

INSPECTION REPORT

Briar Hill Infant School

Whitnash

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique Reference Number: 125563

Headteacher: Mrs Ruth Fennell

Reporting inspector: Mr Fred Riches

Dates of inspection: 22 – 25 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707842

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Richard Hawke
Date of previous inspection:	29 April – 3 May 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Fred Riches, Rgl	English; music; physical education; English as an additional language.	Attainment and progress; teaching; leadership and management.
Derek Bowers, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; attendance; support, guidance and pupils' welfare; efficiency.
Anna Dawson	Science; design and technology; information technology; art; under fives; equal opportunities.	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources.
Stephanie Lacey	Mathematics; geography; history; religious education; special educational needs.	Curriculum and assessment; pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Children make good progress in the reception year as a result of consistently good teaching.
- Pupils' attainment is high in mathematics and science.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and they show positive attitudes to learning.
- The headteacher gives good leadership and is well supported the by deputy head and governors.
- Teachers and assistants are dedicated and give very good support and guidance.
- The school has established a very good partnership with parents and the community.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Standards at age seven are not high enough in reading and writing.
- II. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- III. Support for pupils learning English as an additional language is not sufficiently well planned and executed.
- IV. The school does not track pupils' progress thoroughly through the school.

The school has several strengths, which outweigh its weaknesses. Overall, this is a good school, which provides satisfactory value for money. There are still some important areas needing development. The weaknesses will form the basis of the governors' action plan, a copy of which will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has successfully addressed almost all key issues from the last inspection three years ago and is better than it was. It has put in place schemes of work and assessment systems, which were lacking in all subjects. It has developed an excellent policy on teaching and learning. Provision for children under five, which was a weakness, is now a strength of the school. Systems for monitoring teaching have improved the quality of teaching overall. Despite much attention and effort given to English, the school has not succeeded in improving standards in this subject. The school has improved standards in science and maintained them in mathematics. The school's development plan recognises the need to analyse pupils' progress more carefully and to improve the quality of teaching in English. The school is in a position to continue its steady improvement. Some of its current targets for pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy are over-ambitious, however.

• **Standards in subjects**

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-olds in 1999 based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools (those with between 0 and 8% of pupils entitled to free school meals)	<p>Key</p> <p>well above average</p> <p>above average</p> <p>average</p> <p>below average</p> <p>well below average</p>
Reading	C	D	
Writing	B	C	
Mathematics	A	B	

The table shows that in 1999 pupils' attainment was above average in writing and average in reading. Attainment in writing was close to that of similar schools, but in reading it was below that of similar schools. Pupils' attainment in mathematics was well above the national average and above the standard achieved by similar schools. This picture of high attainment in mathematics was also reflected in science. Pupils' attainment in the current year towards the end of Key Stage 1 in mathematics is above average and in science well above average. Attainment in reading and writing is average, but is not as good as it should be. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in mathematics and good progress in science. Their progress in English is good in Year 1, but unsatisfactory in Year 2. Standards in information technology and religious education are satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in art, design and technology, history, geography and music. Progress is satisfactory in physical education. Children under five are all making good progress.

• **Quality of teaching**

Teaching in:	Under 5	5 – 7 years
English	Good	Satisfactory
Mathematics	Good	Satisfactory
Science		Good
Information technology		Satisfactory
Religious education		Satisfactory
Other subjects	Good	Good

The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons. It is good or better in 58 per cent, including 17 per cent where it is very good or excellent. In six per cent of lessons it is unsatisfactory. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, when 16 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory.

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

• **Other aspects of the school**

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Very good in lessons, and at break and lunchtimes.
Attendance	Very good; well above the national average.
Ethos*	Good. Conscientious staff form good relationships with pupils and ensure positive attitudes to work; the school strives for higher standards through reflective self-review and resultant action.
Leadership and management	Good overall. Very good strategic planning and clear improvement through strong action taken to implement policies since the last inspection; monitoring of teaching is sound, but monitoring of pupils' progress lacks precision; not enough focus on management of teaching and support given to pupils learning English as an additional language.
Curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum for children under five is good. At Key Stage 1 the curriculum is broad and balanced; schemes of work in each subject ensure that planning is sequential and builds on knowledge, concepts and skills covered earlier.
Pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. The school has given insufficient attention to meeting the needs of pupils on its register of special educational need. The policy does not meet statutory requirements.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good. Staff promote good behaviour and develop pupils' social skills successfully; they provide good, and occasionally excellent opportunities to develop pupils' cultural awareness; they offer sound opportunities for spiritual development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good. Sufficient well-trained teachers; an above-average number of classroom support staff; spacious accommodation and good learning resources in most subjects.
Value for money	Satisfactory. With average expenditure per pupil, the school ensures that pupils make sound progress overall.

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

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[illegible]

The inspection team agrees fully with the overwhelmingly positive views expressed by parents. It also agrees with those parents who expressed a concern about children having to read entirely different books to parents from those they read in lessons. This currently has the effect of limiting liaison between parents and teachers in an area where the sharing of information is particularly valuable. The concern raised about information for parents of reception children turned out to refer purely to a very small number of parents. Their children had moved into the school after the initial staff visits to homes and parent visits to school had been held. For the most part, the school's systems for informing and involving parents when their children start school are very good. Staff give useful advice to parents about the curriculum and are very willing to resolve any queries.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to build on the school's current strengths, further improve the quality of education provided and raise standards, the governing body, headteacher and staff with management responsibilities should:

XI. Raise attainment in English by:

- ensuring that teachers share with pupils the focused objectives of each lesson or group activity and that ensuing marking and discussion build on that focus;
- making the best use of any support staff available to maximise the focus on targeted pupils;
- ensuring regular 'guided reading' during the literacy hour, with books chosen to match pupils' ability;
- monitoring pupils' progress by collecting books and work samples over a period and by using specific assessments to calculate pupils' current levels of attainment;
- involving pupils in self-assessment and letting parents know what their children need to do to make progress;
- involving parents more closely in sharing books with their children and ensuring that teachers, parents and children share information on children's reading;
- monitoring the teaching of reading, writing, handwriting and spelling in order to overcome current variations in lesson quality;

(Reference paragraphs 8, 28, 35, 53, 58, 63, 95, 96, 101, 102, 103.)

XII. Improve provision for pupils with special educational needs by:

- improving the quality and quantity of support directly available to pupils with identified special needs;
- ensuring the policy meets statutory requirements and provides a useful guide to teachers;
- improving the involvement of parents and pupils in target-setting and review procedures;
- introducing greater rigour into the management of special needs provision and the monitoring of the impact of support given;

(Reference paragraphs 15, 32, 42, 48, 54, 61, 65, 68, 95, 96, 103.)

XIII. Improve the quality and focus of support for pupils learning English as an additional language by:

- ensuring that support staff spend more time in direct teaching;
- ensuring that support staff work in close partnership with class teachers and focus on the development of pupils' oral and written communication;
- monitoring pupils' progress and the quality of provision more rigorously;

(Reference paragraphs 31, 64, 73, 97, 103.)

XIV. Introduce more rigorous testing and assessment procedures, in line with proposals in the school's current development plan, in order to monitor regularly the progress of all pupils, and of specific groups of pupils, from their time of entry to the school through to their transfer to the junior school.

(Reference paragraphs 41, 60, 62.)

In addition to these key issues, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are indicated in the report paragraphs as referenced:

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Raise the overall quality of English and mathematics teaching to match the best in the school; (100-102 and 109)

Develop a scheme of work and improve resources to support the teaching of religious education; (37, 123 and 126)

Improve pupils' access to information technology; (13 and 119)

Increase the level of challenge in physical education. (153, 155 and 156)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

- 1 Briar Hill Infant School is in Whitnash, near Leamington Spa. The present building is about 30 years old and is set in attractive grounds. There are 212 boys and girls on roll, with slightly more girls than boys. Around 75 per cent of the pupils come from within the catchment area. The others mainly travel from other parts of Whitnash or South Leamington. The pupils come from families that represent a broad social mix. Approximately 72 per cent of pupils have cultural roots in the British Isles, with 25 per cent from other ethnic backgrounds, mainly Indian. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is two per cent, which is well below the national average. Children start school in the reception classes in the September before their fifth birthday. At the time of the inspection 61 children were still four. The reception year children begin school with a range of skills and experiences, many having attended local nursery or playgroup provision. Baseline assessments confirm a broad spread of capabilities on entry to the school, with attainment on entry above average overall in speaking and listening, reading, writing, mathematics and personal and social development. Almost 13 per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational need, which is slightly below average. One pupil has a statement of special educational need.
- 2 The school aims to encourage the development of individual children within a caring community and to provide a stimulating environment and curriculum. Its stated aim is to 'create a caring and welcoming environment'. It seeks to 'promote children's learning and social development in their early years' and stresses that it aims to do this 'in partnership with parents'. The school aims to ensure that 'every child will feel valued and have opportunities to be successful'.
- 3 Particular targets for the current year include the introduction of the numeracy strategy, and the raising of standards in English. The school development plan also recognises improvement in procedures for analysing and tracking pupils' progress and in tightening arrangements for pupils with special educational needs as priorities. The school has set numerical targets, agreed with the local education authority, for the percentage of pupils to attain and exceed the national standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 in the years 2000 and 2001.

- **Key indicators**

Attainment at Key Stage 1¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for latest reporting year:		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	33	24	57
• National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics	
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	30	27	33	
	Girls	23	23	23	
	Total	53	50	56	
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	93 (91)	88 (81)	98 (88)	
	National	82 (81)	83 (82)	87 (86)	
• Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science	
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or Above	Boys	29	32	33	
	Girls	22	23	23	
	Total	51	55	56	
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	89 (91)	96 (91)	98 (96)	
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)	

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

- **Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

Authorised	School	3.9
Absence	National comparative data	5.7
Unauthorised	School	0.1
Absence	National comparative data	0.5

- **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:	Number
Fixed period	0
Permanent	0

- **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:	%
Very good or better	17
Satisfactory or better	94
Less than satisfactory	6

- **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

- **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

- **Attainment and progress**

4 Pupils' attainment at age seven is well above average in science, above average in mathematics and average in English. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the already high standards in mathematics and improved still further in science. Pupils' attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 1, although much the same as it was in 1996, is not high enough.

5 The attainment of children by the age of five is well above average in personal and social development and above average in all other areas of learning. It is a strength of the school. On entry to the reception classes, children' attainment is above average overall. They get a good start to their education and make good progress in language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. In personal and social development they make very good progress. Almost all children achieve the recommended national desirable learning outcomes before the age of five and begin work on the initial level of the National Curriculum. Children are happy, secure and confident learners. All recognise their names and most make a good attempt at writing them. Approximately half know most of their letter sounds and a few are beginning to read. Most of the children count to ten and are secure in their knowledge and understanding of number to ten. The majority have begun to solve simple problems of addition and subtraction using apparatus.

6 Results of Key Stage 1 national tests in 1999 show pupils' attainment as well above the national average in mathematics, above average in writing and average in reading. When compared with similar schools (those with up to eight per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals), results show attainment above that of their peers in mathematics, broadly in line in writing, but below average in reading. In the current year, pupils are making satisfactory progress overall through Key Stage 1 in mathematics. Pupils make good progress in all aspects of English in Year 1 and satisfactory progress in speaking and listening in Year 2. Progress in reading and writing is unsatisfactory overall through the key stage, however, as it slows in Year 2. Pupils' attainment towards the end of Key Stage 1 in the current year is above average in mathematics and speaking and listening. It is broadly average in reading and writing.

7 Pupils' attainment in both English and mathematics reflect the results of 1998 tests, which were a little lower than in 1999. Results have varied over the last four years. A rise from 1996 to 1997 was followed by a dip in 1998. In 1999 results in mathematics and writing improved, but there was little change in reading. Differences stem largely from the nature of the year groups, some of which include a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs. It is clear that the school's strategies to improve attainment in

mathematics were successful in 1999 and that there was a little improvement for higher attainers in writing. It is equally clear, however, from inspection findings and from the school's 1999 reading results, that the school's focus on English has not resulted in improved levels of attainment in this subject overall by the end of Key Stage 1.

8 In English, pupils' speaking and listening skills develop satisfactorily. Some higher attainers express themselves well. The better readers make satisfactory progress in reading, but others are not making sufficient progress. They lack confidence and fluency. While pupils systematically develop skills during lessons using sets of texts kept in school, they choose from a different selection of books for reading at home. As a result, teachers and parents are not liaising very closely on developing pupils' skills and interest in reading. Pupils' early research skills are underdeveloped, as the school library is not yet fully in use. In writing, pupils make good progress in Year 1 as a result of stimulating teaching. They use words and phrases imaginatively and with confidence. A few samples of writing by Year 2 pupils, about Guy Fawkes for example, are thoughtful responses to an appropriate challenge, but progress in writing in Year 2 is unsatisfactory in the main. Pupils' books and folders show little progress in content, punctuation or standards of presentation since the summer. Year 2 pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress in writing, because they receive insufficient support.

9 Pupils learning English as an additional language have widely differing levels of attainment. Their progress in all subjects is broadly the same as that of pupils with similar abilities in their year groups. An analysis of the previous year's test results confirms that the performance of pupils learning English as an additional language is similar to the whole school's pattern in reading, writing and mathematics. Some bilingual higher attainers are fluent English speakers, readers and writers and are making good progress in English in Year 1. Others, who are at earlier stages of learning English as an additional language, are making unsatisfactory progress in writing in Year 2.

10 All pupils apply their speaking and listening, reading and writing skills often in science, geography and history lessons. Throughout the key stage, they write for a range of purposes and in the context of several other subjects. They make satisfactory use of information technology to support the development of reading and writing skills. Overall, most pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of their literacy skills in Year 1, but progress slows in Year 2.

11 In mathematics, pupils develop a sound understanding of the number system and many work accurately with numbers up to 100. They make satisfactory progress in their use of mental strategies and their ability to memorise addition, subtraction and multiplication facts. Their skills in numeracy are above average. Their knowledge of shapes and measuring is good, but they make little use of information technology to help develop their understanding in mathematics. Occasionally, pupils' progress in individual lessons in Year 2 is unsatisfactory because the work set is not pitched at challenging levels.

12 Science is a strength of the school. Pupils make good progress throughout the school in this subject. Results from assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 show pupils attaining well above the national average. Statistics show the school's performance well above that of similar schools, with a high proportion of seven-year-olds attaining beyond the national standard. In the current Year 2, pupils' attainment continues to be well above average. The school's emphasis on experimental and investigative work ensures that pupils

not only build up a good scientific knowledge, but also understand what they are learning and acquire good observational, organisational and analytical skills. Pupils show good knowledge, derived from full coverage of the science curriculum. They record the findings of investigations conducted and are confident when asked to engage in their own experimental and investigative work. Most pupils in a Year 1 class, for example, showed good organisational, observational and recording skills as they conducted tests on different objects to see which were magnetic.

13 Standards in information technology are similar to those reported in 1996. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is average and pupils make mainly satisfactory progress. Occasionally, progress is unsatisfactory, when tasks are not clear or pupils have not been taught the necessary skills for the activity. Pupils' attainment in religious education broadly meets the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress in this subject. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection, when attainment did not meet requirements.

14 Pupils make good progress in art, design and technology, geography, history and music. The good progress is a direct result of a stimulating curriculum. Pupils respond well to imaginative teaching of skills and knowledge. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school in physical education. Since the last inspection, the school has improved standards in design and technology, history and geography. It has maintained high standards in art and music and satisfactory standards in physical education.

15 Pupils with special educational needs make uneven progress through the school. In the reception class, children's learning needs are identified well and they work on appropriate tasks. Consequently their progress is good. In Year 1, pupils also work on activities that are sufficiently challenging and make satisfactory progress overall. In Year 2, pupils make unsatisfactory progress. This is particularly so in English. Writing and reading skills are not well taught. Occasionally pupils work on tasks that are too hard for them in mathematics. The exception to this is the good progress made by a pupil with a statement of special educational need, who benefits from targeted support from a special needs assistant and special needs teacher. Overall, this picture shows a deterioration from the last inspection, when pupils with special educational needs made good progress.

16 An analysis of test results over the past few years shows no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls in any of the main three subjects. Neither does it show any difference between overall attainment and that of pupils learning English as an additional language. The school has agreed challenging performance targets for the next two years, based on its assessment of pupils' current attainment, but it does not gather and use assessment information to track pupils' progress clearly. This results in insecure target-setting. The school is revising some of its current targets, which are over-ambitious.

• **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

17 Pupils' good attitudes to learning and high standards of behaviour reported during the last inspection have been maintained.

18 Children under five are enthusiastic and eager to learn. In the reception classes, they happily settle into their activities in an atmosphere of purposeful calm. They listen

attentively, show interest in their work, and sustain their concentration. They are independent in getting out their equipment and tidying it away at the end of sessions. They behave very well and play and work happily together

19 Pupils throughout the school have good attitudes and show interest in their work. They listen attentively and participate with enthusiasm during introductions and discussions in lessons and assemblies. For example, in a lesson organised by visiting musicians during the inspection, pupils were captivated by the performances and demonstrations. They maintain good concentration when tackling their individual tasks and work at a good pace. Teachers are able to leave the pupils to work independently with the confidence that they will organise themselves well and complete their individual tasks.

20 Pupils' behaviour is very good in lessons and assemblies. Pupils are obedient, polite and respectful. They respond quickly to teachers' requests for them to settle or move on to other activities. Behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes is also very good. The school is very orderly and there is a pleasant, friendly atmosphere throughout the day. Pupils are polite to teachers and other members of staff and helpers. They are friendly and helpful when offering information or answering questions from visitors. A few pupils on the school's register of special educational need have identified behavioural difficulties. These pupils manage well at school with the support of the teachers and classroom assistants. Incidents between pupils are rare and generally of a minor nature. There was no evidence during the inspection of bullying. No pupils have been excluded from the school. Pupils appreciate the good facilities provided by the school. They look after the buildings, grounds, equipment, materials and books well and use the litterbins consistently to help to maintain a clean, tidy environment.

21 Relationships between pupils are very good both in lessons and at breaktimes. Boys and girls mix well and pupils from different cultural backgrounds and different year groups get on well together. Pupils are always interested in the contributions of others in lessons and assemblies and enthusiastically share their achievements. Throughout the school, pupils work together well in lessons, sharing their ideas, equipment and materials. They willingly help each other by providing information and giving explanations.

22 Starting in the reception classes the pupils develop good study skills and are encouraged to take responsibility for their work and for the resources. This good start develops well as the pupils move up through the year groups. There are good routines in lessons and pupils organise themselves well for the different activities throughout the day. Materials and books are prepared and cleared away efficiently. In all classes the pupils help with the daily routines as monitors and helpers.

• **Attendance**

23 Pupils' good levels of attendance and punctuality have been maintained well since the previous inspection. Attendance is very good. The level of unauthorised absences is well below the national average. Pupils arrive punctually each morning and consequently registration periods and lessons start on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

24 The quality of teaching is better than at the time of the last inspection. It is mainly good. It is satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons. This includes 17 per cent where it is very good or excellent and a further 41 per cent where it is good. The remaining six per cent is unsatisfactory and occurs only in Year 2. Among the main strengths are teachers' thorough planning and preparation. In the great majority of lessons throughout the school, teachers match tasks successfully to pupils' current attainment, ensuring a good level of challenge. The best teaching adds an element of imagination, which wins and holds pupils' interest.

25 The quality of teaching for children under five is good. There are particular strengths in the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Teachers plan lessons very well and staff work closely together to share teaching objectives and assessments of children's work. Staff monitor children's development very well and plan activities that are matched to their needs. The staff have worked hard to create a stimulating environment, with well-organised resources. Teachers' warm and supportive relationships with children motivate them and encourage them to learn.

26 Throughout the school, teachers exercise good class control in almost all lessons. Where teaching is most effective, teachers engage pupils' interest and involvement through very good questioning. As a result, pupils show enthusiasm and clearly enjoy the learning. For example, in a Year 1 English lesson, the teacher's careful questioning involved all pupils in composing a class rhyming story, while she acted as secretary, typing their phrases to appear on the computer screen as they watched.

27 Teaching in the literacy and numeracy lessons in Key Stage 1 is mixed in quality. In the good and very good lessons, it is the teachers' clear focus on the purpose of the lesson, their attention to detail in questioning and supporting pupils which gives the lessons quality. Teaching is unsatisfactory when they set tasks which are either too difficult or too easy for pupils, and occasionally when the teacher's explanation of the activity leaves pupils unclear about what they are to do. Teachers develop pupils' literacy skills well in the context of science, geography and history studies. They offer fewer opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills in the context of other subjects.

28 Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but the marking does not always lead to improvement, especially for the older pupils. In some cases, especially in English, this is because teachers' marking and assessment is not focused on one particular aspect. Teachers do not routinely share with pupils what they want them to learn from the lesson. As a result, pupils undertake tasks without knowing what the focus is. Occasionally, teachers mark a range of different mistakes, rather than correcting only the focused teaching and learning points. During lessons, teachers usually make useful verbal assessments, commenting helpfully in order to give praise or ensure pupils' clearer understanding. Teachers make mainly good use of homework to promote pupils' progress and in this they receive good support from parents. The school is reconsidering its approach to reading at home, which currently leads to parents and teachers not sharing

sufficient information about children's choice of books and progress in reading.

29 Teachers prepare well for lessons and ensure that resources required are readily accessible. They organise pupils so that there is a mainly good balance of class, group and individual activities. Teachers deploy classroom assistants well during group activities and brief them well to work with targeted pupils. Overall classroom assistants and volunteers make a positive contribution to teaching throughout the school. The school does not always ensure effective use of support staff's time while class lessons are taking place, however.

30 Teachers ensure equality of opportunity in all activities. In lessons, teachers invariably organise mixed gender groups. They ensure that themes studied are of interest to boys and girls and that they involve both boys and girls in participating, answering questions and demonstrating activities. A few pupils learning English as an additional language are withdrawn from class, but only during the class teaching part of the literacy hour. At these times they receive support in very small groups, with work appropriately focused on the same areas as the class.

31 Very detailed assessment notes on bilingual pupils' learning reveal conscientious teaching support by staff allocated to this role. One particular series of work samples showed sound progress in a pupil's writing over a two-month period. The school allocates teaching support for pupils learning English as an additional language during literacy hour group times and occasionally during other appropriate lessons. This includes appropriate deployment to develop pupils' vocabulary and understanding in the context of practical science experiments, for example. During group support sessions in the literacy hour and in the context of other subjects, the teaching support role is not always sufficiently distinguishable from a classroom assistant's role. In some instances, assistants are deployed to give more appropriately stimulating language support. In one instance, for example, an assistant used excellent questioning techniques to draw two bilingual pupils into expressing their views on the characters and events in a story, while in the same class the support teaching role involved forming and recognising the letter 'a'. No withdrawal group lessons were seen, but teaching support observed during group times was mainly unsatisfactory. This was because the tasks were undemanding and the teaching did not engage pupils in developing their powers of expression through focused, challenging activities.

32 Pupils with special educational needs are taught well in the reception and Year 1 classes. There is no extra designated support for these pupils, but teachers generally plan appropriate tasks and ensure that pupils receive adult support as often as possible. In Years 1 and 2, pupils usually work in groups with others of similar attainment levels. Sometimes they have extra help from the teacher or classroom assistant. In Year 1, these pupils are taught satisfactorily and sometimes well. Teachers take care to include these pupils in whole class discussion and plan activities which are appropriate for their levels of understanding. In Year 2, teachers take care to raise pupils' self esteem by their positive and encouraging approach, but too often the work planned for them does not help them to make progress. Generally teachers, throughout the school, do not make reference to pupils' individual targets when they plan work for the class.

• **The curriculum and assessment**

33 The school has worked hard to improve the curriculum over the last three years. It has successfully addressed the main weaknesses identified by the last inspection. These were related to the curriculum for children under five and the development of skills in all subject areas. Overall the curriculum is now broad and balanced and all statutory requirements are met.

34 The curriculum for children under five is now good. It is securely based on the six areas of learning and provides a rich and stimulating programme of work, which engages children's interest and imagination. It is well planned, broad and balanced. There is a smooth blend with work at early stages of the National Curriculum. Children's attainments are assessed soon after entry and used effectively to plan their work. Pupils' special educational needs are identified early. There is a strong emphasis on the development of language, literacy and numeracy skills in teachers' planning within the reception class, following the guidance in the national literacy and numeracy strategies. The curriculum also has a strong emphasis on children's personal and social development. It provides a very secure foundation for children to make good progress, taking into account their specific needs. The thorough half-termly and weekly planning provides a clear focused curriculum for the children. The procedures for assessing progress clearly indicate on children's individual's records what they have achieved. However, an overall assessment profile, which at a glance shows the attainment and progress of a class and year group of children, is yet to be developed.

35 The curriculum planned for Years 1 and 2 is now satisfactory. Earlier work on English planning has been superseded by the introduction of the national literacy strategy. Staff are adapting this to meet the particular needs of the pupils. Most reading is now taught within the literacy hour and while this is satisfactory overall, staff have not yet sufficiently incorporated the reading that pupils undertake as homework into the programme. There are also planned opportunities for pupils to write for a purpose, but planning for the teaching of handwriting is unsatisfactory.

36 The school has also adopted the national numeracy strategy and staff have worked hard to implement it this term. While planning is generally good, in Year 2 there is sometimes a mismatch between the activity and pupils' knowledge and understanding.

37 In most other subjects, effective schemes of work provide a sound basis for planning. The curriculum for science, information technology, religious education, art, design and technology, geography and history is planned around topics, which provide an interesting focus for pupils' learning. Physical education and music are planned discretely. The school has adopted the local agreed syllabus for religious education and teachers refer to this when planning lessons, but the school has not completed a scheme of work to avoid repetition and ensure broad and balanced coverage of the syllabus.

38 The governing body has decided not to provide sex education at Briar Hill. Drugs education is covered within the science programme in Year 1, although there is no specific policy for this work. The school makes good provision for the development of other aspects of health education and personal and social education, especially through circle times. At the moment there is no extra-curricular provision for pupils. Last year the school took part in

the 'Top Play' scheme and plans to re-introduce a sports club in the new year.

39 The school is committed to providing all pupils equal access to the curriculum, and this is clearly stated in its policies. There has been some improvement in meeting the learning needs of all pupils since the last inspection and staff are aware of the importance of challenging all pupils at an appropriate level. There is a new policy for work with the more able, for example, which provides clear guidance about work for higher attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs follow the same curriculum as their peers. Teachers plan work for these pupils within the general provision for the class. This is more effective in the reception and Year 1 classes. Arrangements for bilingual pupils also ensure equality of opportunity and access to the full curriculum, as small groups are withdrawn only during the literacy hour, when they undertake the same work as the rest of the class, but with targeted support.

40 Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. The school has made good progress in developing systems for recording pupils' achievements, which was an area identified for improvement. There are now very detailed systems in place for recording individual pupils' progress through the school. The school has adopted the local authority's baseline assessment scheme for pupils as they start school. Pupils take the national statutory tests and assessments in Year 2. In addition to these, teachers now record pupils' progress in English, mathematics, science and information technology in great detail on individual summative sheets. These will provide a thorough picture of how well pupils are doing, but have only been recently implemented. There is no system in place to track pupils' progress in religious education or in other subjects.

41 The improvements in this area are the result of monthly staff discussions led by the deputy headteacher. All staff have been involved in the development of the new assessment records and consequently use them well. Staff are now beginning to analyse assessment information more closely to plan future work. Groups in English and mathematics, for example are based on these assessments. So far staff have not summarised the information gained by the assessments to provide an overall picture of each year group's attainment. There has been some analysis of statutory tests and assessments in order to plan for the future. Recently, for example, it was apparent in discussions about the writing tests that some staff were not fully aware of the criteria necessary to achieve the higher level 3. This was addressed so that pupils could be better challenged to reach this level. Staff are aware that more thorough analysis of statutory tests, in relation to gender and ethnicity for example, could be made in order to raise standards further.

42 Until this term the tracking of progress of pupils with special educational needs has been poor. Individual education plans are drawn up by class teachers, sometimes in association with the special educational needs co-ordinator, but records of any reviews are missing. The exception is the annual review of the pupil with a statement of educational need, which has been undertaken in line with statutory requirements. Pupils are not involved in discussions about their progress and do not always know the targets that have been set for them.

• **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

43 The effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development highlighted by the last inspection has been maintained and is good overall.

44 The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual development. Assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on religious belief and join in acts of worship. They are calm and thoughtful gatherings. A theme is followed each week and staff take it in turn to lead the school in singing, reflection and prayer. Occasionally visitors participate. At harvest time, for example, three local ministers joined the separate year group celebrations. Pupils are also given opportunities to reflect on spiritual truths during religious education lessons. Some sessions in other subjects provide pupils with opportunities to step beyond the every day routine and experience the spiritual element in creativity. This was evident in the visit by the Warwickshire ensemble.

45 The school's provision for pupils' moral development is good and has a positive impact on their behaviour and attitudes. Rules are displayed in the classrooms so that parents, teachers and other staff are reminded of the school's behaviour code. These rules are discussed with the pupils and consequently they are aware of what they may and may not do. Pupils are made aware of the procedures that will be followed in the case of misbehaviour. Most staff provide very positive role models for pupils and treat them with respect. There are few raised voices and most staff encourage good behaviour in a positive way. In some lessons, pupils are encouraged to discuss moral issues. In one religious education session, for example, pupils looked at the five 'K's of Sikhism and made up their own personal rules.

46 The school makes good provision for pupils' social development. Pupils are encouraged to work and play well together. In lessons, for example, they are given frequent opportunities to work together in pairs or small groups. In some classes pupils have a regular 'circle time' in which every pupil is given the opportunity to speak about his or her feelings and anxieties. At playtimes, a quieter end of the playground is designated for younger pupils, which helps them to build up relationships in smaller groups. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities. Pupils take the registers to the office, for example, and tidy up at the end of sessions. In Year 2, pupils are expected to show prospective parents around the school on open days. Pupils are encouraged to think of others and raise money for various charities. Last year, for example, they raised over £1000 for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

47 Good provision is made for pupils' cultural development. Art, music and literature are well promoted. Pupils study the work of famous artists, such as Gaudi, for example, and use their pictures as a basis for their own work. Pupils are given opportunities to hear the work of famous composers in assembly as well as hearing live music played by professional musicians. The school library contains some good quality books and a love of literature is promoted at special occasions, such as the annual book week. This year the week included a performance by a travelling theatre company. The school is fortunate in having representatives from a diversity of ethnic groups and to some extent the richness of pupils' backgrounds is celebrated in the life of the school. This is largely undertaken through religious education. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to look at the work of artists, musicians and writers from other cultures.

• **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

48 The good provision for pupils' support and welfare has been maintained well since the previous inspection. Teachers know their pupils well and maintain a strong interest throughout their time in the school. They monitor their progress informally throughout the year and before each consultation evening they review the progress of each child in the core subjects. All pupils receive good support and advice on their personal development through a variety of activities in circle times, assemblies and class discussions. Teachers identify pupils with special educational needs early in their time at school, but the organisation of support and the tracking of progress for these pupils are unsatisfactory.

49 The behaviour policy is well established and provides a good framework for the management of pupils. The recently introduced home-school contract has been well received and supported by parents. Teachers follow up any concerns from pupils and parents very quickly and report their actions and findings to them. The staff are consistent in their handling of the pupils. In the documentation and meetings for parents the school stresses the importance of good attendance and timekeeping and the avoidance of term-time holidays. Parents are very supportive. The use of optical mark registers ensures a rapid dissemination of information on any absences or patterns of lateness. Teachers and headteacher follow up the rare unexplained absences promptly.

50 The school follows the local child protection procedures closely and has produced its own guidelines. The procedures to be followed are very clear and there is a useful section on teaching pupils to take care of themselves. The member of staff responsible for this area has received recent training and another teacher will be attending a similar course in the near future. The procedures have been discussed with the other members of staff. There is effective liaison with outside agencies.

51 The school has produced a comprehensive health and safety policy, which details arrangements and procedures clearly. The experienced health and safety governor undertakes audits twice a year with the headteacher and they follow the schedule closely. The report is submitted to the premises committee and the full governing body is informed of any issues. The regular checks of the fire alarm, fire appliances and electrical equipment are recorded properly. Teachers receive good advice on safe practices in lessons. There is effective teaching, which helps children to protect themselves. The school nurse and members of the police and fire brigade also give helpful support. There are very good arrangements for supervision of lunches and play. The concern expressed at the public meeting about insufficient staffing at lunchtime was not borne out by the evidence. There are good arrangements to deal with any accidents or illness.

• **Partnership with parents and the community**

52 The good links with parents and the wider community have been developed well since the last inspection. The school sends home well-prepared, regular newsletters and letters, which give details of activities and events in the school, including the curriculum topics to be covered during each half term and information about patterns of homework. The brochure and governors' annual reports are informative and attractively presented. The school is very welcoming and teachers are easily accessible, particularly at the end of the school day, to provide additional information for parents. Parents value the information evenings which are held each year on standardised tests and about curriculum developments such as the literacy strategy. The deputy headteacher and reception teachers visit all new pupils at home before they start school and a full induction day in the summer term provides further

information for new parents. The school strives to improve its communication with parents and recently sent home a questionnaire to help to evaluate the induction programme. The annual pupil reports are satisfactory. They cover all subjects and give reasonable detail in English, mathematics and science. Some of the coverage in the other subjects is not very specific to the individuals. Strengths and weaknesses are highlighted and there are some suggestions for areas of development, though this is not applied consistently.

53 Many parents help in school on a regular basis. Their involvement is co-ordinated well by one of the teachers and the school shows its appreciation at a function held for them at the end of the year. Every class has at least one parent helper each week and some have more. One parent helps organise the library and another does maintenance work. Parents run a popular book club. Several parents willingly give up their time to support pupils' learning by taking small groups of pupils to work on the computer. There is always a very good response from parents to help with trips and fund-raising events at the school. Reading diaries show that almost all parents help their children regularly with reading, but parents are appropriately concerned that their children view reading at school and at home as unrelated activities, because they use entirely separate reading material. The thriving School Association organises many social events each year and has recently raised £5,500 for the development of the attractive courtyard.

54 Parents of pupils with special educational needs are notified of their children's problems, but not involved sufficiently in reviews of their progress. There are good links with support agencies and Round Oak School, which are beneficial to the work of pupils with special educational needs.

55 There are good links with the main feeder nursery in Whitnash and this helps to contribute to the smooth induction of pupils into their reception classes. Links with the adjacent junior school are good and the headteachers meet frequently. These links help to ensure good arrangements for the transfer of pupils at the end of Year 2. The teachers at both schools have at least one joint session of training each year and there are some links between the subject managers in the two schools, but these are underdeveloped.

56 The school makes good use of local expertise, including visiting religious leaders. The local vicar takes assemblies and makes contributions in religious education lessons. The school nurse, police and fire brigade help in a variety of ways to enhance the curriculum. Through the Education-Business Partnership the school has received substantial reading support. Six employees of a local company received training in reading support and attended the school for a session each week throughout last year. There are similar plans to give support to numeracy in the near future. The school involves pupils in the wider community by holding an annual concert and party for local elderly residents. Substantial collections are raised by the children and their families for a number of local and national charities. Good use is made of facilities in the local community to enhance the curriculum in history, geography, religious education and citizenship. For example, the pupils visit the local church, study local architecture and visit the post office and shops.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

• Leadership and management

57 The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by the deputy headteacher and governing body. The school has successfully addressed most of the weaknesses highlighted in the six key issues raised by the last report. The most obvious improvement is in the school's provision for children under five. This was a weakness three years ago and has become a strength of the school. Schemes of work, which were lacking in all subjects three years ago, are now almost all in place and the school has introduced very detailed assessment systems in English and mathematics. Assessment systems are much improved, but the use of assessment information to track pupils' progress and set targets has not yet been fully addressed. The headteacher has led work on improving the quality and range of teaching strategies through the introduction of a comprehensive policy on teaching and learning and, together with the deputy headteacher, through monitoring the quality of teaching in the classroom. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, although the process is still under way and there are still areas for improvement. Overall, the school has made sound improvements since the last inspection and is in a position to maintain this steady improvement.

58 As a result of this work, there are visible improvements in the school's provision in several subjects, notably science, information technology, design and technology, geography and history. While results of assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 have varied over the past four years in mathematics and science, high standards in these subjects have been maintained overall. In English, the school's conscientious reflection and hard work, both in following up the suggestions of the last inspection and introducing the literacy hour, have not had sufficient impact on pupils' progress and attainment. There are aspects of teaching, assessment and monitoring of progress which remain unsatisfactory in this subject.

59 The governors and headteacher set a clear educational direction for the school. The headteacher consults fully with the governing body and works hard to ensure that all parents feel welcome. As a result, relationships are very good. Many parents and volunteers work in the school and there is a positive ethos. Staff implement the school's aims, values and policies well. The headteacher's drive and the deputy headteacher's sensitive support have given teaching and support staff a good team spirit and a sense of common purpose.

60 The headteacher and deputy have ensured good staff training during the introduction of national initiatives, including the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies, and the provision of schemes of work. The school has set challenging performance targets for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 for the next two years, but as the use of assessment information to track pupils' progress is a little insecure, some targets are unrealistic.

61 The management of provision for children under five is good. Staff plan the curriculum effectively together and this is monitored by the headteacher. The management of special educational needs provision is unsatisfactory. The headteacher is managing this area, in addition to her many other responsibilities, during the absence through illness of the co-ordinator. The policy has been recently revised, but does not meet statutory requirements. It does not provide a clear guide for work in the school.

62 Headteacher, governor representatives and staff have been fully involved in implementing the national literacy and numeracy strategies. The implementation has involved all teachers in conscientious completion of very detailed weekly planning and assessment systems. Subject managers are not yet monitoring pupils' progress, however, or looking at the impact of teaching on learning. As a result, there has been insufficient analysis of the progress of different groups of pupils, for example those learning English as an additional language or those with special educational needs, by staff in management positions.

63 Since the last inspection, school development planning has focused on teachers' tasks rather than on the impact of changes and developments on pupils' standards. This has promoted positive changes, in developing a greater variety of teaching styles for example, but it has also inadvertently contributed to the lack of effectiveness in improving standards in English. Staff have looked in minute detail at teaching strategies and individual pupils' assessments lesson by lesson, but have not stepped back to monitor pupils' progress over a period of time or to gain an overview of the effectiveness of their efforts. The school has been busy tackling detail, without maintaining an overview of the big picture.

64 The current year's improvement plan is comprehensive. It reviews the current position for each area of action and identifies appropriate priorities. The plan notes clearly the action to be taken and specifies that the success of the action taken will be measured by its impact on standards. Strategic planning is very good, with governors closely involved in calculating the future needs of the school in a changing environment. One example of the school's attention to detail is shown in the choice of replacement physical education apparatus, where the subject manager observed the proposed apparatus in use at another school before finalising the decision to purchase. Consideration of support provision for pupils learning English as an additional language is currently missing from the plan.

65 The governing body gives very good support to the school. It has very effective committee procedures and uses time efficiently. Governors play a very positive role in strategic planning. They receive the headteacher's reports and discuss all aspects of the school's work in the appropriate role of critical friend. Several governors make very good use of their personal expertise in supporting the school. The governing body fulfils all statutory requirements, except for the missing elements in the special needs policy.

• **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

66 There is a satisfactory number of teaching staff, who are well qualified for the posts they hold. Between them they have a good level of expertise, matched to their subject responsibilities, to meet the demands of the National Curriculum and the needs of pupils learning English as an additional language. All staff have responsibility for a curriculum area. They work closely together, are adequately deployed and have been recently trained in literacy, numeracy and information technology.

67 The school has a good allocation of education support staff, who know the pupils very well and are valued by teachers for the very effective assistance they give the pupils, especially in literacy and numeracy lessons. The efficiency of the office and premises staff ensures the smooth running of the school. Mid-day assistants are trained appropriately and ensure continuity of assistance and expectations during the lunchtime period. This ensures

pupils' good social behaviour while eating their lunch and during their break. The school has improved the number of staff in relation to the number of pupils in the school since the previous report.

68 Staffing provision for pupils' with special educational needs is unsatisfactory overall. There is a special educational needs co-ordinator, but there are no designated staff to support the work in school, except for the assistant who works with the pupil with a statement of special educational need.

69 Arrangements for the professional development of teaching and support staff are very good. All staff are well trained and the local authority's courses offer good support. The professional development of all staff is now being closely linked to the school development plan. Newly qualified teachers have a mentor on the teaching staff. The school has links with a local teacher-training centre and initial teacher training takes place within the school. Appropriate procedures for teacher appraisal are in place.

70 The accommodation is very good. It is very well maintained and cared for and provides a welcoming and stimulating environment for the pupils. The school hall and classrooms are spacious. The library, which is also used as a music and information technology area, is adjacent to the hall and is convenient for all the classes in the school, but it is at present underused by the pupils as a library. The grounds provide a range of valuable teaching resources, including an inner courtyard, which has been recently developed with seating, plants and a sundial area. This is used mainly by the reception children for outdoor play and curriculum activities. A large grassed area enables pupils to play field games and there is a small wildlife area.

71 Resources for learning are good overall and have improved since the last inspection, when they were satisfactory. In religious education resources are unsatisfactory. There are insufficient artefacts and books to support pupils' learning. In the large majority of subjects, the good provision of learning resources and the very good accommodation positively support teaching and learning.

• **The efficiency of the school**

72 The staff and governors have maintained and developed their strategic and financial planning well since the previous inspection. Development plans are detailed and include resource implications and success criteria. These strategic plans are used well to determine the priorities in the annual financial plans. The school is oversubscribed and takes an increasing proportion of its roll from outside the local catchment area. A new housing development nearby will require the school to expand to a three-form entry over the next few years. The governors and senior staff spend considerable time planning for the optimal rate of expansion to ensure that the school will be able to meet the increasing local demand for places. The school has built a reserve at an acceptable level to smooth the transitional period when staffing and accommodation will be ahead of demand. Staff and governors have no formal structures for reviewing the cost-effectiveness of their decisions, but informal monitoring takes place. Service contracts for maintenance and development are monitored to ensure value for money. For example, the financial contract which provides the services of an experienced bursar to manage the main accounts is good value for money.

73 The school's deployment of teachers is good overall, but the deployment of teaching staff for pupils learning English as an additional language is unsatisfactory. The overall use of the accommodation and resources is good. However, the library is underused and the computing equipment in many classes is not used sufficiently to support the whole curriculum.

74 The overall efficiency of financial control and school administration is very good. There are good routines in place and the school runs very smoothly. The administration gives effective support to pupils, parents, staff and governors. There are good filing systems in place and the information provided is clear, detailed and useful. The most recent audit earlier this year found that all financial practices and controls were in place and they were being used properly. All records of the school fund are in good order and the accounts are audited regularly.

75 There are no additional specific grants and funds for pupils with special educational needs. One pupil with a statement of special educational need receives extra support for three days a week, which is funded by the authority. Staffing for pupils learning English as an additional language is funded appropriately through the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant. The school accounts for its expenditure on staff development properly.

76 Pupils' attainment at age seven is above average overall. Pupils' progress throughout Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. Their attitudes are good and their behaviour and personal development are very good. The quality of education provided by the school, particularly teaching, is satisfactory. Setting these factors against the above average socio-economic circumstances of the pupils and their above average attainment on entry, together with an income per pupil which is close to the national average, the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

77 At the time of the inspection there were 61 four-year-olds in the reception year. The children enter school at the start of the school year in which they will become five. When they arrive, their attainment is generally above average in the main. As a result of consistently good teaching, children make good progress overall. By the age of five, most children have already achieved the recommended desirable learning outcomes in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical understanding, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development. Many are already working on the initial level of the National Curriculum.

78 In the last report the curriculum and planning for children under fives was unsatisfactory. Since then the school has made very good improvement in all areas of its provision for children of this age and all the issues have been successfully resolved.

Personal and social development

79 In personal and social development, most children make very good progress. Their behaviour is very good and they work and play together sensibly. They co-operate well with one another in the Post Office role-play area for example, or when sharing the bricks to build a garage together. Children understand the classroom routines, put their hands up and wait their turn to speak. They listen carefully to staff and respond well. They treat their resources and equipment with respect and help to tidy them away at the end of the session. They are interested in their activities and concentrate on the task in hand. They choose their activities and work independently, for example when mixing paints or working on the computer to sequence a series of three pictures.

80 The teaching of personal and social education is very good and has a high priority in school. All staff are always approachable, friendly and patient with the children. They always praise and encourage them, motivating them to persevere and succeed in their tasks and promoting their self-esteem. The staff are good role models for the children and create a calm and purposeful working environment. Staff work together consistently well and share the aims and values of the school effectively with the parents. As a result of this consistent provision in school and good partnership with parents, the children are secure and happy.

Language and literacy

81 Children make good progress. They are confident when talking and happily describe what they are doing. They talk about their roles in the Post Office and describe the resources they use and how they make envelopes for their play. They listen well to instructions, stories and rhymes. They enjoy stories such as 'The Gingerbread Man' and are able to re-tell it and express their feelings about it. They know a range of traditional rhymes and enjoy singing 'Alice the Camel' and 'Five Little Speckled Frogs'. They are careful to hold books correctly and to turn the pages one at a time starting from the front. In discussions, during story-time, they are keen to re-tell the story. They are beginning to

recognise the language of stories as they retell their stories for an assistant to type on the computer. A minority recognise simple words they could use to write the story. Children know that sentences start with a capital letter and end with a full stop. All children have started to read by the age of five and higher attainers are beginning to read simple repetitive stories accurately. Most attempt to write their names and a number achieve this accurately. By the time they are five, they write recognisable phrases and words. Most form their letters correctly and try hard to hold their pencils properly. All recognise some letters and most are beginning to recognise a few common words. A small minority are beginning to build three-letter words.

82 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers use every opportunity to extend children's language, asking questions to promote their thinking and reinforcing correct vocabulary. In small group sessions, staff encourage children to hold their pencils correctly and discuss the letters and spellings they make. During story time, teachers help children focus on familiar words and letters and the sound they make. They make effective use of illustrations to talk about the characters and the development of the story. Teachers tell stories with enthusiasm, which captures children's interest and holds their attention. Staff have implemented the literacy hour successfully and children especially enjoy reading together, which is having a positive impact on their attainment. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early. Staff support them effectively, and they make good progress towards their learning targets.

• **Mathematics**

83 Children make good progress. Staff place appropriate emphasis on the teaching of number. Most children count to ten and beyond. The majority solve simple number problems of addition and subtraction using small apparatus. In their mental work, they make sensible guesses as they estimate the number of spots on a ladybird. They are beginning to grasp the vocabulary and concepts of 'one more than' and 'one less than'. Most of the children identify triangles, squares, circles and rectangles. They recognise a repeating pattern of two colours. They know and sing some number rhymes such as 'Five Current Buns', and enjoy experiences of early capacity as they pour and fill containers with water or sand, understanding and learning concepts such as 'full', 'empty', 'more than' and 'less than'. Their understanding is extended as they play in the Post Office and use money to buy and sell items.

84 The quality of teaching is good. Staff provide a variety of experiences such as rhymes and role-play to extend children's knowledge and understanding. Teachers prepare lessons very well. They encourage children to concentrate well in individual work as well as class sessions. Children are progressing well in acquiring strategies for numeracy as teachers help them to solve problems mentally. Teachers always involve children in evaluating and discussing what has been achieved at the end of the lesson

• **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

85 Children make good progress. They talk about their own experiences and those within their immediate environment with enthusiasm. They are developing sound geographical concepts as they map the local area of the school, making comparisons of trees and the changing scenery during the autumn. In investigation of the environment, children study a

range of objects and predict whether they will sink or float. They then test them to find out if their predictions were correct. When working on the computer, they know the functions of the mouse and show good control as they drop pictures accurately to order a sequence of three pictures. Children use small and large construction materials well to build together houses or rockets. All children have been involved in designing and making envelopes for their role play area, the Post Office. This extends their knowledge and understanding of how letters are written and sent through the post.

86 The quality of teaching is good in this area. Staff provide a wide range of activities to extend early concepts of science, design and technology, history, geography and information technology. They plan effective use of the outside environment as well as the classroom. The good relationships and the calm atmosphere provide an effective learning environment. Staff teach pupils to work independently, when on the computer or when working in the sand or water for example. They teach children to use the equipment and resources carefully and to wash their hands after using paints and glue.

• **Physical development**

87 Most children make good progress. They use pencils and crayons effectively in their creative and writing activities. They manipulate small equipment and construction materials skilfully. In their physical activities, they have a good awareness of the space around them and enjoy working together. They show good co-ordination and control as they begin to travel along the floor in a variety of movements using their hands and feet. Most can balance on one foot and hop a short distance.

88 The quality of teaching is good. Staff demonstrate movements effectively and monitor children well. They address safety issues and plan well for the development of skills. Each class teacher provides a range of small equipment, pencils and pastel crayons as part of everyday activities to develop co-ordination. Staff provide opportunities to develop skills of climbing, running and jumping outdoors on larger apparatus.

• **Creative development**

89 Children make good progress. They take pride in their work and handle paint and brushes carefully as they mix their own colours. Their own paintings are bright, bold and well proportioned. Children enjoy singing their favourite song and clap in time to the different rhythms of their names. The cafe role-play area provides opportunities for children to extend their language and skills of co-operation as they decide and act out their roles. They are enthusiastic about dressing up and taking the parts of shopkeeper, postman and customers.

90 Teaching in this area is good, as staff provide good quality experiences for the children to develop their imaginative and creative ideas. Teachers plan opportunities over the term for pupils to use materials such as clay, play dough and other modelling materials. Teachers identify clearly what children are expected to learn and all children are fully involved in learning. Staff organise resources and manage activities well. As a result, children work well independently in getting out resources and tidying up.

91 Children under five receive a broad and balanced curriculum, which contributes effectively to their good progress. The curriculum is very well planned by all staff, who work

closely together to ensure that the six areas of learning effectively lead children into the National Curriculum. During the first half term, children are assessed using a standard procedure. This provides information about children's attainment on entry and is used as a baseline to measure future progress. Children with special educational needs are quickly identified and supported effectively by the staff. Children learning English as an additional language also receive more individual and small group support from staff allocated for this purpose. However, although there are comprehensive individual records kept of children's attainment, there is no overall at-a-glance assessment of the class, which identifies and tracks their progress. Information on pupils' attainments is shared with parents and teachers use their assessment records effectively to plan children's work. Staff work hard to foster good links with parents through meetings and home visits. They provide good support and activities to prepare children for entry and to support their learning.

92 Resources are of good quality and are arranged well for easy access. The children have access to outside, and the hall, for their physical development. The classroom space is good for all classes and the staff and children make very good use of it.

- **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

- **English**

93 Results of tests at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 show pupils' attainment above the national average in writing and broadly average in reading. The school's performance in writing is in line with that of similar schools, but the results in reading are below those of similar schools. Pupils are currently making good progress in Year 1 in both reading and writing. In Year 2, most pupils are making satisfactory progress in reading, but unsatisfactory progress in writing. Overall through the key stage, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are making satisfactory progress in reading, but unsatisfactory progress in writing. As in previous years, pupils' attainment in English towards the end of Key Stage 1 is average. This compares unfavourably with their high attainment in mathematics and science. Standards in reading and writing are similar to those reported in 1996. They have not improved sufficiently and are not high enough.

94 Pupils develop their speaking and listening skills satisfactorily. They participate in class discussions in all subjects. Some higher attainers express themselves well. Pupils in Year 1 express their answers to questions clearly, using complete sentences. They recall and retell excerpts from stories they have looked at in earlier lessons. Many Year 2 pupils have a wide vocabulary and express themselves very well when given the opportunity. One class listened intently as their teacher led a discussion of a John Foster poem and a number of pupils made thoughtful comments about the contrasting emotions and moods portrayed. In another lesson the teacher's questioning was less effective, requiring mainly one-word answers.

95 Pupils make satisfactory progress in reading overall. Most use their knowledge of sounds and letters as well as their understanding of the context to decipher words they do not recognise. Pupils in Year 1 discuss authors and illustrators enthusiastically. They know how to use the 'blurb' on the back of a book and a few recollect the word 'synopsis'. They recognise rhyming words and explain why they rhyme. A number of lower attainers in Year 2 lack confidence and fluency when they read aloud, but are systematically developing skills

during the literacy hour each day. Occasionally the texts chosen for group reading in both year groups are a little too difficult. Pupils choose from a different selection of books when they take them home and this means that teachers and parents are not liaising very closely on developing pupils' skills and interest in reading. Higher attainers who are enthusiastic readers make good progress independently and some read very expressively and with clear understanding. Less confident readers, including pupils with special educational needs, make slower progress, partly because there is little link between their reading at school and their reading at home. Pupils' early research skills are underdeveloped. Year 2 pupils do not know how to locate and use non-fiction books in the school library.

96 In writing, pupils make good progress in Year 1 as a result of stimulating teaching. Their stories about 'Magic Shoes' or 'The Planet Tublity' show thoughtful and imaginative use of words and phrases. For example, one pupil describing the effect of the magic shoes, wrote, 'when I put them on they made me wriggle and then they made me turn around until I got dizzy'. There are a few interesting samples of imaginative writing on the theme of Guy Fawkes from Year 2 pupils, telling the story from different standpoints, but progress in writing in Year 2 is unsatisfactory in the main. Pupils' books and folders show little progress either in content or in standards of presentation since the summer. Pupils' progress in handwriting in Year 2 is poor. Pupils copy joining patterns prepared by the teacher, but do not understand the importance of forming letters and joins correctly, inventing their own start and finish points. Older pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress in writing, because they receive insufficient focused support.

97 The progress of pupils learning English as an additional language is similar to that of their peers in each year group. One bilingual learner in Year 2 read very expressively, but found answering questions about the characters and plot in the story quite difficult. A group of pupils in Year 1 worked successfully with the support teacher to compose sentences about a series of pictures. In other supported group sessions, however, pupils learning English as an additional language made little progress. Pupils received unhelpful support, for example, in discussions about things that 'stick' and 'do not stick' in the context of learning about magnetism. A few pupils who find difficulty learning English as an additional language appropriately receive a greater quantity of the targeted support available. The time available for direct teaching is not always allocated and used effectively to stimulate pupils' development of vocabulary and expression, however.

98 All pupils apply their speaking and listening, reading and writing skills in most subjects, especially in science, geography and history lessons. They write for a range of purposes and in the context of several other subjects. For example, pupils write about their observations and conclusions from a scientific experiment on drying clothes and describe the difference between their clothing and Victorian dress for teachers and children. They make satisfactory use of information technology to support the development of reading and writing skills. Occasionally, pupils' progress in literacy skills is accelerated by skilful use of information technology by the teacher, as when composing a rhyming story immediately on screen, using the pupils' suggested phrases and rhymes.

99 Pupils' attitudes to reading are positive in the main. They enjoy reading or sharing their books. Pupils concentrate well during the literacy hour in both year groups. They show positive attitudes to learning. They listen well and participate readily during full class discussions. They organise themselves quickly, set to work well and sustain concentration during their group activity. Most show very good self-control and work successfully when

not under direct adult supervision. Teachers have trained pupils well to make good use of these focused group activity sessions. They collaborate well when required and show recognition of each other's efforts. In only one lesson were pupils a little restless and fussy. This resulted from the teacher's over-anxious control. For the most part, pupils' behaviour in English lessons is very good.

100 The quality of teaching ranges from very good to unsatisfactory, but is satisfactory in most lessons. The very good teaching is in Year 1. What makes this high quality teaching stand out is the way the teacher fully engages all pupils through stimulating questioning and very good use of pupils' contributions. The teaching is confident, based on a very good knowledge of the subject. Lessons are well planned and thoroughly prepared. The teacher lets pupils know what the aim of the lesson, making sure by precise explanation and then questioning that pupils understand what they have to do. Calm, reassuring class control results from well-established, warm relationships and gives pupils a sense of being valued and trusted. In one of the very good lessons observed, the teacher deployed other adults well during the group time to support pupils word-building and sentence-making. In another, the teacher's imaginative use of information technology caught pupils' interest and maintained their focused attention.

101 Teachers involve pupils in sharing what they have done and congratulate them on their efforts and completion of tasks. Not all teachers make clear to pupils the aim of the lesson, however. As a result, in some lessons, pupils participate in the discussions and complete activities prepared, but without a sense of purpose and without knowing what they have achieved by the end of the lesson. Teachers also assess conscientiously during group times and make thorough assessment notes during, or shortly after each lesson. They mark individual books thoroughly, but marking is often in response to every pupils' individual range of mistakes and is therefore unmanageable as a teaching tool. Marking and assessment are not leading to all teachers having an overview of pupils' progress.

102 Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the teacher does not make the purposes of the activities clear to pupils or assistants. Where the pace of discussion is slow and the teacher's questioning does not require thoughtful involvement, pupils make insufficient progress as a result of a lack of application to tasks.

103 Those involved in leading the development of the subject have committed much time and thought to development planning and are conscientiously seeking solutions to a situation where standards stubbornly refuse to improve. The school is implementing the national literacy strategy fully, but results and current work samples towards the end of the key stage show that the school's implementation of the strategy is not fully effective. It is clear that monitoring of pupils' work has not been sufficiently rigorous to uncover areas requiring attention. The teaching and support for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Year 2 work samples show lower attainers struggling when they work without support, which leads to frustration for these pupils. Time allocated for supporting pupils learning English as an additional language is sometimes well used, but on other occasions the teaching support is not deployed efficiently. The subject is the school's main weakness.

• **Mathematics**

104 National tests over the last few years show that pupils' attainment has been slightly above the national average. In 1999, pupils did better and their attainment was well above

average. In comparison to similar schools, pupils at Briar Hill were above average.

105 The inspection found that pupils' attainment in the current year is slightly above average. This is a similar picture to the last inspection, but a little lower than that shown by 1999 test results. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, are making satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1 overall. Pupils learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress in the subject. There are two reasons for the current year's levels of attainment towards the end of the key stage being a little lower than in 1999. One factor is the extra support that was given to Year 2 classes by the headteacher last year, which helped some pupils to attain higher levels in the statutory tests. The other is related to the work teachers are setting for some of the group activities during numeracy lessons. This term staff have worked hard to implement the national numeracy strategy, but a few are still grappling with the challenge of setting appropriate tasks for the activity part of the lesson.

106 Pupils work hard in the introductory mental mathematics session. In Year 1, pupils clearly understand the difference between 'bigger than' and 'smaller than'. They count on and back and partition numbers into sets. In Year 2, pupils count to one hundred in tens and to one thousand in hundreds, but find it difficult to answer questions outside these patterns. They recall some multiplication facts in the ten times table.

107 In the activity part of the session, pupils in Year 1 generally made good progress because of the relevant tasks planned. They use coins to make amounts up to 20p and record their answers carefully. They find ways of partitioning numbers up to 20 and see a pattern in what they have done. They work on arranging ordinal numbers up to 10. In Year 2, pupils' progress is not so consistent. Work in their books shows that they have made satisfactory progress overall this term in adding and subtracting two digit numbers and developing an understanding of tens and units. Pupils recognise and name common two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and describe their properties. They use non-standard and standard units to measure the length and mass of objects. During the inspection, Year 2 pupils did not make sufficient progress in their lessons on multiplication. In one class, the use of practical resources, such as sweets, helped pupils to understand the concept of the multiplication of money. In the other class, pupils used a times table square to help them work out multiplication sums, but most did not understand what they were doing.

108 Most pupils work hard in mathematics. They listen to teachers' instructions and are keen to contribute to discussions. One pupil in Year 2, when given the opportunity to explain his mental strategies for solving a problem, explained very clearly that the missing number on the teacher's number line 'is 200, because it's half way between zero and 400 and 200 is half of 400'. Pupils concentrate well during the activity part of the session. They persevere to complete tasks and use the equipment sensibly. They are careful with the coins, for example, and collect these up carefully at the end of sessions. When asked to work together in pairs or in groups, pupils usually collaborate well and support each other.

109 The quality of teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory. It is satisfactory overall. The stronger teaching is in the Year 1 classes. Teachers' planning is generally good. Teachers set clear objectives for the sessions and usually ensure that work is well matched to pupils' levels of attainment. This was not the case in the two unsatisfactory lessons. The objectives in these lessons were not specific enough and so difficult to achieve. The group

tasks planned were too difficult in one session and too easy in another. Consequently most pupils made very little progress. In the good lessons, the teachers explain new concepts clearly. They use practical demonstration well. In one session, for example, the teacher explained how to partition nine into two sets by jumping ducks between two 'ponds'. This grasped the pupils' imaginations and helped them to pick up the concept quickly. Another characteristic of the good teaching was the good attention given to skill development. One teacher, for example, explained that it is easy to count up money if you tap a 2p coin twice and a 1p coin once. During the inspection, teachers directed the questions to specific pupils and did not use other methods to ensure that all were involved in the mental calculations, such as holding up digit cards. In a few sessions this meant that some pupils were not sufficiently challenged.

110 Resources are carefully prepared, especially in Year 1, and this helps pupils to settle quickly to their tasks. For the most part, support assistants are deployed well to help with groups in the activity part of the session. There is reasonable coverage of the full mathematics curriculum, but less emphasis on using and applying mathematics. Teachers mark work conscientiously, using the new marking policy. In some books there are too few helpful comments to help pupils to improve. Opportunities to develop pupil's numeracy skills through the use of information technology are underdeveloped. Except for the unsatisfactory match of tasks to pupils' abilities in some Year 2 lessons, the school is implementing the national numeracy project satisfactorily. It has set appropriately challenging targets for pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 for the next two years.

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Science

111 In the 1998 teacher assessments for Key Stage 1, the number of pupils attaining the expected standard level was above the national average and the number attaining the higher level was well above average. Results were also well above average in comparison to similar schools. The results of the assessments in 1999 indicate a similar pattern with standards overall being well above average. In the current year, pupils' attainment at seven years of age continues to be well above average. A few pupils are already working towards the higher level. In the previous report, pupils' attainment was 'consistent with national expectations'. Standards have clearly improved considerably.

112 By the time pupils are seven, they identify a range of materials and explain their properties. They sort them easily by two or more criteria and describe their uses in relation to their everyday lives. They describe their observations and record them. They use equipment to help them make scientific investigations and find ways of recording their results. They know what plants need in order to grow healthily and sort living things into groups, according to their features. In Year 1, pupils investigate magnetism and know that opposite poles attract and similar poles repel objects. They predict which objects will be attracted to magnets made from a wide range of materials. They find out that most metals, but not all metals, are magnetic. They record their observations and discuss the usefulness of magnets, as fridge magnets for example.

113 Pupils make good progress, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. They use a variety of methods to record their results, including graphs, charts and diagrams. Their written work shows an increasing accuracy, as they get older. Their best work in their topic books is of a high quality. Pupils

have a sound understanding of each area of the science curriculum and their investigative skills are a strength. There are no significant differences between the attainments of boys and girls.

114 Pupils have very good attitudes to science. They are keen to find out and investigate. They particularly enjoy the practical nature of the subject and work very well in small groups, where they learn from one another. There are good relationships in class and pupils respond very well to their teachers' questioning.

115 The quality of teaching is good, particularly in the teaching of investigative work, where pupils are taught to devise their own experiments and seek solutions to problems. In the lesson with very good features, the teacher shared her objectives with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and ensured that they were met by the end. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use precise scientific vocabulary. This ensures that pupils develop the appropriate knowledge and understanding of different terms and to what they relate. Teachers plan lessons very well, and generally match tasks well to pupils' prior attainment. They use assessment very well in lessons to tell pupils how to improve their work. Most staff have high expectations of work and behaviour and set a brisk pace to learning. Planning fully covers all the aspects of science. Teachers place a particularly strong emphasis on developing pupils' investigative skills throughout the school. They teach pupils consistently to devise and record their investigations. This has a positive impact on their personal development, as well as their attainment and progress. It helps to prepare them well for their next phase of learning.

116 Resources are good and readily available. The subject manager has developed the policy and scheme successfully in conjunction with the staff. She monitors teachers' planning effectively. Comprehensive assessments made by staff at the end of each topic are passed on to the next teacher at the end of the year. National assessment results are scrutinised for weaknesses. These procedures help to ensure that all aspects of science are taught and that pupils consistently and systematically acquire the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding. The school has developed a very good natural environmental resource in the school grounds. Wild flowers flourish, which attract butterflies, bees and other minibeasts and creatures. This is used to good effect in the study of life and living processes.

· OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Information technology

117 Pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national expectations by the time they are seven. Although no class lessons were observed, evidence was gathered from watching pupils working in small groups, looking at their past work and talking to pupils and staff. The last report described pupils as making good progress. The skills achieved were those expected by the end of Key Stage 1. The school has broadly maintained standards since the last inspection.

118 Pupils work with a range of technology, such as, floor robots and listening centres. They write instructions and control the floor robot and predict and measure its anticipated path. They listen independently to well known traditional stories and stories from their

reading books. The majority use the computers effectively for writing and finding rhyming words. For example, they alter text as they write poems on the computer in support of their literacy lessons. Pupils use the cursor, shift, return and delete keys. They are learning to log on to the computers which are connected to the Internet. Most older pupils work in pairs independently on refining and correcting text. For example, they place sentences in the correct order for well-known nursery rhymes, such as Humpty Dumpty and Jack and Jill.

119 Pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress towards their targets with additional support. Teaching and support staff sometimes use information technology very well to extend and develop their pupils' language work. Sufficient opportunities are provided in the teachers' planning to give the pupils opportunities to learn and develop their skills. For example, pupils are confident in using the mouse to click and drag pictures or text. They use a range of keys to assist with word-processing skills and print their work. However information technology is insufficiently used for the collection and retrieval of data and the development of numeracy. Although the level of resources is adequate, the computers are not in continual use. This limits the time pupils spend on the subject and impedes pupils' progress.

120 Pupils have good attitudes to work and enjoy using the computer. By the time they reach the age of seven, pupils use computers and other equipment, such as listening centres, effectively in their work. They are enthusiastic and interested in their tasks. They work well together in pairs and small groups, helping each other and giving ideas and support to each other.

121 There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching. However, the quality of support given to pupils in small groups is satisfactory. All members of staff, including the support staff, have an adequate level of expertise and subject knowledge, which is reflected in their work with the pupils. Their level of expertise ensures that the pupils are usually engaged in purposeful and interesting tasks. For example, staff model writing on the computer effectively as they type pupils' versions of favourite stories. Members of staff plan appropriate opportunities to assist learning in literacy and other subjects, such as drawing in art, and writing about the 'Great Fire of London' in history. The teachers deploy support staff and other adults well to support the work done in the classroom. The good behaviour and good relationships in classes promote the enjoyment and the involvement of the pupils. There are satisfactory procedures for the assessment of pupils' work and staff make sound use of assessment when teaching, helping pupils see how to improve their work.

122 The subject manager's enthusiasm for the subject and the strong support that she gives to her colleagues make a significant contribution to the school. In the previous inspection the resources for information technology were limited. The level of provision has improved to a satisfactory level, but pupils' access to computers is only sufficient to maintain the satisfactory standards that the school achieves.

Religious education

123 Pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the requirements of the local agreed syllabus at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall. They are developing an interest in religious beliefs and practices. Sometimes pupils' progress is slowed by lack

of structured planning, which results in their repeating work. There is some improvement in this area since the last inspection, but the subject remains relatively weak because planning structures have not yet been sufficiently developed.

124 There is an emphasis throughout the school on work related to religious attributes such as caring and friendship. The work planned draws well upon pupils' own experiences. In Year 1, for example, pupils write and draw about what they do to show that they care. One pupil wrote that 'she kissed her mummy'. Sometimes there is some overlap in the materials and stories used to develop the theme. This term, for example, pupils in both Years 1 and 2 have studied the story of the Good Samaritan, in relation to friendship in Year 1 and caring in Year 2.

125 Pupils study a range of religions and are developing an awareness of the similarities and differences between different beliefs and practices. In a Year 1 session, for example, the local vicar came to talk to the pupils about his priestly clothes. The pupils were fascinated particularly by his stoles and scarves. Their questions and responses indicated a good understanding of spiritual concepts. One pupil, for example, said that 'he didn't want Jesus to die' when the crucifixion was mentioned. Another felt that God can see us all the time and 'can see through the ceiling'. In Year 2, pupils have been studying Sikhism this term. They have looked at the five 'Ks' and learnt about Guru Nanak's birthday. Some of the pupils are Sikhs and make a valuable contribution to class discussions. Many pupils in Year 2 have a firm grasp of the basic tenets of Christianity, such as belief in Jesus and the main festivals of Christmas and Easter. Generally pupils find it more difficult to make connections between the work which they have covered. Some do not understand the difference between a person's nationality and religious belief and, for example, feel that Indians are Sikhs and Welsh people follow the Welsh religion. Some are also confused about the differences between religions and think that Sikhs are Christian because they believe in God.

126 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers take care to prepare interesting activities for the pupils in order to bring the subject alive. Visitors, such as the local vicar, are used well in this context. There is also an emphasis on using class discussion as a way of increasing pupils' awareness of spiritual matters. This often works well, but sometimes the pupils spend too long discussing information and ideas that they have covered before. This happened in a class session about celebrations and as a result the pupils learnt nothing new in the session. Planning is unsatisfactory because the school has not used the local agreed syllabus to create a scheme of work which sets out a development of skills, knowledge and understanding through the school. In some sessions, individual teachers' planning is clear and pinpoints objectives which will help pupils to develop their understanding, but in others the purpose of the lesson is not made clear to the pupils and they make little progress. Teachers use artefacts well to teach about religious practices. The school's own resources are inadequate and staff bring in resources from home. Pupils are interested in religious education. They enjoy stories about religious leaders and participate enthusiastically in discussions.

• Art

127 Although only two art lessons were seen, pupils' work and discussions with pupils indicate that they make good progress throughout Key Stage 1. Standards are similarly high to those celebrated by the previous report.

128 By the time pupils are seven, they work confidently from their imagination as they produce bold and well-proportioned paintings. They use their art notebooks to good effect as they learn to mix their own colours and tones, and develop skills of drawing as they represent the world around them. Pupils work effectively in small groups to model structures based on the work of Antoni Gaudi. They decorate their work with intricate patterns and designs and represent the vivid colours he used by applying blocks of brightly coloured tissue papers. In Year 1, pupils observe and draw a range of hats using their pencils to shade and outline to represent light and dark tones and texture. Their work is of a high quality. It is bold and detailed. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are familiar with the work of famous artists, such as LS Lowry and Miro. They are beginning to develop their own style of drawing and painting as they learn about different styles and techniques. This makes a positive contribution to their cultural development. For example, they paint daffodils in the style of Monet and combine a range of techniques such as washes and pastel work, as well as painting, to achieve a desired effect.

129 Pupils are introduced to new skills and knowledge through purposefully structured activities. They acquire skills of working with materials and tools systematically, and are encouraged to express their ideas and feelings. They work well collaboratively, learning ideas from one another and making improvements as they work. They understand the various techniques used by some of the famous artists and incorporate those techniques into their work. Good progress is made when the teacher demonstrates new skills and techniques. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are supported appropriately and make satisfactory progress on their set targets. Pupils benefit from links that are made to other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 2, practise their joining techniques as they design their structures in the style of Gaudi. Pupils in Year 1 apply their scientific knowledge of made and natural materials, as they make weavings from a range of these materials. They understand the purpose of a variety of hats and appreciate why hats made from materials such as plastic and wool are designed to keep us dry or warm.

130 Pupils concentrate well on their lessons, applying themselves with enthusiasm. When necessary they work effectively in small groups. This was particularly evident in the Year 2 class, where pupils enjoyed decorating their structures with brightly coloured tissue paper.

131 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers show good subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils' work. They plan lessons very well and demonstrate new techniques effectively. This has a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to the subject. Staff plan the work well together to ensure that pupils progressively acquire new knowledge and skills. They monitor pupils well and ensure they receive the help they need. There are sound procedures for the assessment of pupils' work. Teachers present pupils' finished works attractively on displays around the school. Lessons include activities based on a range of artists, which effectively contributes to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

132 Art is well established throughout the school. Effective guidance is provided to staff by the policy and well thought out scheme of work. The high standard of work on display around the school provides an attractive and stimulating environment. The resources are good and well maintained by the staff. However the school has insufficient access to large prints of works by well-known artists, in order to give pupils valuable experience of other artists' work and contribute positively to their cultural development.

Design and technology

133 Two design and technology lessons were observed. These, together with examples of pupils' work on display, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils, indicate that pupils make good progress. High standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

134 By the time pupils are seven, they use a variety of construction sets, malleable materials and paper and boxes to make a range of models and artefacts. The pupils in Year 2 make strong structures from rolled newspapers, designing a chair to support the weight of a teddy. As they study the architecture of Antoni Gaudi, they design and make their own structures in his style, drawing intricate patterns and using brightly coloured tissue papers. In Year 1, they design and make a variety of shoes, inspired by their shoe shop. They take care to design different types of shoes with cut out toes, straps and a range of fastenings. The pupils use a wide range of materials to make puppets and models. They stick and sew using a variety of stitches to make their glove puppets for a puppet theatre and role-play activities.

135 Pupils make good progress. The development of literacy and numeracy is encouraged progressively when the pupils describe, measure, make, record and evaluate what they have done in their lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress and are well supported by class teachers and support staff.

136 Pupils' attitudes are good. The pupils take pride in their work and they are keen to discuss what they are doing. For example, in Year 1, a pupil is eager to show her finished puppet, clearly proud and pleased with her achievement. Pupils behave very well and listen carefully to class teachers. They work well together and help each other as they work. When they were making their Gaudi structures, pupils were prepared to share equipment and resources well.

137 The quality of teaching is good. Design and technology is used effectively by the teachers to support a range of subjects in the curriculum, for example, their design and observational skills in art in Year 2. In Year 1, pupils use the puppets they have made to support the development of English. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They explain and demonstrate techniques well. Lessons are well planned and teachers take every opportunity to extend and develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding. They assess work regularly at the end of each topic and use assessment well in lessons, as they discuss pupils' work with them and offer advice for improvements. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work. They plan carefully between each year group to ensure consistency and progressive acquisition of skills and knowledge.

138 A visiting artist makes a significant contribution to the curriculum as he works with the pupils to design and make a variety of wooden toys with simple mechanisms. The subject is supported well by voluntary help from adults and parents, which has a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress.

History

139 All pupils make good progress in building up historical skills, knowledge and understanding because of the interesting topics and work planned.

140 The school places good emphasis on the development of historical enquiry. Teachers encourage pupils to look at artefacts and buildings to find out clues about the past. In one session, for example, Year 1 pupils came to conclusions about the history of nursing by looking at uniforms to see how they had changed over time. Year 1 pupils also set up a toy museum each year and look carefully at toys from the past to see how materials have changed. In Year 2, pupils visit the Avoncroft Museum of buildings each autumn and study the buildings in order to compare then with those in the present day.

141 Pupils are also developing a bank of information about the past. They listen to stories about famous people, such as Guy Fawkes and Florence Nightingale, and appreciate their place in our history. They study important events, such as the Great Fires of London and Warwick, and discuss how these might have occurred. They communicate what they have learnt in a variety of ways. In one Year 2 class, for example, pupils worked in pairs to make a newspaper about the Warwick fire and in the other class pupils worked in groups to make up a play about the fire. Pupils enjoy history and are very interested in the past.

142 The quality of teaching ranges from very good to satisfactory and is predominantly satisfactory. In the very good lesson, the teacher made her aims very clear and used questioning very well to move pupils' understanding forward. Artefacts were very well used and the session moved along at a lively pace, so that much was accomplished. In the satisfactory lessons, teachers planned interesting activities which engaged the pupils' imaginations. However, in one of these lessons an unnecessary over-emphasis on behaviour management wasted time and slowed progress. In the other, the teacher did not draw the lesson to a conclusion and so opportunities to reinforce understanding were lost. Generally teachers plan well. Work in history is integrated into the termly projects and so pupils appreciate the links between the past and the present more readily. In some sessions pupils are given opportunities to develop their literacy and computer skills.

Geography

143 Only one lesson was seen during the inspection. Based on this, pupils' work and teachers' planning, it is evident that pupils make good progress through the school. The last inspection did not make any judgements on work in geography.

144 The work is planned to capture pupils' imagination and interest and is integrated well into the topic programme. There is an appropriate emphasis on work related to places. In Year 2, for example, pupils are studying Baricho, a village in Kenya. They compare life in Whitnash with that in Kenya. They find out more about daily life in Baricho by listening to a visitor. Pupils are reminded well about what they have learnt by interesting and attractive displays. Individual pupils also share their knowledge of other places with their friends by recording the adventures of the school bears. Each class has one or two bears who are available to accompany pupils on their holidays. When the bear returns to school he brings the diary of his adventures, postcards, photographs and sometimes maps. This helps pupils to understand more about other countries.

145 Within their work on places, pupils also study the effect of climate on what people wear. In one lesson, for example, a parent visited the class to show the pupils some saris. They were fascinated by the texture and colour of the material and appreciated that this type of clothing was suitable for hot countries. They went on to look at a kilt and discussed the kind of weather conditions which kilt wearers might experience. In this session pupils were aware of the differences in climate between India and Scotland and the effect that these differences had on people's lives.

146 Teachers plan some lessons to develop pupils' mapwork skills. In Year 1, for example, pupils have compiled a book to give directions from their classroom to the office. The bears' adventures also provide opportunities to follow a route on a larger map. In some classrooms pupils also use globes to trace routes and find places, but there are not sufficient for each class. Pupils are interested in finding out about the world and, in the lesson observed, they listened very well and asked some sensible questions.

147 The quality of the teaching in the lesson seen was good. Teachers relate work in geography well to pupils' interests and experiences, which helps them to build well on what they already know. Good use is made of the local environment and trips away from Whitnash to help to develop pupils' understanding of place. In Year 1, for example, pupils visit Stratford-on-Avon.

• **Music**

148 During the inspection there were no class music lessons at Key Stage 1, as the school had invited an ensemble from the local education authority to develop pupils' knowledge and interest in music. The ensemble played and demonstrated instruments in two sessions, one for children under five and the other for pupils in Key Stage 1. Evidence for inspection judgements is taken from observations of the ensemble presentation, a Year 2 recorder lesson, singing in assemblies and a discussion with the subject manager. Although the evidence base is limited, it is clear that pupils are making good progress and that the school has maintained both the profile and standards reported at the time of the last inspection. There is insufficient evidence to support a judgement on the quality of teaching in the school.

149 Key Stage 1 pupils showed good knowledge and understanding during the ensemble presentation. They recalled knowledge they had previously learned about instruments and answered questions intelligently on information shared earlier in the performance. Pupils were very interested and excited by the session, which was very thoroughly prepared. The team gave very clear explanations about the musical pieces and instruments played. They caught and held pupils' keen interest, as they gave an excellent performance and involved pupils fully in discussions.

150 The Year 2 recorder lesson showed that pupils' skills were well above average for their age. At least a third of the year group showed an ability to recognise musical notation and play simple recorder tunes using their left hand. Almost half of the pupils already play tunes which involve additional right hand fingering. They recognise both the length and pitch of note and play together successfully as a result of good teaching. This involves patient and clear instruction by the teacher, together with careful observational assessment and sensitive use of praise and commentary.

151 All pupils join in readily to sing in assembly and create a pleasant sound, pitching notes tunefully and enunciating well. They enjoy listening to the music played each day at the start and close of the assembly and note the name of the work and the composer, displayed in the hall. The school's planning shows that teachers give due attention to both listening and appraising and the performing and composing aspects of the music curriculum. Pupils' love of singing and music-making stems from very good provision for creative development in the reception classes.

Physical education

152 Most pupils make satisfactory progress in physical education, but higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged. The school has maintained the satisfactory standards of teaching and learning reported at the time of the last inspection.

153 Pupils in all Year 1 classes develop throwing and catching skills as a result of well-organised lessons. They enjoy their games skills lessons in the school hall and work well together in pairs. Their behaviour is good, as teachers have high expectations and maintain good class control. Pupils collect and return equipment sensibly, wasting little time. During the series of planned activities, teachers observe and comment, ensuring that pupils pause to watch occasional demonstrations by pupils completing tasks proficiently. They give the class clear instructions in between each of the planned activities and so give all pupils equal opportunity to participate, practise and consolidate skills. During warm-up activities, pupils stretch, curl up, shake themselves, run, find a space and then 'freeze'. They obey instructions well and during the main part of the lesson, they bounce and catch balls, quoits or beanbags successfully, first standing still and then walking forwards. Teachers congratulate pupils on their activities, but do not challenge them sufficiently to improve and refine their skills.

154 In Year 2, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in developing similar skills. They are equally enthusiastic and behave well, with both attitudes and effort improving during the more briskly-paced elements of the lesson. They add a clap between throwing and catching and improve the challenge of bouncing a ball by counting the number of bounces. When the teacher introduces such challenges, pupils become more purposeful in their completion of the activities.

155 In all lessons, teachers show appropriate awareness of health and safety factors and share information about safe practices with pupils. In both year groups, the initial warm-up and final 'calm-down' take place as an integral part of lessons. However, in none of the lessons observed did pupils increase their heart rate or develop any need to warm down. There is insufficient opportunity for pupils to engage in sustained, healthy, energetic physical exercise.

156 The term's planning shows a series of activities, which enable all pupils to participate equally. The strength of the teaching lies in the clear, sequential planning and good organisation. Overall, pupils do not give the impression that they are aiming to improve their skills or gain a sense of achievement by meeting targets. This sense of purpose and challenge is currently lacking, a result of teachers not sharing the aim of the lesson or reviewing what has been achieved so far.

157 The school has almost completed its scheme of work. It is still developing its approach to dance. New equipment is on order, which will be more suitable for the age group. The subject manager has taken great pains to ensure that allocated funding is well spent. The school is also reviewing clothing for physical education lessons, as current practice of changing into underwear does not create an atmosphere of energetic purpose.

· **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

· **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

158 The team consisted of four inspectors, spending a total of 12.5 days in school over a three-and-a-half day period. During the inspection 48 lessons, several registration sessions, all assemblies and a range of other activities were observed. The team spent over 37 hours observing lessons, attending assemblies, hearing pupils read and talking to them about their work. A further 13 hours were spent looking at pupils' work, which included all the available written work from a representative sample of pupils from each class. Inspectors spoke to several governors, including the vice-chair (in the chair's absence), about their roles. All teachers were interviewed and inspectors spoke to other members of the school staff about their work. Considerable documentation provided by the school was analysed, both before and during the inspection. Before the inspection, 14 parents attended an evening meeting held by the registered inspector to seek their views. In response to a questionnaire sent to parents, seeking their views on specific issues, the inspection team received 54 replies.

- **DATA AND INDICATORS**

- **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR – Y2	212	1	27	4

- **Teachers and classes**

- **Qualified teachers (YR – Y2)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	8.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	24

- **Education support staff (YR – Y2)**

Total number of education support staff:	6
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	119
Average class size:	30.3

- **Financial data**

Financial year:	1999
	£
Total Income	302089
Total Expenditure	304374
Expenditure per pupil	1561
Balance brought forward from previous year	42258
Balance carried forward to next year	39973

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 190
 Number of questionnaires returned: 54

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	31	67	2	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	31	65	4	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	12	64	21	2	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	17	71	8	4	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	32	42	20	6	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	27	62	12	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	14	59	20	6	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	23	62	8	6	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	37	60	4	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	38	56	6	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	60	36	4	0	0