

INSPECTION REPORT

**FAIRFIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL AND
NURSERY**

Cheshunt, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117334

Headteacher: Mr M G Tuck

Reporting inspector: Graham Soar
10153

Dates of inspection: 7/2/00 – 10/2/00

Inspection number: 188399

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Rosedale Way
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Hertfordshire

Postcode: EN7 6JG

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J Gillespie

Date of previous inspection: 03/06/1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full-time pupils:	311 (bigger than other primary schools)
Number of children in the nursery attending part time	60
Proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals:	10.8% (is below the national average)
Proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language:	0.4% (is low)
Proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register	21.9% (is broadly in line with the national average)
Proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs.	1.6% (is broadly in line with the national average)
Average class size:	30.7
Pupils teacher ratio:	28 to 1 (is above average)

Recently the school has increased its intake to 60 pupils (two forms of entry). The school now has two groups of 30 nursery children attending part-time, half of them in the morning the other half following the same curriculum in the afternoon. There are two classes in reception and two in year one. The remaining classes, apart from a single Year 2 and Year 6 class, contain pupils of mixed ages. Teaching groups are currently organised chronologically so that the spread of ages within each of the mixed-age classes is relatively narrow. At present the attainment of pupils when they first start school is broadly in line with both LEA and national averages.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Fairfields Primary School and Nursery is a good school where the strengths outweigh any weaknesses. Standards in tests when pupils reach the age of seven and eleven have been consistently high over the last three years. Results at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are well above both the national and LEA averages and have continued to improve at a similar rate to that found nationally. Some of the keys to the school's success include the very good quality of leadership and teamwork exhibited by those who work with the school, the consistent application of policies and routines and the maintenance of a strong learning ethos. Teaching throughout the school is mostly good. The overall effectiveness of Fairfields Primary School and Nursery is good and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is good at supporting middle and lower ability pupils to achieve in line with national expectations.
- The effective implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies. Organisation and management of both are very good and the quality of teaching in these subjects is generally good.
- Attainment in mathematics in the end of key stage assessments is high.
- The very good overall ethos for learning and the good attitudes and behaviour of pupils. Pupils enjoy school, are keen to learn and their attendance is very good.
- Provision for pupils under five is good. Pupils make a good start at Fairfields and settle quickly into the clearly structured routines.
- The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction to the school's developments. The headteacher, staff and the governing body work very effectively as a team.

What could be improved

- Broaden the curriculum to make it more relevant to pupils of different ages and abilities particularly when they are in the same class but in particular in the following subjects:
 - English - Increasing the range and opportunities for writing across the curriculum focusing particularly on the higher levels in each key stage.
 - Science - Ensuring that skills are developed progressively to enable pupils to carry out experiments independently, whilst maintaining the high levels of scientific recall.
 - Design and technology - Extending opportunities for pupils to develop their ideas, planning, making products and evaluating them.
 - Information technology - Increasing the opportunities for pupils to use and develop their knowledge and skills of information technology across the curriculum.
- Broaden the range of teaching strategies, making use of assessment information to match the work to pupils' varying needs in order to support learning.

In many respects the areas identified for improvement reflect the outcomes of the school's own evaluations and are already in the school improvement plan, particularly in the priorities given to future curriculum developments in the light of the changes to 'Curriculum 2000'.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents, and carers of pupils at the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in June 1996 the school has been remodelled to accommodate the extra pupils now being admitted. This has been a major challenge for the school to manage whilst maintaining the focus on curriculum developments. Despite this, the school has successfully implemented both the national literacy and numeracy strategies. Both these initiatives have had a marked positive impact on curriculum planning, the quality of teaching in these core subjects and the standards achieved. There have been clear gains in the overall standards achieved in English, mathematics and science at both key stages. The quality of teaching has improved since 1996 when a third of lessons were good; now 60 percent of lessons seen are good. All teachers identify the intended learning outcomes and most teachers share these with pupils to make clear what they should gain from the work covered. Improvements to planning have been made, matching schemes of work to the National Curriculum programmes of study, but further work is needed particularly in supporting the development of pupils' skills associated with investigative science, design technology, and access to a wider range of applications of information and communication technology. Organisation and management of pupils with special educational needs has improved enabling them to make good progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Behaviour support mechanisms for those pupils that present a challenge are very good. Teachers and Support staff record and monitor incidents. Routines and procedures are clearly structured and pupils from an early age are aware of them. Overall progress is good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A	B	B	A
mathematics	A	A	A	A
science	A*	A	A	A

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

The attainment of the majority of pupils starting school is in line with both the LEA and national averages. In lessons they make good progress and the vast majority of them achieve in line with expectations. At seven years of age the proportion of pupils achieving national expectations in reading and writing are above average and in mathematics they are well above average compared with pupils in similar schools and nationally. A high proportion of eleven-year-olds attain Level 4 or above (the national expectation) in English. Results at this level are very high in mathematics and science, and pupils do significantly better than in similar schools in all three core subjects. Attainment in tests at Level 5 in mathematics is above average and science it is well above average. Attainment in lessons and in the work seen indicates that a large number of pupils perform in line with expectations. However, the proportion of pupils achieving above expected levels is not as high. This is evident in both lessons throughout the school, as well as in the end of key stage tests, particularly in reading and writing. The school has already identified writing as an area for development. The school sets appropriate targets based on thorough analysis and is very successful in raising the achievements, particularly for the middle and lower ability pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils show good attitudes to learning and an enthusiasm for school. They are clear about the routines from an early age. Attitudes to learning are best where pupils know what to do and what is expected of them. This is particularly so in the classes of early years pupils and those in upper Key Stage 2
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good throughout the school both in lessons and during play times. Teachers and classroom assistants work hard to ensure consistency in routines. Pupils are polite and show respect both for adults and other pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are very good. There is an effective programme of support for pupils' personal development. Pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities that are appropriately matched to their ages and abilities. Opportunities for pupils to take the initiative in their own learning are less evident.
Attendance	Attendance is very good; the vast majority of pupils, enjoy school and are proud of their achievements.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	good	good	satisfactory

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

In well over half the lessons teaching is good, there are few very good or unsatisfactory lessons the remaining third of lesson being satisfactory. The quality of teaching in lessons for the under fives is consistently good. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is mostly good particularly towards the end of each key stage. Teaching in science and the foundation subjects is more variable often depending on teachers' subject knowledge and the quality of planning. All lessons are well prepared and organised. Teachers manage both pupils and tasks effectively but often through tightly structured activities that occasionally restrict opportunities for creative open-ended work particularly for the more able pupils. The vast majority of pupils make good progress in learning facts but opportunities to build on their previous experiences, particularly with skills associated with investigative work, are not always capitalised on. In well over half the lessons seen, learning is good. The degree of engagement, challenge and high expectation is best in classes with pupils who are under five and those in Years 2 and 6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad and relatively balanced curriculum. Residential visits, outside speakers and educational trips, along with a number of clubs and other activities, provide a range of worthwhile experiences for pupils of all ages and abilities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Support for pupils with special educational needs is effective and enables all to access the curriculum and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The overall provision is good. A recently introduced circle time extends opportunities for pupils to develop personal, social, moral and cultural aspects of their education. Sometimes there are missed opportunities to enhance and develop the spiritual dimension in pupils' learning.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Adults work very effectively as a team to care for all pupils. They provide consistency in routines in a caring and friendly atmosphere where all pupils are welcomed and valued. Personal support and guidance for all pupils are very good, as are procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Health, safety and pupil security is paramount.

The major focus in the curriculum has been on literacy and numeracy in line with national developments. Implementation of these strategies has had a positive effect on planning and teaching in these subjects. Up until recently the development of information and communication technology has been affected partly by the lack of appropriate resources to meet the growing demands of this curriculum area. All classes have computers but the range of applications and skills that pupils develop across the curriculum is narrow. The balance in the curriculum is also affected by the limited opportunities for pupils to independently investigate in areas such as design and technology and science.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school has a clear sense of direction and a good learning ethos. A shared commitment to the maintenance of high achievement and good pupil behaviour lies at the heart of the school's management. The head teacher is central to this focus. He leads by example a team of committed professionals, providing opportunities for their own and the schools' development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body takes seriously its role in supporting and challenging the school. It has reviewed its own management framework to meet the changing demands as the school grows. Members of the governing body are well informed of standards and of the progress towards school development priorities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Detailed analysis of individual pupil performances as well as an overview of the school's achievements are made and evaluated. The development plan addresses appropriate priorities based on careful and realistic evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is good, although more detailed success indicators would help this process.
The strategic use of resources	Strategic use of resources including staffing, accommodation and learning resources is very carefully planned. The school uses the funds available efficiently and effectively. All developments are costed and arrangements made to secure good value for money in the interests of pupils and the quality of their education

Governors visit the school regularly; they have first hand knowledge of developments and are able to appraise the effectiveness of their spending decisions in educational terms matched against the regular reports they receive. Governors contribute positively to the overall effectiveness of the school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • The good progress they make. • The good behaviour. • Good teaching. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. • The school is well managed. • The school expects children to work hard. • The caretaker and support staff "are really special". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents who replied to the questionnaire felt the school could do more in providing an interesting range of activities outside lessons. Several of them did not know the nature of activities on offer. • More information about how well the children are getting on. • A few parents were concerned about the amount of work to do at home.

The inspectors endorse the very positive comments parents have of the school. Most staff are involved in running clubs or activities of some sort providing a range of good quality provision for extra-curricular activities. The inspectors did not support the view of those parents who responded negatively to the questionnaire. Whilst parents are generally pleased about the reports they receive on their children's progress, a small number of parents were concerned about the timing of the two consultation evenings and a few would prefer a report each term. However, the school is receptive to parents' needs and there are opportunities for them to make appointments to see teachers.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school is good at supporting middle and lower ability pupils to achieve in line with national expectations.

1. In lessons for pupils who are under five, learning is nearly always good and in all lessons seen, the vast majority of these younger pupils are performing in line with age-related expectations. This is as a direct result of good planning and support, clear focus and good quality provision for these pupils, which is a strength of the school. In Key Stage 1 learning is nearly always sound and is good in two thirds of lessons seen. In all cases the vast majority of pupils are performing in line with expectations. This section from a Year 1 numeracy lesson observation exemplifies this:

“The majority of pupils of all abilities are gaining in understanding of the number bonds to ten using coins to count on in various practical situations. Support staff effectively help and challenge those with learning difficulties providing them with counting-on strategies so that they make good progress..... Pupils of average ability carry out similar tasks to the more able but with more focused support that ensures all pupils achieve the lesson objectives.....The majority of pupils are clearly working in line with expectations and a few working above this level...”

2. Attainment in the 1999 end of Key Stage 1 assessments endorses the way in which all pupils are supported to achieve the expected level. In reading and writing all pupils achieve the lower band of Level 2 and in reading, three quarters of them reach the middle band of Level 2, which is very high in comparison to national averages. In writing, 60 percent of pupils reach this middle band in line with the national average. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading and writing is only close to the national figure. In mathematics pupils performance is better than in English with 93 percent of pupils reaching the lower band of Level 2 but 83 percent of these pupils achieve the higher levels, 40 percent of them achieving Level 3, well above average. A typical lesson observation illustrates how the support provided and the context of the work ensures pupils achieve the expected levels in this key stage:

“The teacher was secure in her subject knowledge and set clear expectations for pupils. The pupils responded positively showing they understood the conventions of responding in a group taking turns and listening to each other. Speaking and listening is in line with expectations for the majority of the group. All pupils understood the components of a non-fiction book, for example, contents, page, index and labels. The text illustrated well the main teaching points, and the support provided by the teacher and the classroom assistants enabled all pupils to learn effectively and achieve in line with expectations.”

3. In three-quarters of lessons seen in Key Stage 2, pupils achieve in line with age related expectations. In those lessons where there is under-achievement it is as a result of teachers' limited subject knowledge and strategies to support and develop pupils' skills or understanding in the techniques of experimental science. However, pupils' work in science shows progress in scientific knowledge and most pupils during discussions could talk about science using the correct terminology. Nevertheless, few pupils showed evidence of detailed explanation and interpretations in their written work:

“Teacher’s planning identifies a set of objectives that are not fully realised..... Pupils are not getting sufficient hands-on experience to demonstrate investigative skills. They are able to represent simple series circuits but the teaching methods adopted do not allow them to make progress at an appropriate pace in all aspects of the science programme of study. They can draw circuit diagrams and record different types of circuits, observe the changes in brightness as different bulbs are added but not to explain what is happening or why. The strategies adopted, support pupils to answer test questions linked to circuit interpretation but not to investigate problems in depth using this knowledge in a practical situation.”

4. Performance in the tests at the end of Key Stage 2 reinforces the effectiveness of the school in supporting pupils of middle and low ability to achieve Level 4 or above. In English 91 percent and in mathematics 97 percent of pupils achieve this standard. In science, all pupils achieve Level 4, and half of them reach Level 5. However, teacher assessments for science based largely on investigative skills, show Level 5 figures closer to the national average.
5. Throughout the school the support given by staff to aid pupils' learning is very good. Classroom assistants and teachers work well together. Classroom assistants are used effectively and efficiently to prepare activities and support group work. They question pupils effectively focusing on the planned lesson objectives. As reported in a Year 2/3 class mathematics observation:

“Intervention and support from both the teacher and classroom assistants is good and meets the needs of pupils particularly those with special needs. Progress in the activities is good at an appropriate pace. The teacher and support staff encourage co-operation, working closely together. Preparation and organisation for learning are good and activities enable the middle and low ability pupils to learn effectively and make satisfactory to good progress.....”

6. The good quality of support and the fact that all staff work closely as a team are contributory factors in ensuring pupils learn effectively, particularly in bringing those of middle and lower ability up to the point where they are performing in line with expectations. The organisation and management of literacy and numeracy has also contributed positively to this process.

The effective implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.

7. Both the literacy and numeracy frameworks have been implemented effectively. The organisation and management of both literacy and numeracy developments within the school are very good. The quality of teaching in these subjects is generally good particularly towards the end of each key stage. Planning for both subjects is good and a range of activities is carefully matched to the objectives set. Good joint planning in both subject areas has promoted consistency in teaching approaches within year groups and across the school. The common planning framework encourages activities to be planned to meet specific objectives. All classes have a literacy and numeracy session daily. The key objectives for lessons are shared with pupils. In the case of split-aged classes the key objectives for each age group are identified and activities planned to meet these. This is done better in mathematics than in English.
8. From an early age pupils are effectively introduced to the development of literacy skills at an appropriate level. Guided reading and structured group activities are all organised well with a clear focus on learning. The three-part lesson is very well organised throughout the school and the teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1 is very good. Teachers plan to use within literacy, a range of texts and topics from across the curriculum. In the story of 'Mamba and Crocodile bird' Year 2 pupils were creating posters with captions about teeth, this work reflected some science as well as aspects of health education:

“The teacher showed good subject knowledge particularly in the way she questioned pupils about their writing.....pupils write in complete sentences clearly understanding the use of nouns and verbs. Some writing is descriptive. The level and challenge in the work linked to the group reading story is good and the teacher effectively pauses the class to draw attention to key teaching elements, reflecting and sharing pupils' work to reset the level of challenge and expectation.”

9. The range of approaches and texts used in literacy lessons supports pupils in their learning to achieve levels that are in line with expectations. However, the use of common texts or occasionally tightly structured activities often leaves limited scope for individual pupil creativity or few opportunities for them to extend the work to higher levels. There is nevertheless clear progress in the quality of handwriting. Pupils are writing at greater length, with increasingly complex sentence structures as they move through the school.

10. Opportunities for older pupils to extend their understanding of literature and develop literacy skills are good. In an example of work on a range of narrative poems Year 5 pupils were able to describe the different types of structure and use this knowledge to write similar poems:

“The teacher moved the lesson along at a good pace through effective questioning and good quality feedback about verse form and use of language. Good quality continuous assessment enabled the teacher to intervene effectively and prompt pupils about their writing.....This helped their understanding of the task and contributed to the good learning and progress that took place.

11. Good pace and challenge with careful textual analysis by teachers provides a model for pupils' learning in literacy, enabling them to make progress in lessons and to achieve. This is particularly the case for the older pupils.
12. The consistency in the application of the two strategies from the common planning framework provides a clear focus for identifying learning activities, with both English and mathematics. The framework for numeracy, the nature of planning and the structure of the three-part lesson, provides the platform from which pupils make very good progress. In the same way as with literacy implementation, mathematics is very good and achievement is high and is a significant strength in the school.

Attainment in mathematics in the end of key stage assessments is high.

13. High proportions of pupils, well above the national average, attain standards in mathematics tests at the end of both key stages that are above national expectations. These good results are prompted largely because of the effective implementation of the numeracy strategy. Those pupils who are under five have a good start to mathematics with focused activities that enable a significant proportion to achieve in line with expectations and a few above. These activities include a range of opportunities for pupils to gain familiarity with 'number' through play situations, which promote good learning. Pupils are able to count and recognise numbers and many are beginning to record numbers. This statement from a lesson observation typifies the success in number work in lessons for these pupils:

“The very carefully planned sessions and group activities are well organised and relate to the mathematics focus at a suitable level for children. Children respond very positively and show great enjoyment whilst extending their knowledge of counting and of the names of different two-dimensional shapes.”

14. In the reception class, teachers make effective use of role-play to act out simple addition and subtraction; this is then consolidated through number games with a similar focus. The more able pupils in the groups record their results and are willing to talk about their number work and what they are doing. The groundwork in numeracy skills is firmly established and learning gains for these pupils are good.
15. Development of mathematics concepts through practical activities is common place within the mathematics curriculum. This is demonstrated in a practical weighing exercise seen in Year 2:

“Organisation of groups and resources shows clear use of on-going assessment matching the practical tasks and resources to pupils' needs. Pupils are ably supported and all make good progress.....By the end of the session, pupils are able to compare and order a number of parcels pointing out which is the heaviest. They make reliable estimates and check these using a balance. The more able in the group organise their work, check results and are able to explain their reasoning. These pupils are working above expectations.”

16. In 1999 Key Stage 1 national tests, 93 percent of pupils attained the national expectations or above, but 40 percent of them reached Level 3, well above average for similar schools and the national average. Girls performed particularly well, showing at least the equivalent of 2 terms

progress ahead of the boys. Teacher assessments, particularly for the high levels, tend to be rigorous, although they clearly identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses in the various attainment targets. Progress over time is good, and follows the national trend but with school performances consistently above the national average.

17. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards in mathematics are high. Last year, 97 percent of eleven year olds reached the national expected level or above. This result is very high in comparison to the national average and the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 was above average. The very well planned framework for numeracy provides opportunities for pupils to make good progress through a range of activities. Pupils enjoy mathematics and are able to explain their working and suggest alternative strategies. In a Year 6 maths mental starter session the teacher used a set of 'Follow me cards' where a card for each pupil had an answer (number), and a question to ask. This timed activity required them to think and respond quickly. Everyone was involved and the success depended on good co-operation. Pupils enjoyed this session:

"The oral starter is very good, whole class teaching effectively promotes learning. Good relationships and effectively planned support for pupils with SEN enables full engagement. The teacher encourages the use of maths vocabulary and all pupils in the class understand place value, can recognise and order decimal fraction up to three decimal places.....The work is challenging and at an appropriate pace.....the majority in the class is working at Level 4 and a significant proportion at Level 5."

18. Attainment in the Key Stage 2 tests in 1999 shows how successfully the school is in supporting the middle and lower ability pupils to achieving the national expected level. Attainment in lessons and in pupils' work supports this, with most pupils achieving in line with expectations. Towards the end of the key stage a significant number of pupils achieve above expectations. The learning that takes place in lessons in Key Stage 2 is mostly sound and sometimes good improving towards the end of the key stage, so that pupils make good progress over time. There is no difference in attainments between boys and girls by the end of the key stage. Pupils at the school tend to be over 2 terms ahead of pupils nationally. Similar extracts from Years 3 and 6 numeracy sessions are summarised as an example:

"Differentiated activities and task sheets set within a common theme to meet the lesson objectives are good and both ensure good learning and progress of all abilities in the class."

19. The standards achieved in mathematics provide a good focus for applying numeracy skills across the curriculum. In a Year 4 science lesson, there is effective progress in preparing and presenting data and its interpretation.
20. Overall attainment and progress in mathematics is seen as a considerable strength; recognised by both parents and pupils alike. It is clear from the good response and positive attitudes to mathematics that pupils enjoy the activities and work well within the structured framework provided for them.

The very good overall ethos for learning and the good attitudes and behaviour of pupils

21. Pupils enjoy school, are keen to learn and their attendance is very good. The overall good behaviour in class and around the school and the positive attitudes pupils show towards learning are a testimony to the organisation and management of the school. Relationships are very good between pupils and adults and between pupils themselves. This starts from the youngest pupils and extends throughout the school. In an Under fives music and circle time:

"There was obvious respect between pupils and adults and between pupils which contributes to the purposeful ethos in the room and helped pupils achieve."

22. The very good ethos of the school is clearly recognised by parents and members of the governing body as a strength of the school. Credit for this goes to the headteacher and the teaching staff in establishing clear sets of routines and consistent implementation of policies and procedures. Pupils from an early age are clearly aware of the routines; they know what to do and

what is expected of them. Parents have been involved in the Home School agreement that focuses on both pupil and parent responsibilities in addressing positive approaches to behaviour and discouragement of disrespectful or hurtful comments or actions. Judging from the questionnaires returned, the vast majority of parents are very positive about what the school is trying to do for their children and very supportive of the school. Pupils and parents alike are aware of the 'golden rules' that support the positive behaviour of pupils and focus on their learning. Any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with quickly and staff record and monitor incidents regularly. Around the school pupils are polite and respectful to visitors. They are willing to help and clear up at the end of each session. The responsibilities given to pupils are appropriately matched to their ages and abilities and enhance their self-esteem. However, opportunities for pupils to take more responsibilities for their own learning are not so well developed when activities are tightly structured.

23. The headteacher and staff enjoy teaching and working with children and they work very effectively as a team planning a range of different experiences for the pupils in their care. During the inspection week the school was having a 'book week' with outside speakers and storytellers culminating in a day of fancy dress with themes taken from characters in different books, both pupils and staff joined in. The involvement of pupils and their parents in the book week activities was clearly enjoyable for all involved. The school encourages parents to take an active part in their children's learning. Curriculum evenings have been held to promote literacy and numeracy and activities such as open-ended maths investigations are encouraged as a family activity. This active support for learning, from both home and school, signals to pupils the importance of school and a pride in the achievements of the school. Teachers and classroom assistants alike are always ready to encourage and congratulate pupils on their achievements.
24. Key lessons that pupils clearly enjoyed and showed very good attitudes include the Year 5/6 science practical session investigating jelly setting, the Year 6 mental maths starter quiz, which created a great sense of urgency when pupils puzzled over calculations. Pupils in Year 1 using a science focus as part of a literacy activity were drawing around a person to use as a basis for labelling the parts of the body, this they did enthusiastically. In all these and in many other lessons, pupils showed enjoyment in their learning, were keen to take part and contributed positively to the lessons. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are nearly always good and sometimes very good. Attitudes are best in those lessons where pupils understand the purpose of the tasks, know what they have to do and are clear about what is expected of them. Pupils' attitudes to learning are also good when they are appropriately challenged through a range of different activities. The clarity about the tasks and the challenges on offer are more evident, but not exclusively, in the early years and in the upper Key Stage 2 classes.
25. Parents pointed out that their children did not need much encouragement to come to school, this is born out by the 97 percent of replies in the parent questionnaire that said, "My child likes school". As a result attendance figures are higher than the national average, and there is no unauthorised absence. There are no fixed or permanent exclusions.

Provision for pupils under five is good.

26. These pupils make a good start to their formal education at Fairfields. They enjoy school and quickly settle into the clearly structured routines. They are gaining in confidence at work and play with each other. A number of parents commented very positively that their children were happy and content and looked forward to school. The curriculum is effectively planned ensuring that the areas of experience linked to the Desirable Learning Outcomes, provide effective progression into the start of the National Curriculum. There is a good emphasis on learning through play and pupils' social and physical skills are effectively developed through the structured support and consistent reinforcement of routines. In a Reception Science lesson:

"The teacher encourages them to share and take turns, ...both the teacher and classroom assistants effectively support pupils and encourage co-operation and engagement. Routines are clear and pupils know what to do and what is expected of them. ...Children are encouraged to explore pushes and pulls with various toys.Effective teacher questioning prompts pupils to talk about why things happen and how things work.

27. The organisation between the two reception classes is very good with efficient and effective joint use of resources as well as each class making good use of both rooms. The joint planning and clear communications with the classroom support staff is excellent; a characteristic that extends throughout the school but is more evident in the nursery and reception classes. Classroom assistants work well with children focusing questions on the activities ensuring that learning takes place. The following statements taken from an observation of an under-fives mathematics focused activity typifies this:

"Good organisation and discipline ensures that pupils stayed focused on the tasks. Teacher's good subject knowledge, careful planning and good methods, created a purposeful learning environment. Children are keen and enthusiastic to teamwork together. Support staff are used to work with small groups with clear understanding of their role. They provide good overall support for pupils' learning.

28. The quality of teaching in the reception and nursery classes is consistently good. Teaching promotes learning through a range of well-organised structured activities. As a result the learning gains made by pupils of all abilities in a range of skills across subject areas is good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are always good and sometimes very good. The experiences they receive working and playing together in a purposeful learning environment, ensures that the vast majority are performing in line with expectations and in some areas, such as mathematics, some pupils are working above this level. Pupils from the earliest age are keen to talk about their work, they relate well to the stories they have read to them, making appropriate predictions and responding to questions about the stories. There are opportunities to communicate in a number of creative ways including the use of information technology. A range of supervised learning activities makes use of a wide range of equipment available to develop both pupils' physical skills as well as their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Work in the nursery clearly provides pupils with the necessary social skills to enable them to form good relationships, work co-operatively in small groups and to be considerate of others. The guidance the school gives to parents about early learning is very good and ensures an effective on-going partnership between home and school.

**The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction to the school's developments.
The headteacher, staff and the governing body, work very effectively as a team.**

29. Strategic leadership and management of the school by the headteacher and other key staff are very good. There is a very clear sense of educational direction to the work of the school. All those with responsibilities understand their roles and are effectively supported. They work closely together and keep each other informed of developments. This results in a clear corporate view of the school and ownership of its policies, ensuring consistency in practice throughout the school. This gives pupils a clear sense of security and confidence in the support and guidance that they get from all staff. There is an excellent shared commitment to high achievement, the maintenance of standards and a good learning ethos. Teachers and support staff, together with parents and governors are successful in meeting the stated aims of the school.

30. There is an effective school development and planning process. The headteacher carefully monitors and evaluates the work of the school giving a clear steer to development priorities and supports staff very effectively through an open and consultative approach. The priorities identified in the improvement plan are appropriate and match the current development needs of the school. However, success indicators are not always clearly stated either in qualitative or quantitative terms, making interim evaluation of progress more difficult. It is not always clear in the plan what the expectations are in terms of maintenance and/or development targets nor how management responsibilities for oversight of the various developments are to be apportioned. One important section missing from the plan, relates to the governors' own development plan which needs to be seen in parallel with curriculum and other whole school developments.

31. The governing body is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. Governors have been sensitive to the difficulties that affect the school in relation to curriculum planning and pupil management with split-aged classes. With this in mind, they effectively negotiated with the LEA to increase the school size to two-forms of entry. Governors have responded positively and support the school very effectively particularly during the changes in the school. They very efficiently arranged financial contingencies over time to support the development of learning resources as the school's population increased and also addressed the issues of security for pupils. Planned developments of the school site for creative and adventure play are part of their current development agenda. Overall financial planning in the school is very good and clearly linked to the planning process and development priorities. The audit report indicates that financial controls are of a high standard. The LEA services offer regular budget evaluations and there is effective and efficient use of information and communication technology to support financial management.
32. A number of governors including the special educational needs governor are new to the team and have still to develop their roles with appropriate in-service training which is available through the LEA support package which the governors subscribe to. Governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities and take them seriously. They have reorganised their committee structure to meet the changing demands on their roles as critical friends to the school. There is an appropriate mix of experience on the governing body to cater for the various issues that arise. Governors are kept well informed about the school through the regular monitoring reports and performance analysis that takes place either by the senior management team, subject co-ordinators, or through the LEA's monitoring reviews. Networking between committees and links to the LEA, staff and the school are very good. A number of governors work in the school as classroom assistants or parent helpers and the chair of the governors visits regularly working with a class as a volunteer support. This enables them all to have a strategic overview of the school from secure first-hand information. LEA management information is used effectively to monitor a range of performance indicators including, test and baseline data, staffing levels, resources and financial management.
33. Both governors and parents are proud of the school and its achievements. These they attribute largely to the leadership of the headteacher in whom they have great confidence. The successful management of the school is closely linked to the effective teamwork that has developed over the years between all staff, governors and parents working in close partnership together under the headteacher's guidance.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Broaden the way of making the curriculum more relevant to pupils of different ages and abilities particularly when they are in the same class.

34. The school provides a broad and relatively balanced curriculum with a range of extra-curricular activities. Some are linked to the topics and themes, but all support pupils' intellectual, creative and physical development. Within this context, the central focus within the curriculum has been the development of literacy and numeracy. The implementation of these two strategies has been very effective in promoting pupils' learning particularly for the middle and lower ability pupils. This is clearly demonstrated by performances in the national tests at the end of each key stage where high proportions of pupils achieve the national expected levels.
35. **English** – The school's own analysis shows that the number of pupils achieving the higher levels particularly in reading and writing are only in line with national averages. Often tightly structured activities are restricting opportunities for pupils to develop creativity and extend their literacy skills beyond the target level. There is not always a clear distinction either in the planning or the variation in use of suitable texts within comprehension exercises to meet the differing needs of

pupils in mixed age and ability groupings. Common texts and activities used in some of the group sessions, do not always enable the lower ability pupils to maximise their comprehension skills, particularly when they have difficulty understanding both the structure and meaning of the text. Similarly, opportunities for more able pupils to extend their writing, to be creative or to apply writing techniques in different contexts, are not always planned for. Differentiation by pace and outcome does not always provide the opportunities for pupils to consolidate their writing, nor to develop their understanding of a range of genre building on previous experiences. In order to broaden the curriculum the school needs to extend opportunities for pupils to write for a wider range of purposes in contexts across the curriculum, particularly in targeting the higher levels in each key stage.

36. **Science** – Currently the school maintains high standards in the end of Key Stage 2 tests in science, particularly in scientific recall. In Key Stage 1, teacher assessments at Level 2 the national expectation indicate standards broadly in line with national averages in Experimental and Investigative Science and Physical Processes. Whereas in Life and Living Processes and in Materials and their Properties, teacher assessments put the school above average, evidence from lessons and work seen would suggest that pupils are working in line with expectations but with limited evidence of higher order levels. In a nursery class pupils were able to recall a mini-beast hunt in the school grounds and identify what animals they found and where. These pupils can recognise and name external parts of the human body and can recognise and identify a range of different animals in line with National Curriculum Level 1. Some able pupils in the reception class can already describe the basic conditions needed for plants and animals to survive and sort things into groups according to features recognising that different things are found in different places. In the lesson with toys, reception pupils:

“were able to make predictions on the basis of observations about different toys, how they could be moved and what makes them work. Pupils recognise and demonstrate a push and pull, linking the forces to the direction of movement”.

37. However, as pupils move through the school, there is not clear evidence of planned progression in the context of investigative skills, but there is evidence of progress in scientific knowledge. Where pupils in Year 3 were confident researching to find out about the life cycle of various animals, some pupils could understand the main processes linked to living things such as growth and reproduction. These pupils were clearly working at Level 3 in the knowledge based attainment target Life and Living Processes. However, when this subject area is extended to an investigation on age and growth, with pupils of the same age but in a different class, attainment is below expectation. The structured experimental worksheet for collecting data and the analysis of the results, focused more on the mathematical skills of data handling than it did on the scientific reasons linked to growth or on the skill development associated with scientific enquiry.
38. By the end of Key Stage 2 the proportion of pupils achieving Levels 4 and 5 are well above average in science. With both boys and girls showing progress in advance of the national average by nearly 3 terms. However, the range of skills and investigations in pupils' class work does not support these high levels. In practical work, pupils are not achieving the same high standards as they are in the knowledge based attainment targets. The principle reason for this is the limited focus on pupils' explanations and evaluation using scientific terminology to explain the outcomes of experimental work. This is linked in part to the development of literacy across the curriculum and the higher order writing skills, which the school has already identified, but is also a function of the tightly structured activities that limit opportunities for pupils to investigate independently. In order to broaden the curriculum the school needs to ensure that the overall science provision is balanced. In particular that scientific enquiry is taught through contexts that are taken from a range of the knowledge based areas of the programmes of study, so that experimental and investigative skills are taught progressively and systematically throughout the school, building on pupils' experiences and achievements.
39. **Design and technology** – The school provides limited time for teaching the subject and there are a few examples of pupils' work in design and technology on display. Most of the work is focused largely on art and craft techniques rather than on design, making and evaluation identified in the design and technology curriculum. Topics such as mechanisms, systems, construction and taking things apart to see how they work, are not identified in the current work

plan. In some cases, pupils work with food and textiles in Key Stage 1 but the range of activities is less clearly defined in the upper school. However, the quality of some of the craft work linked to the topics and themes shows pupils have acquired a range of skills and are able to work with a range of media, including fabrics, card and mouldable materials. Whilst working with these materials enable pupils to work with tools, equipment, materials and sometimes components to make products, the knowledge and understanding and skills of the subject including development planning communicating ideas and making, followed by the evaluation process, are not fully exploited. The examples seen around the school suggest that a common format is presented to pupils when developing work with materials, as a result there is limited development of creativity or opportunities for them to explore alternative constructions or approaches. This limits open-ended investigative work in this area of the curriculum. In order to broaden the curriculum the school needs to extend opportunities for pupils to work with a range of tools and materials to develop their ideas, planning, making products and evaluating them in line with the programmes of study.

40. **Information and communication technology** – The subject time allocation identified in teachers' weekly timetables shows limited direct timetabled teaching of information and communication technology (ICT). Up until recently the range of computer hardware and the software programs available, have not enabled the school to fully address the wide range of applications demanded of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Whilst co-ordination and support for information technology in the school are good, the inclusion of the subject in the curriculum is still limited. Those examples of displayed pupils' work with ICT tend to be restricted to text or clip-art work in conjunction with word processing. Databases, spread sheets, monitoring and control are not fully addressed either as a subject focus in their own right or as a skill applied to support other subject areas. The school has already identified this as an issue for development. A programme of training through the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) is being planned, and the development of resources through the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) is underway. All rooms have at least one computer and printer but in the absence of a centralised suite of networked machines, whole class teaching of the subject is limited. Teachers rely on demonstration and skill practice with small groups during the other focused work in order to ensure all pupils have access to the programs. Small groups of Year 6 pupils were seen during the inspection working on the library computer during lunchtime. The programme of in service support for staff run by the co-ordinator has resulted in an increase in confidence and competence in teachers' ability to use and teach ICT. In order to broaden the curriculum the school needs to extend opportunities for pupils to use and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills through a full range of application of ICT across the curriculum.

Broaden the range of teaching strategies making use of assessment information to match the work to pupils' needs to support learning.

41. The quality of teaching overall is good; over half the lessons are good with significant strengths towards the end of each key stage. Teachers find it more difficult to organise the curriculum and teach pupils when classes contain pupils from different age groups. However, in the mixed age classes there is both a narrower age and ability range than in the single age classes. Despite this, the quality of teaching in classes where pupils are the same age group is significantly better than in mixed age classes. Of particular note is the extent to which teachers use their knowledge of pupils' previous experiences to plan and build on skills and knowledge to meet the needs of all pupils. This is more effective in the classes where pupils are from the same year group. In these classes, progression in subject knowledge and skills is more clearly structured than in mixed-age classes, where they plan a two-year rolling programme of topics. It is also more effective in numeracy than in literacy lessons. Despite this, the school works hard to ensure an appropriate balance of topic and skill focus so that no pupil is disadvantaged.
42. The current planning framework is good for literacy and numeracy. In these subjects the key objectives for each age group are clearly identified and activities are designed to meet these objectives. However, planned tasks often result in a narrow range of level outcomes and this restricts opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge and skills beyond the target level. Pupils' progress towards achieving the higher levels is sometimes impeded by the tight structure imposed as a result of over prescribed activities, instructions or work sheets. In some cases teachers specify the outcomes thereby limiting creativity or independence in pupils' learning.

The Literacy and Numeracy Strategies do in part address these issues. However, the planning framework is not extended across all subjects of the curriculum to the same depth. Some teachers use assessment information effectively to support planning. When this happens planned activities build on pupils' previous experiences but this is not always evident in foundation subjects. Not all subjects are planned in a way that translate the schemes of work into activities that meet either the teaching objectives or identified intended learning outcomes at specific National Curriculum levels.

43. Evidence from the last series of tests and teacher assessments indicates some variance in the judgements made in relation to the higher order levels, particularly in Key Stage 1 reading and mathematics and Key Stage 2 mathematics and science. It is therefore important that the teachers have a clear view of the quality and quantity of work required of each National Curriculum level in all subjects. In this way they are in a position to plan work to support pupils as they move step by step in terms of skills and knowledge to achieve the next level. At present too much reliance is often given to common activities that differentiates pupils' achievements by pace or outcome. Samples of pupils' work from both single aged classes and mixed age classes indicate common statements in pupils' books and common contexts for learning regardless of age or ability.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

44. The Headteacher, staff and governing body are together fully aware of the tasks that face them as the school grows. A number of appropriate issues have already been identified in the school's improvement plan. The key issues for the school are to maintain the current high standards attained in the core subjects and ensure that the good learning ethos remains throughout as the school enlarges. To assist them in this focus and to target the higher order levels in each key stage the school needs to:
 1. Continue to extend the use of assessment information to support planning in order to clarify the steps in pupils' learning ensuring that:
 - pupils are clear about the standards to which they are working;
 - pupils know the skills and knowledge to be learned ;
 - pupils know how they might achieve the next stage in learning;
 - teachers use this information to support teaching programmes that build on pupils' previous experiences, particularly in the foundation subjects.
 2. Broaden the range of teaching strategies to make the curriculum more relevant to pupils of different ages and abilities.
 3. Continue to build on the development of investigative work in science and design and technology by providing the necessary support to ensure teachers have the subject knowledge and skills to cover all aspects of each subject.
 4. Raise standards in information and communication technology by ensuring effective use is made of a full range of knowledge, skills and applications of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	30
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	3	57	33	7		

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	23	279
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	30

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	69

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.8
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	25	17	52

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	25	22
	Girls	17	17	17
	Total	42	42	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100	100	93
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	22	20
	Girls	17	17	17
	Total	42	39	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100	93	88
	National	82	86	87

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	17	17	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	16	17
	Girls	16	17	17
	Total	31	33	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91	97	100
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	15
	Girls	16	17	17
	Total	31	32	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91	94	94
	National	68	69	75

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	247
Any other minority ethnic group	9

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28
Average class size	30.7

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	101

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	Apr 1998 – Mar 1999
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	£
Total income	534,579
Total expenditure	500,161
Expenditure per pupil	1707
Balance brought forward from previous year	33,151
Balance carried forward to next year	67,569

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	302
Number of questionnaires returned	69

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	38	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	46	1	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	46	4	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	52	13	1	10
The teaching is good.	52	42	0	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	54	12	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	29	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	35	0	1	4
The school works closely with parents.	38	46	9	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	64	30	3	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	51	0	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	25	23	7	20