help one another as they carry out different tasks. Good opportunities are provided for them to undertake particular responsibilities, such as being an energy monitor that involves closing windows and turning off lights when appropriate. They respond to these responsibilities well.
27. Children's overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average. This represents a decline over the last three years and is due mainly to some parents taking their children on holiday during term time. The school is working hard to discourage this.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The provision for children with special educational needs.

28. The school's percentage of children identified as having special educational needs, including those with a statement of special need, is lower than the national average. The previous inspection found that children with special educational needs made mainly good progress, but some parents are concerned that this is not now the case.
29. The special educational needs co-ordinator has held the responsibility for some four years. She is a very good class teacher and committed to fulfilling the role of co-ordinator effectively. She links with outside agencies and this benefits the children. She has also attended training recently about changes to the national code of practice for children with special educational needs. The link governor for special needs knows the school well and meets with the co-ordinator regularly on both a formal and informal basis. Together they have reviewed the school's policy statement on special educational needs and this is a positive development. However, the co-ordinator is responsible for a class for four and a half days each week. She liaises with other members of staff about special educational needs, but does not see their lesson plans regularly. During the half day each week away from her class she manages to observe some lessons and to give verbal and written feedback to teachers and staff. She also checks on some children's progress. Whilst this is helpful, she does not have sufficient time to monitor and evaluate rigorously the school's overall provision for this area of its work, including the early identification of children with learning difficulties. This is particularly important at the present time because a high proportion of the teachers are relatively new to the school and are still settling to its routines and procedures.
30. Lesson observations show that children with special educational needs are keen to please and to do their best. Their individual education plans are written by class teachers with guidance given by the co-ordinator. The plans are up to date, but targets for improvement are not always precise enough and there is little reference to them in teachers' planning. Support for the children relies heavily on programmes of work provided by class teachers. Whilst these are sometimes good, scrutiny of work over time shows there is inconsistency between classes. Some teachers do not take sufficient account of the targets set for individual children when preparing and delivering lessons. This means that children do not always make the progress they should and parents are right to be concerned about this.
31. Learning support assistants play an important part in the school's provision for special educational needs. They have good relationships with the children and are keen to make a worthwhile contribution, which they do. However, they would benefit from more meetings with the co-ordinator to discuss ideas and experiences and to help them plan their work. Both teachers and support staff would benefit from additional training about particular forms of special educational needs, such as dyslexia.

The partnership and communication with parents.

32. Parents are supportive of the school and keen to see their child do well. Many attend special events and several undertake voluntary work within classrooms, such as helping with reading. There is a thriving Friends' Association that organises a full programme of fund raising events and makes a valuable contribution to the life of the school. However, the level of parental satisfaction has fallen since the last inspection. Almost a quarter of those parents replying to the questionnaires do not feel that the school works closely enough with them. Comments made at the parents' meeting and in the questionnaires indicate that the main concerns relate to communication. A significant number of parents feel they are not sufficiently well informed about how their child is getting on.
33. There are several strong features about the school's partnership and communication with parents. These include:
- helpful details about the school in the prospectus and governors' annual report;
 - regular newsletters about the general life of the school;
 - supplementary letters about particular events, such as class visits to places of interest;
 - the distribution of class planners that give an outline of the work to be covered and where help and assistance might be required;
 - workshops and discussions with parents that explain current issues;
 - the use of the school website to communicate with parents.
34. Much has been done and the school deserves credit for this. However, there are several weaknesses as follows:
- parents are encouraged to raise any individual concerns by informal discussions with teachers and staff. Most find this arrangement helpful, but a few are disappointed about their representation to senior staff;
 - parents are informed about homework arrangements, but find that these are not applied consistently across classes;
 - parents are advised about their child's progress through annual reports and consultation meetings. The school has altered the format of the meetings in response to comments from parents, but there is still some dissatisfaction;
 - the school sends out questionnaires to help identify areas of development, but some parents feel that not enough attention is given to their views.
35. The school aims to achieve a welcoming and open-door approach. Overall, however, it has not managed to satisfy a significant number of parents in terms of its partnership and communication with them.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

36. To build further on the strengths of the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

1 improve the provision for children with special educational needs;

Paragraphs: 28 – 31;

2 improve the partnership and communication with parents.

Paragraphs: 32 – 35.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	15
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	0	6	5	4	0]	0	0
Percentage	0%	40%	33%	27%	0%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25	209
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	32

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	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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
	2002	14	15	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	14
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	29	29	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (93)	100 (97)	100 (97)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	14
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	29	29	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (87)	100 (87)	100 (97)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	15	17	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	15
	Girls	14	13	16
	Total	29	28	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91 (83)	88 (73)	97 (90)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	15
	Girls	15	15	16
	Total	30	30	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	97 (90)	97 (87)	100 (90)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	160	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	7	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23:1
Average class size	28.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	135

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18:1
Total number of education support staff	1.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	39.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.7
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.7
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	[]
Total expenditure	[]
Expenditure per pupil	[]
Balance brought forward from previous year	43,800
Balance carried forward to next year	[]

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	234
Number of questionnaires returned	79

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	32	0	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	38	14	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	42	1	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	47	19	3	3
The teaching is good.	42	48	5	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	51	24	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	41	9	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	34	48	10	3	5
The school works closely with parents.	23	52	19	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	25	58	14	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	44	5	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	34	28	10	9

