

INSPECTION REPORT

BRIDGEMERE CE (AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Nantwich

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111343

Headteacher: Mrs B Edwards

Reporting inspector: Mrs Janet Johnson
17711

Dates of inspection: 7th – 9th February 2000

Inspection number: 192097

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bridgemere Lane Bridgemere Nantwich Cheshire
Postcode:	CW5 7PX
Telephone number:	01270 520 271
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of Chair of Governors:	Mr Walter Done
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs J Johnson	Registered inspector	English, information technology, design and technology, history, geography Under-five's	Leadership and management The school's results and achievement
Mr D W Jones	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes values and personal development The school's care for its pupils Partnership with parents Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mr O L Thomas	Team inspector	Mathematics, science, art, music, physical education Special educational needs Equal opportunities	Teaching and learning Curricular and other opportunities

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bridgemere Church of England (Aided) Primary School is smaller than most primary schools with 62 boys and girls on roll, aged from 4 to 11 years. Boys outnumber girls by two to one. Seven pupils are eligible for free school meals and this number is low but does not reflect accurately the comprehensive socio-economic background of pupils. There are no pupils from ethnic minority groups, refugees or with English as a second language. There are six pupils on the register for special educational need and this is below the national average but is steadily increasing. No pupils currently have a Statement of Special Educational Need. Most have attended some form of pre-school facility prior to entry to the reception class and their attainment on entry is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Bridgemere CE (Aided) Primary School is a successful school, which very effectively secures good standards for its pupils within a positive climate for learning. The impressive leadership and management given by the Headteacher and the superior teaching quality provided are fundamental to the school's continual drive for high achievement. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils attain high standards in the national tests and equally well in their day to day work.
- Young children under five make a very good start to their school careers, their progress is swift.
- Teaching quality is a significant strength; teachers have consistently high expectations, know their pupils well and match work thoughtfully to the range of ages and abilities. Time is precious and none is lost. Very good emphasis is placed on the teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy.
- The Headteacher leads by example and is relentless in the time and effort she gives to setting a tone for care, dedication and success for the pupils; this is reflected in the team spirit and drive all staff share.
- Governors' knowledge, insight and support for the school are first rate.
- Pastoral care by all staff is excellent. Parents are particularly appreciative of this feature of the school.
- The school broadens extensively the pupils' education through additional curriculum activities and notably through useful links with their main partner high school.

What could be improved

- In spite of some good work, pupils do not attain as expected by the age of 11 in information technology.
- There is scope to raise standards in writing even higher.
- A more systematic approach to the recording of all aspects of pupils' learning is needed.
- The attitudes and values of a minority of pupils, which hinder their personal development and at times their learning.
- The time for the Headteacher to fulfil her management role and critically reflect to secure future school improvement.
- Aspects of the accommodation cause restrictions in pupils' learning and efficiency of administration.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December 1996 and since that time it has moved onward and upwards. Pupils' performance in national test results has improved considerably as have standards of work seen during the inspection. Reading and numeracy are the most apparent strengths. Teaching, pupils' progress in their learning and a number of factors related to management show significant improvements. The key issues identified in the previous report have been grasped and addressed successfully within the resources available to the school and amidst introducing successfully national initiatives in literacy and numeracy. The school has already recognised for itself within its long term planning all of the issues identified by this inspection for further improvement.

Some features, which have not been so well sustained, are information technology, where the curriculum requirements and the subject's status have been heightened nationally since the last inspection. These changes and the ever-increasing resource demands have been difficult for the school to keep pace with, in spite of considerable effort. This school, like many others, has still some way to go until it can meet the full requirements for the delivery of the statutory curriculum for information technology. Also there is less evidence of work in design and technology, which although planned for, has not been a priority against implementing the literacy and numeracy hours.

The school has the necessary ingredients to thrive. It is very well supported by the commitment and expertise of the governors, Headteacher and teaching staff who give unstintingly of their time and goodwill in their drive for success and achievement by the pupils. All factors, including the parental support for the school's aims, indicate a ring of confidence and even greater success for the future.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	A	A*	A	A	well above average A
Mathematics	B	A*	A*	A*	above average B
Science	B	A*	A*	A*	average C
					below average D
					well below average E

N.B. Cohort sizes are small and different groups of pupils are being tested each year. This could account for slight fluctuations in performance in some year. Where the comparative grade is A* or E*, reference to the school's performance being in the highest or lowest 5% nationally;

Over time results have remained consistently above the national average and have risen in the latter two years to place the results for mathematics and science performance in the top five per cent nationally. English although well above average has not yet quite achieved these high levels. The school's targets for the current Year 6 pupils show the majority of them have been assessed to attain at the higher Level 5 in all three subjects; this is well above the national expectation if achieved. Targets for the following year are lower and are reflective of the cohort,

which has eight boys to one girl and a broader spectrum of ability with more pupils identified with special educational needs. The test results for seven year olds also show a positive picture of pupils' performance.

The inspection focused on assessing standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. From the work seen in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' books standards are good overall in all three subjects at both key stages. In English, speaking, reading and technical writing skills are good. Standards in listening range from very good to unsatisfactory and are satisfactory overall. Standards in narrative and creative writing reflect the national picture and are broadly in line with what is expected with some individual examples of high quality writing. There is scope to improve the pupils' writing skills even further. In mathematics, standards in mental arithmetic and numeracy are at least good, as are pupils' knowledge and understanding of the language of mathematics for shape, space and measures. Standards in data handling and investigative mathematics are satisfactory overall with some good examples in cross-curricular work. In science, standards in knowledge and understanding of natural and physical phenomena are above average. The pupils have a firm grasp of the investigative process and are confident in determining their own line of enquiry. Older pupils have a secure understanding of the need for 'fair tests'. In information technology, pupils do not attain as expected by the ages of seven or 11 because they do not have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the full breadth of the subject although there are some examples of effective use in the other subjects.

In the other subjects, pupils attain as generally expected by the time they leave the school with some good quality work in art. A weakness in their achievement, is in design and technology which has commanded less attention and is not being taught systematically.

On entry to the school pupils are mainly of average ability. They make very rapid progress in the early years and this is well built upon throughout the rest of their school. Pupils of all abilities generally achieve well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good overall. Most pupils enthusiastically share their preferences for school life and talk animatedly about their opportunities and experiences.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. It is best when pupils are in the classrooms where they mainly live up well to the high expectation teachers have of them. A minority of pupils lack the self-discipline expected at breaks and lunchtimes and express a potential for mischief and dominance which at times overawes some younger pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Overall satisfactory but range from excellent to poor. A number of pupils lack respect for, and understanding of, the impact of their actions and words on others. It is taking some pupils longer than others to learn that in school they are one of many.
Attendance	Good overall. Pupils enjoy school and parents support this view. Not all parents recognise their responsibility in ensuring that their children arrive at school promptly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

No teaching was judged to be less than good during the inspection. In 72 per cent of lessons teaching was very good or excellent. The remainder were good.

The significant strengths of teaching are the high expectations for listening, behaviour, presentation, use of taught skills and output of work. Teachers know their pupils well and assess very carefully their needs. They cope well with the broad age and ability ranges in the classes and pupils' needs are well met. Work is well planned and based on accurate evaluations of what pupils have learned to reinforce and build on their knowledge and understanding. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are very well taught. General points for further improvements in teaching are in the need for ; greater use of writing skills across the curriculum, at times there is an over emphasis on the use of prescribed worksheets and for all teachers to use the marking of work to set targets to show pupils how they can improve for themselves.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. Very well complemented by additional activities and is overall broad and balanced, designed to widen pupils' perspective of the world and enhanced by excellent links with the neighbouring high school. The delivery of information technology does not meet requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Class teachers plan work carefully to meet pupils' needs and are extremely well supported by the non-teaching assistant. However, the registering of concerns is not sufficiently systematic to respond to changing needs and determine possible support needed with the special educational needs coordinator who has very limited time to fulfil her role.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Spiritual and cultural development are good and moral and social development are very good. The school has highlighted the need to develop even further its programme for personal and social education; this is necessary and appropriate to respond to pupils' diverse needs and develop their abilities to deal positively with relationships and life changes.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well indeed. Pastoral care is excellent and teachers provide a secure, safe framework in which pupils can develop confidence. Parents appreciate this. Teachers are highly sensitive to their pupils' needs. Whilst satisfactory overall there is scope to improve the procedures for recording and monitoring of personal and academic progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the Headteacher and other key staff	The Headteacher provides very strong leadership to steer the school forward. Outside pressures and internal constraints are tempered very well to set realistic expectations for improvement without compromising the goal for high standards and placing pupils' needs first. However, the onus of responsibilities upon the Headteacher is tremendous. Coordinators contribute significantly to the development of their subjects and support colleagues well, even where they are employed on a part time basis.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a very good insight into school life through direct monitoring and involvement. They fulfil their responsibilities very adeptly in support of the Headteacher and staff and have a wholehearted commitment to developing the school. A bid for funding to improve information technology resources has already been made.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Has many strengths. The Headteacher, governors and staff have a keen sense of where priorities lie and improvements are needed through careful analysis of outcomes. However, time for critical reflection and fine tuning of initiatives by the Headteacher, on how the school can move even further forward is acutely limited, a cause for frustration and in need of review.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes the best use of the adequate resources available to it. Governors are very mindful of the need to seek best value. The accommodation presents challenges for teaching and administration, which are an unwelcome distraction to efficiency and effectiveness. Given its context and high costs balanced against the very good quality of education provided the school gives good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress made by their children. • Behaviour in the school. • The amount of homework. • The quality of teaching. • Information on pupils' progress. • The openness and receptiveness of staff. • The Headteacher's care for pupils and her management and leadership. • The quality of pastoral care. • The emphasis the school gives to personal development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pupils' behaviour in the playground. • The amount of homework given. • The relationship with parents. • The range of additional activities. • The information about what the children are going to learn.

The inspection team largely supports and echoes the positive points made by parents.

However, it is judged that:

- the behaviour and attitudes of a minority of pupils are in need of further improvement;
- the amount of homework is appropriate and supports learning well;
- the additional activities provided to support the curriculum are quite extensive for the size of school and also, after school the teacher's time is directed to planning and preparing for the pupils' learning which results in the high standards achieved.
- The inspection has no evidence that relationships with parents are anything other than positive. The school makes regular efforts to keep parents informed through newsletters and events and there is an apparent open door policy and a clear complaints procedures if parents have concerns.
- The school does not have formal structures to inform parents about what pupils are going to learn and information about work to be covered relies on individual communications. This is a matter for the school to consider.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The pupils' performance in the national tests at the ages of seven and 11, both recently and over time, is very impressive. The most notable features of the national test results are that by the age of 11 the percentages of pupils attaining at the expected Level 4 or above is high in English, mathematics and science when compared with all schools nationally. A striking feature of the pupils' performance is the good number of them attaining at the higher Level 5 in all three subjects. The mathematics and science results have risen from above average to very high over the last two years; this improvement places the school in the top five per cent nationally in these subjects when compared with all schools and with similar schools. English results have not yet quite reached these lofty heights but are nevertheless still very good. Both boys and girls perform well above the national average in all three subjects although in mathematics and science girls tend to do slightly better than boys. Over the period 1996 to 1999 there have been some slight fluctuations in results but caution needs to be exercised in allowing this to detract from the school's performance as each year different pupils are being tested and the size of the groups are small. Results for seven year olds are equally impressive. Nine out of ten pupils attained at the expected Level 2 or above in reading and writing with all pupils attaining Level 2 in mathematics. A relative weakness was that no pupils attained at Level 3 in writing, although to be fair to the school only one pupil would have needed to attain at this level to place them in line with all other schools both nationally and similar in character. As with the oldest pupils, the percentage of pupils attaining at the higher levels is striking, with eight out of ten gaining the higher Level 3 in reading and four out of ten in mathematics. No pupils were assessed as capable of gaining this level in science although all gained the expected Level 2. Unusually, boys did slightly better than girls in reading and writing and mathematics. Girls' performance was not as good as the national average although this deficit is redressed over time as the 11 year olds' results show.

2. The school sets itself realistic and appropriate targets based on careful analysis of the pupils' performance. The targets for the current Year 6 group show that many of them have been assessed to attain at the higher Level 5 in all three subjects; this is well above the national expectation if achieved and is reflected by the work seen during the inspection. Targets for the following year, current Year 5, are lower, and are reflective of the cohort, which has eight boys to one girl and a broader spectrum of ability with more pupils identified with special educational needs. The test results for seven year old pupils also show a positive picture of pupils' performance.

3. The inspection focus was on assessing standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. From both the work seen in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' books standards are good overall in all three subjects at both key stages and confirm that the school is on target to realise strong results yet again in the year 2000. On entry to the reception class pupils are mainly of average ability although there is a spectrum ranging from below average to very good. By the age of five, most children have attained as expected in the Desirable Learning Outcomes. This variance is most evident in pupils' speaking and listening skills. However, by the age of seven, most can talk clearly and many can make clear their thoughts and ideas very well, speaking in sentences and adding expression. Listening is still variable and some do not listen well at all to what others and the teachers have to say without regular reminding. Pupils' reading skills are good and this is because they have a firm grasp of phonics and understanding of the text. This knowledge is well transferred to their writing as most spell well for their age and have a good grasp of punctuation. Their ability to write extended accounts from personal experience or from imagination is average but rarely better. Few pupils can write fluently using a joined script by

the end of Key stage 1. A very similar picture is evident by the age of 11 although many more pupils write neatly and present their work well using a joined script. There are some better examples of narrative and creative writing but overall standards are broadly in line with what is expected. There is scope to improve the pupils' writing skills even further. In mathematics, standards in mental arithmetic and numeracy are at least good by the end of both key stages. The oldest pupils have a swift and impressive knowledge of the multiplication tables and compute the four rules number confidently. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the language of mathematics for shape, space and measures is mainly good. Standards in data handling and investigative mathematics are satisfactory overall. In science, pupils by the ages of seven and 11 attain well in knowledge of the subject and experimentation. There are some good examples of older pupils using data skills to gather evidence in science. In information technology, pupils do not attain as expected by the ages of seven or 11. They do not have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the full breadth of the subject because teachers' knowledge has not kept pace with changes, sufficient time is not allocated to the direct teaching of skills and resources are limited. There are some examples of good use of communication technology in the other subjects in word processing, use of CD- ROM's for research and handling and interrogating data.

4. The quality of work seen in art is as usually found overall although standards are at times better than generally expected. Design and technology is a weakness. The pupils' skills in making are sound but they do not have a good base knowledge in the design process nor do they regularly evaluate and seek to improve their work, draw plans or consider the implications of using a range of materials to suit the task. This is because insufficient attention has been given to the subject. In history and geography, most pupils have a suitable knowledge about places and people now and in the past by the time they leave the school. Their mapping skills are quite good. In music, they sing well and have a range of experiences using instruments. Some perform well playing the recorder. The size of the hall is restrictive to pupils' achievements in gymnastics but the school organises the use of a nearby recreation centre to support their achievements.

5. On entry to the school pupils are mainly of average ability. They make very rapid progress in the early years and this is well built upon throughout the rest of their school giving considerable added value. Pupils of all abilities generally achieve well. In 75 per cent of observations pupils' make good progress in their learning. In 15 per cent it is satisfactory and in the remainder very good. This is because work is well matched to their abilities and they are expected to settle quickly and work hard by teachers. The very good teaching significantly supports pupils' achievements and this is confirmed by comparison of their performance in national tests against similar schools; the school's results are well above average.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. The pupils' attitude to school is very good. The quality of their behaviour and attendance is good, whilst their personal development and relationships are satisfactory. This aspect has been overall sustained as a strength, although a minority of pupils, lack interpersonal skills in their relationships with one another in spite of the school's best efforts.

7. In most lessons, across the key stages, pupils' attitudes to their work are very positive. They are eager learners, keen to contribute their knowledge during lessons and show pride in their work; this is demonstrated in the quality of presentation in their books and displays. In the reception class most young pupils are enthusiastic to join in with whole-class reading although a minority lack concentration and try to secure the teacher's attention for themselves. This reflects the lack of understanding in their personal development that they are one of many in school. During a numeracy hour for pupils in Years 2-4, the pupils were developing their skills through number mapping from one to 100. They were clearly stimulated by the lesson, enjoying the

challenge posed and eager to succeed. The oldest pupils focus very intently when listening to the poignant story of Prince Llewelyn and his dog, Gelert and readily answer technical or comprehension questions but only a few show the emotion which might be expected.

8. About one third of parents feel that the school does not provide enough after school activities. The inspection finds that the range of additional activities for the size of the school is good enough. Also it should be borne in mind that the isolated location and the fact that most children travel by car or minibus has an effect on after school arrangements. Discussions with pupils, both formally and informally, reveals their enjoyment in coming to school. This is confirmed in parental responses, which strongly emphasise their children's enjoyment of life at the school.

9. The quality of their behaviour is overall good; being significantly affected by the very good quality of teaching which challenges and stimulates the pupils. The behaviour management by teaching staff secures a positive learning environment. The behaviour of pupils is not supported by the limited size of the accommodation, which in some instances is cramped. There is an element among the pupils who do not have a well-developed sense of self-discipline. Some pupils in both key stages show inappropriate behaviour. During an afternoon celebration for assembly and worship some older boys displayed poor behaviour. However, this minority, although in need of further support does not detract from the majority who are generally courteous with each other and adults, and treat the school and equipment with respect. They were seen working cooperatively during lessons and have trusting respectful relationships with their teachers.

10. The pupils are relaxed and confident in school and enjoy a safe secure environment. Discussions with them reveal that bullying is not a feature of their school life. However, they are aware of how to respond if it occurs. Some immature responses particularly from older boys reveal inappropriate attitudes. A minority have little respect for what others feel, think or say. Some boys still think that there are aspects of life and jobs which are only for girls and that females do not hold positions of responsibility. During discussions with older pupils about their responsibilities a boy indicated that 'washing up' was only for girls. There is potential for mischief in the playground at lunchtimes when pupils are not directly supervised by teachers. The oldest boys lack respect for the playspace of little ones and some very young pupils are too rough in their play. However, most pupils are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others as with older pupils who look after and assist younger pupils during lunch and play. The pupils support a number of charities. They have studied and understand a range of other cultures and religious beliefs from around the world. Many pupils show a strong sense of responsibility and initiative in the tasks they carry out for example, dealing with telephone calls during lunch hour and assisting class teachers.

11. The youngest pupils who are under five years of age are in a three year class group. They are quickly integrated into school life and have settled well. During the inspection they were observed to be confident and active participants in lessons. They have mainly good levels of speaking but listening is very variable. Many are learning to concentrate well as when they use the mouse to control objects on the computer screen. The behaviour of most, in lessons and about the school is excellent but a few lack social skills and are attention seeking and immature.

12. Levels of attendance are good, being consistently above 95 per cent and this supports the continuity of pupils' learning well. This has improved since the last inspection. Levels of unauthorised absence are not significant and there have been no exclusions.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching is very good overall and enables pupils to make good and at times very good progress in their learning. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection from good overall to the high standard recorded by this inspection. For children under five, teaching is excellent and they are given wide opportunities to develop skills, independence and pleasure through an effective, lively and meaningful environment. In Key Stages 1 and 2 teaching is very good overall. This is due to the high expectations, planning based on accurate assessments of what pupils know, careful preparation and well structured organisation and management driven by a determination to provide an effective curriculum and achieve high standards for pupils.

14. The teachers, for children under five, have a very good knowledge and understanding of early years' education. They know the curriculum requirements for children under five very well and match these to the pupils' needs effectively. Lessons are well planned, resourced and prepared to provide sufficient tasks to support pupils who finish tasks quickly. Very good use is made of classroom support staff. There is a job share arrangement in this class and it works very well to the pupils' advantage. The teachers communicate regularly with each other and the very best use is made of their specialisms and teaching styles, enthusiasms, and personalities. Interaction with the children is given great attention. Teachers are never still in either focusing on a group to give quality teaching time or in moving around groups to make regular checks on pupils' progress. The children receive an excellent start to their school careers and make rapid gains in knowledge, understanding and skills towards meeting the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the age of five and for some exceeding them in literacy and numeracy. The teaching inspires the children to apply themselves and settle quickly to their work. Teaching makes clear to the children what they have to do and this is evident because they are very ready to explain the task when they have to select pictures of fruit and vegetables and identify which letter of the alphabet it begins with. The children interrupt each other with detail about how they must complete the task, commenting on how well each has done their own.

15. At both Key Stages 1 and 2 the teachers have a very secure knowledge of the requirements of the National Curriculum and this promotes pupils' learning well and at times very well. The main features of the teaching which take learning on, are high expectations for both academic and personal progress, including behaviour, very thorough assessments of their pupils, so that they know what they do well and how they need to improve. This enables pupils of all abilities including those with special educational needs to make good progress in their learning. For example, in English the teacher profitably uses pupils' responses to explore what sort of information a book might contain and prompts the pupils to search for clues. This is the case for all literacy and numeracy sessions where a key feature of teaching which promotes pupils' understanding is, making clear to pupils what they are going to learn and then using plenary sessions to explore with them how well they have done. These techniques impact very well on pupils' learning and allows them to acquire new knowledge, reinforce what they already know and acquire and use skills. Most pupils are well motivated by teachers to apply themselves and make effort with their work. Higher attaining pupils are well challenged by the tasks which require them to think for themselves. Lessons are well planned and prepared to stimulate pupils' imaginations and capture their attention resulting in pupils' showing good interest in their work and concentrating to complete the tasks and work at a good pace. The most notable feature of the teaching is the rigour and directness with which the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught. There is a strong focus on subject vocabulary and exploring word meanings for pupils' to understand. Teachers focus on groups but keep a good eye on what others are doing to ensure that pupils are on task and working productively, which is mainly the case for all ages and abilities. The teachers are pedantic in ensuring and reminding pupils to use what they have learned in their every day work and apply their knowledge to new situations to take learning

forward.

16. Teachers set homework linked to class work and this is regularly marked and used to stimulate class work or check understanding. The oldest pupils have a clear timetable of homework provision, which supports their learning in class well, particularly in reading, writing, numeracy and topics. Pupils themselves discuss how homework helps them to 'understand better' what they are doing in class. One pupil said '*It makes me think about what I have learned more and I can talk to my mum or dad about it*'.

17. Some areas for further improvement are evident from scrutiny of pupils' work; namely that marking of pupils' work could be more rigorous. Teachers conscientiously mark work and make positive comments. However, seldom do they indicate for pupils exactly how the work could be improved by them, set them targets to aim at or check that corrections have been completed. This does not support pupils' skills of independent learning well enough. This aspect does need improvement because greater focus on self-improvement and editing of their own work could significantly affect the pupils in improving their writing by encouraging them to be more self-critical.

18. The superior teaching, the good standards of work and the rate of pupils' learning are inextricably linked and the pupils benefit tremendously from the knowledge, dedication and commitment of staff to pursue high standards and achieve the best for their pupils in promoting learning.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

19. The quality of the curriculum provision has been at least sustained and has improved somewhat since the last inspection particularly in literacy and numeracy. All of the subjects of the National Curriculum are planned for in the long and medium term. The school follows the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies to deliver the teaching of English and mathematics and these are particular strengths of the provision; laying the foundation for pupils to use their skills in all aspects of the learning. The learning opportunities for these important basic skills are frequent and of high quality and contribute significantly to the standards achieved. In discussions with pupils they enjoy the learning offered to them and many particularly express preferences for mathematics, science and literacy hour. In science, pupils have ample opportunities to investigate.

20. A useful rolling programme of themes enables teachers to cover in a structured way the delivery of the other subjects. This programme is currently being reviewed to cater for the broad range of age within the classes. The planning for art is a notable strength. The school follows a detailed programme, which is focused on learning skills and techniques; the success of this is evident in the examples of good quality artwork about the school. History, geography and music are satisfactorily planned for. Within its limited resources the planned activities are effectively delivered with the exception that pupils have insufficient access to using and learning about information technology and, although they have some experiences in design and making they are infrequent and not covered in enough depth to promote high achievement. There is some restriction on the delivery of physical education as the hall is too small for the safe movement of pupils for gymnastics and it is necessary for the school to make additional arrangements for the use of a nearby recreation centre. Planning shows pupils have experiences in all elements of the subject through the year.

21. Provision for pupils with special educational needs meets the requirements of the national Code of Practice and is good. There is one, very effective, classroom support assistant who works well in cooperation and under the direction of the classteachers and the Headteacher who

is special educational needs coordinator.

22. Regular homework in the form of reading, tables, spelling, bringing in objects for displays and work for older pupils specifically linked to their schoolwork is contributing well to supporting learning.

23. Within the school's development plan good provision is made for the delivery of personal, social and health education. This is supported by a policy for sex education, which takes account of the age of pupils. The parents who approve of the provision know these arrangements. Older pupils are taught about the dangers of drugs' abuse with the support of visitors such as the community constable. The good provision made supports the pupils' abilities to make informed decisions about their life style. Within its development plan the school is planning to improve resources for able learners, further improve its links with community and the programme for personal, social and health education, including drug awareness. Also included is how the school might look at ways of promoting further opportunities for responsibility in older pupils

24. The school makes very good provision to extend pupils' learning through its programme for extracurricular activity. The provision includes after school clubs, visits to places of interest and educational support through activities linked to its receiving secondary school. For example, during the inspection the Year 5 and 6 pupils went to the local high school, Brine Leas; boys took part in food technology activities and the girls benefited from the Women in Science Education, 'WISE', bus activities. The school has plans to work more closely with the high school in developing pupils' skills in technology. On a two yearly basis the school also participates in a week's activities linked to South Cheshire College in July covering all aspects of the curriculum including such activities as orienteering. The after school activities include football, netball and in the summer athletics. Pupils can join in recorder clubs and a member of staff runs a French club for pupils of all ages each week at lunchtime. Educational visits have included residential visits to Burwardsley Outdoor Centre, and day visits to the Blue Planet Aquarium at Ellesmere Port and the New Victoria Theatre. There is a very good linked arrangement with the high school to support the literacy skills of Bridgemere pupils.

25. The curriculum is socially inclusive and provides equality of access and opportunity for boys and girls. There is a case, because of the pupils' attitudes and values, which they bring with them, for the school to test out regularly how effectively it is developing pupils' recognition of gender issues. Some boys have misguided and biased views about the role of boys and girls in life.

26. The school makes good provision to promote the personal development of its pupils in the areas of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is an overall improvement from the previous inspection when the details of each aspect are considered.

27. Within the curriculum the pupils' work reveals their growing awareness of spiritual values. During a science lesson, for Years R and 1, the pupils were investigating the properties of wood. Their sense of awe and wonder was apparent when presented with a box found buried in the garden; pupils were eager and excited to explore its content and surmise what might be inside it. In Years 5 and 6, the pupils have studied the painting styles of a number of artists including Picasso and Van Gogh and discussions with them reveal that they have reflected on the artists' style of paintings and observations. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and the majority of pupils display good behaviour which supports their relationships very well in school where they are supportive and cooperative with one another. Older pupils have as part of their responsibilities the care of younger children during lunch and play. Their response to this initiative is overall very positive and they enjoy the responsibility. They are given broad insight into cultural values through studies of their own and world cultures. In geography, pupils in Years 2 to 4 have

studied life in India and in religious education both key stages have studied the main world religions. Collective worship is well used to support pupils' understanding of these aspects of their development and worship observed during inspection was conducted in accordance with requirements.

28. Bridgemere school is isolated in a small village and most pupils travel some distance to attend. Nevertheless, the school has established strong links with its community and these make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and development. The school is actively involved with its local church where its pupils attend seasonal services. The vicar attends school to lead a weekly celebration for collective worship. Pupils from Bridgemere are currently receiving additional support from their local secondary school to develop literacy skills and a class for nursery pupils is held in the school on three mornings a week. Visitors to the school have included a watercolour artist and the school has arranged visits to a number of venues further afield which are of educational or historical interest.

29. The curriculum provides children under five with insight into spiritual values experienced through awe and wonder during science and art lessons. For example, their illustration of feelings in their paintings of sad and happy faces. In science, they feel and handle wooden objects and have produced observational drawings of patterns in nature. They show a well developed sense of understanding for right and wrong behaviour when they put up their hand to answer questions or wait their turn when queuing for lunch. The school's sex education programme is well structured to introduce the subject at a level appropriate to the age of the children.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. Parents voice strong approval for the quality of pastoral care that the school gives and the inspection agrees that this is of excellent quality and enables pupils to feel safe and secure in their learning. This aspect has been very well sustained since the last inspection. Attendance levels at the school are good. Registers are monitored weekly and completed in accordance with current guidance. Child protection procedures are in place and staff are aware of their responsibilities. A significant strength of the school's child protection procedures is the high level of teachers' pastoral knowledge about pupils.

31. The school has effective strategies for promoting good behaviour through rewards and praise. A significant contribution to the quality of behaviour is the high standard of teachers' behaviour management. There is a need for the further development of pupils' self-discipline. The school's provision for health and safety is consistent for all pupils. In the case of the youngest pupils they are further supported by care from older ones. A weakness in the school's provision is the lack of a separate, safe play area for pupils under five years.

32. The pupils learn in an environment where they feel safe and secure and where relationships are supportive and trusting. Staff know the pupils well and make very good assessments of pupils' personal and academic progress. They use their knowledge to inform planning of work and match tasks carefully to a wide range of age and abilities within the classes. Several different methods are used to record progress. They are all effective in their own right. However, the school recognises that these could be organised collectively so that information about all aspects of pupils' progress can be readily accessible to inform target setting and continuity as pupils move from class to class and school. In addition, there is scope to formalise and share more extensively with pupils the strengths and weaknesses of their work and progress so that they may aspire to greater goals, both academically and personally.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

33. The meeting with parents and analysis of the questionnaires reveals a high level of approval for the school's provision and support. Most parents feel well informed and involved by the school in their children's learning. Some are concerned about their perceived lack of additional activities but the inspection finds that for the size of school the school's provision is good enough. The parents receive good quality information through personal contact with teaching staff, regular newsletters and the overall good quality reports of pupils' progress. There is a need for progress reports to give clear advice on how pupils can improve. As well as informal contact at the start and end of the day, parents' evenings are held on three occasions during the school year. The school encourages parents to assist in the classroom. Although there are many working parents, a number assist with extracurricular work and on school visits. The home/school contract has a positive effect in encouraging parental involvement in the pupils' learning. The links, which the school has with parents, have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

34. The school works well with parents to integrate the youngest pupils into reception. Provision is made for a nursery class for pre-school children that is held in the school hall three mornings a week. Parents are welcomed into the classroom at the start and end of the school day.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

35. The very effective leadership and management by the Headteacher are instrumental to the school's high achievements. The Headteacher has a determination and commitment to providing the best for the pupils; in her decision making and planning their needs are of paramount importance. The Headteacher has a significant class teaching commitment for most of the week, supported currently, by a supply teacher. Although she is balancing very well her leadership and management role with that of class teacher and special educational needs coordinator, the onus of responsibilities on her is tremendous; she gives unstintingly of her personal time to ensure the school's success. Very little school time is available to allow for critical reflection and fine-tuning of developments to secure further improvements. The day to day management of the school is very good and is well supported by a part time school secretary who effectively, in limited time, operates from a corridor to deal with school administration. This situation is not acceptable and causes unwelcome distractions and inefficiency in the use of her time when she has to continually walk through the school to answer the front door to comply with necessary security arrangements.

36. The Headteacher transmits her beliefs and vision very well to the staff through example. She has taken a stance that change will be managed in a realistic and steady way, and this has secured the staff's commitment to school improvement. A recent, unexpected resignation at the start of the school year has meant considerable reorganisation in staffing and allocation of personnel to year groups. This has been smoothly and calmly managed with the continuity of pupils' education uppermost in mind. This seasoned approach to rationalising outside pressures and tempering internal constraints inspires the staff to work as a team and is at the heart of the skilful leadership of the school. The school development plan, which was considered to be in need of improvement at the last inspection, is now an effective tool. It is focused well on curriculum and standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and there are no areas highlighted for improvement by this inspection which the school has not already recognised for itself. Staff and governors are actively involved in the process of identifying and meeting priorities. The school's budget is extremely tight and finances are managed very well to meet priorities. There is little room for manoeuvre. The school has recently acquired charity status to make the most of voluntary donations and this is a good example of how forward looking both the Headteacher and governors are in strategic planning.

37. The Headteacher is extremely well supported by the teaching and non-teaching staff who share her commitment to the pupils. Two staff are employed part time, one of who is the mathematics coordinator, but nevertheless the dedication to fulfilling her role and supporting colleagues with the implementation of the numeracy strategy is first rate. This same high quality involvement in managing a national initiative and recognising areas for improvement is also evident in the work of the literacy coordinator who until recently was employed on a part time basis. Both of these key coordinators accept their responsibilities seriously and participate in training, support for colleagues, subject review, monitoring and strategic planning with steadfastness. The other part time member of staff also fulfils her management of two subjects very well and has clear insight into the strengths and areas for further development.

38. All reasonable efforts have been made by the Headteacher and governors to instigate the statutory appraisal process for teachers. The Headteacher regularly reviews the work of staff and has actively monitored their performance in the classroom and the outcomes of pupils' learning within the constraints of the time available. The Headteacher's view of teaching performance is spot on. However, as at the time of the last inspection the statutory appraisal process is not fully in place. The school is restricted in its efforts to implement this because locally the appropriate training is not available to complete the process as required. Test results and assessments are analysed regularly and the information derived used to set targets for groups of pupils. The school has baseline assessments in place and these are being used effectively to measure added value. Much of this information is shared verbally and there is scope for, and benefit to be gained from, recording succinctly the judgements made to support tracking of progress more closely, efficiency in the use of time and for ease of future reference and information sharing. As with other aspects of management more time is needed for the Headteacher to reflect and question how the school can build on its considerable success.

39. The management systems in place in the school and the high quality of teaching evident make it well placed to be an effective provider of initial teacher training. The very limited accommodation detracts from the practical delivery of some subjects in Class 2, the hall is too small for the safe delivery of physical education and results in additional arrangements having to be made and, the situation where the staffroom doubles as the Headteacher's office and the secretary works from the corridor is wholly unacceptable and hinders efficiency, confidentiality and staff morale. The adequate staffing and resources are used to best effect.

40. The Chairman of Governors leads the governors in their work very well. There is a sensible number of sub-committees who regularly report on the progress of initiatives to the full governing body. The governors fulfil their responsibilities very well save for the delivery of the curriculum in information technology. They have complied well with target setting for improved performance and exceed the stated goals. They are regularly at the school, monitor and gain a feel for the challenges facing the staff. Their involvement has significantly improved since the last inspection. In discussions during the inspection the governors were very well aware of the issues raised and are thoughtful in considering how improvements can be made. Scrutiny of the school development plan shows that governors are very mindful of the principles of achieving 'best value'. The school gives good value for money.

41. The high standards and drive towards success is a result of the firm, clear direction and example given by the Headteacher and the team spirit engendered between her, the governors and staff to achieve the very best for the pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors, Headteacher and staff should include the following matters in their post inspection action plan:

Raise standards in information technology by:

- ensuring that the full National Curriculum Programmes of Study are systematically taught;
- reviewing the time allocated for the direct teaching of subject skills and pupils' access to computers;
- continuing to improve the teachers' confidence and competence to teach the subject;
- improving resources as funding allows.

Reference to these matters can be found in paragraphs, 3, 68, and 69.

Raise standards even further in writing by:

- reviewing the approach and allocation of teaching time to handwriting at Key Stage 1 to aid fluency and speed in recording ideas;
- minimising the number of worksheets completed by pupils for recording work;
- broadening opportunities for pupils to write independently and creatively;
- developing pupils' abilities to self check and edit their work for improvements;
- ensuring that marking by teachers directly makes clear to pupils what is good in their work and what needs to get better.

Reference to these matters can be found in paragraphs 3,50, 51and 52.

Support pupils further in understanding the need for respect for each other, and of the impact of their actions and words on others by ensuring that;

- there is clearer guidance for staff, pupils and parents on the attitudes, values and behaviour which are acceptable in school;
- all pupils are left in no doubt about the expectations upon them;
- that there is absolute consistency by both teaching and non teaching staff in setting parameters for pupils and applying the guidance;
- the school regularly ensures that its equal opportunities policy is being applied;
- extend opportunities for pupils to explore practically their attitudes, feelings and relationships.

Reference to these matters can be found in paragraphs 6, 7, 9,10, 11and 31.

Develop a more systematic approach to the recording of all aspects of pupils' learning to ensure that:

- judgements about pupils' strengths and weaknesses on both academic progress and personal development are concisely formatted and quickly identifiable;
- the information recorded is purposeful and useful to teachers and other audiences as pupils move from class to class and school to school;
- there is scope to register changes in pupils' circumstances which may affect their learning potential;
- succinct judgements are recorded following analysis of tests and assessments for ease of future use;
- the information gathered is used to set relevant targets for individuals and groups of pupils to contribute to their progress and measure success.

Reference to these matters can be found in paragraphs 17, 32, and 38.

Review the time allocated for the Headteacher to fulfil her management role in order to:

- provide sufficient opportunity for critical reflection to secure future school improvement;
- effectively fulfil her role as special educational needs coordinator;
- use her expertise more widely in supporting initiatives across the school.

Reference to these matters can be found in paragraphs 35 and 38.

Use their best endeavours to secure improvements to the accommodation to safeguard:

- the teaching and learning of practical subjects, particularly within Class 2;
- the efficiency and effectiveness of school administration;
- Confidentiality of information.

Reference to these matters can be found in paragraphs 39.

Other minor weaknesses, which the school will want to address, can be found in paragraph numbers: 38, 61 and 72.

The governing body is responsible for drawing up an action plan within 40 working days of receiving the inspection report, showing how the school will tackle the improvements needed. This action plan will be circulated to all parents at the school.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
16	52	32	0	0	0	0

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	YR– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	62
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	7
Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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	8	2	10

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	7	8
	Girls	2	2	2
	Total	9	9	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90	90	100
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	7	8
	Girls	2	2	2
	Total	9	9	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90	90	100
	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	4	6	10

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	3	3	4
	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	9	9	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90	90	100
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	3	3	4
	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	9	9	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90	90	100
	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	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	100
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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)	3.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18:1
Average class size	21

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/9
	£
Total income	135988
Total expenditure	132651
Expenditure per pupil	2248
Balance brought forward from previous year	7547
Balance carried forward to next year	10884

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	62
Number of questionnaires returned	34

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	38	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	44	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	44	12	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	56	12	0	0
The teaching is good.	65	35	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	56	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	18	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	24	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	50	12	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	59	41	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	65	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	9	59	29	3	0

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

42. All pupils are admitted in September in the year in which they are five years old. They join the pupils in Class 1 which includes reception children and Year 1. The majority have already formed links with the school through the Satellite nursery provision which functions in the school but is not managed by it. Most pupils have attended some form of pre-school facility and their attainment on entry is broadly average. Parents feel very positive about the links with the school, the Headteacher's care during induction and the quality of teaching their children receive. The teachers make useful assessments of the children on entry and use these to group them appropriately. The quality of teaching for these young children is excellent as identified in more detail in the teaching section of this report.

43. A strong emphasis is placed on personal and social development, establishing routines and expectations so children may quickly learn to become independent. The children are encouraged to sit for increasing periods, listen to what others have to say and take their turns in speaking. This is necessary as some have not yet learned that at school they are one of many. Young children are shown how to use equipment and then expected to experiment for themselves. They concentrate very well overall, for example, when cutting out vegetables and fruit from magazines to identify which letter it starts. The children talk happily together while they work and most are keen to show others what to do if they need help. The teachers place high regard on developing pupils' personal and social skills of self-esteem, independence and concentration. They are patient, supportive but persistent enabling the children to meet the targets of the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the age of five.

44. The development of children's language and literacy skills is given very high profile and they make swift progress in their learning meeting the targets of the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the age of five. Most listen well but some still need further training. They are encouraged to join in class discussions and many can offer what they know about the story of 'Goldilocks' to contribute. Their progress in handling books, reading from left to right and using pictures to tell a story is very good. Most understand well that print carries meaning and can name letters, shape some when writing that are recognisable, and a few can write their own names. The higher attainers can already recognise many words by sight and copy the teacher's writing so that it is readable. They are learning the letters of the alphabet and the sounds each letter makes; they use this knowledge well when identifying which letter words begin with in matching words and pictures together. The teaching of basic skills of literacy excellent. Both teachers use subject vocabulary very well especially in literacy, mathematics and science.

45. The children's mathematical skills are progressing very well. They take part in the structure of the numeracy hour and most sustain concentration well. The children have learned various counting rhymes to five and some to ten. They recognise most numbers to ten and some can do this in sequence. A few recognise numbers beyond ten. They are learning to form the numerals correctly and complete simple worksheets where they are required to map numbers to objects. In the 'shop' they handle coins and some can identify their values correctly. These young children join in with simple mental recall activities during the numeracy and they are learning a lot through listening and reinforcement. The teaching of numeracy is excellent and enables the Desirable Learning Outcomes to be met by the age of five. The teachers use a creative approach to capture the pupils' imaginations for example, when using a number line up to twenty to count forwards and backwards the emphasis was on active participation by the children.

46. The children's knowledge and understanding of the world are good. They have learned about patterns in nature from studying wood, and have drawn carefully flowers and fruits from observation. The finished drawings are very good quality. Most can name the parts of the body and parts of a plant. The children have a very good knowledge about foods which are healthy and those which are not so good for us. Parents are very appreciative of this and commented on it at the pre-inspection meeting. Most children can name a broad range of fruit and vegetables, describe their colours, texture and some have experience of their taste. The children have been introduced well to information technology and their progress is good. They can use a mouse to select objects on the screen and operate a tape recorder to follow text in a story. The classroom displays are focused on encouraging the children to use their senses and children are encouraged to bring their own contributions to them and do so enthusiastically. The teaching of this aspect is very good and children meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the age of five.

47. No physical activities were observed using large equipment or apparatus. However, the children are quite adept at manipulating small tools to write, paint and draw. They move around the classroom sensibly and are aware of their own and others' space. A group of pupils were observed cutting and sticking and they were, due to the very good teaching careful about the task and quite accurate in their execution of it. There is a weakness in resources which diminishes the children's scope to develop gross motor skills which are overall adequate by the age of five. Firstly, the hall is small and does not allow for much freedom of movement and the range of construction equipment both large and small is not enough. There are no push and pull toys for outside play and teachers are somewhat frustrated by this to develop gross motor skills and support scientific exploration suitably. Construction equipment is not adequate and restricts the children from fully meeting the Desirable Learning Outcomes in this respect.

48. The classroom has water and sand tray areas for pupils to experiment with their senses. They make good progress in painting, printing and drawing towards meeting the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the age of five. The children made good progress in their learning in selecting colours, and they remembered some things about the work of Matisse, the artist whose work they were emulating. The classroom has a shop set up to sell fruit and vegetables and the children enjoy a great deal the opportunity to take on the role of shopkeeper and customer, weighing and wrapping the goods and collecting the money. No musical activity was observed but is very well planned for by the teacher. The classteacher is the music coordinator so the children benefit from this expertise although no teaching was observed.

ENGLISH

49. The school's national test results for 11 year old pupils attaining at the expected Level 4 or above were well above average with 40 per cent of pupils attaining at the higher Level 5. When all levels that pupils attained were taken into account and average point scores calculated the results were high in comparison with all schools and with similar ones. This picture reflects the trends over time where the English scores have been consistently above what all other schools achieve. In 1998 the school's results were in the top five per cent nationally but this has not been sustained. However, too much should not be read into this as the cohort size is small and minor fluctuations from year to year are to be expected. The results in national tests for seven year old pupils attaining at the expected Level 2 or above were also above average in reading and writing. The pupils' performance in reading was particularly impressive with 80 per cent gaining at the higher level 3. This was not so in writing where although nine out of ten pupils gained Level 2 and 50 per cent of these were at the better Level 2a. No pupil attained at the higher Level 3. Nationally only eight per cent of pupils gain a Level 3 in writing and it is fair to say that given the small numbers of pupils taking the tests at Bridgemere, less than one child would have needed to attain Level 3 to meet with the national average. Both boys and girls perform well above the national average. Girls did slightly outperform boys by the age of 11, which reflects the national trend that boys of this age do not usually do as well as girls.

50. In the work seen during the inspection the above results are well reflected and overall pupils attain better than expected nationally by the end of both key stages. Pupils attain above what is usually found in speaking, reading and technical writing by the age of 11. Although there are some individual examples of better quality narrative writing overall most pupils attain as expected in this aspect. Handwriting and presentation is generally of high quality. Listening ranges from very good to poor but is satisfactory overall. By the age of seven, most pupils can answer questions in sentences posed by the teacher. They listen carefully during shared text work and when the teacher is explaining work. Most have the skills to explain their work clearly and to share ideas. The pupils' knowledge of phonics to help them read and spell is good. They can recognise key words and small words within larger ones. They have a good grasp of letter blends. Many pupils use full stops and capital letters correctly when writing sentences. They sound out the letters of a word or they know how to use simple wordlists to locate what they need. Pupils use writing to label types of clothes worn during different weather conditions, and to describe how a conker feels to touch. Most can retell a story. The level of detail in their writing and the use of interesting vocabulary are limited. There is very little evidence that pupils know how to use a joined script by the age of seven to aid fluency and speed in recording ideas. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' listening skills are variable but satisfactory overall. Most speak articulately to answer questions when reading text and to pose questions. They read a suitable range of texts well. The quality of pupils' narrative and extended writing is satisfactory with limited examples of good quality work; for example, the poems which pupils have written to describe colours. Pupils have all of the technical skills and knowledge about planning and drafting but their imaginations are limited. There is scope to put a greater focus on this aspect of pupils' writing to raise standards higher. When writing, pupils' presentation is high quality and most can spell well, they turn readily to dictionaries and know how to use the spellchecker on the computer. There are a number of examples of word processing to support their work in English and the other subjects, which show that pupils have developed some skills in communication technology. Their ability to use punctuation and transfer this to their everyday work is well above average. They write for a broad range of purposes. For example, to research and describe facts about the Victorian era in history, to complete a range of standard English exercises, to write factual accounts such as reporting about the Eclipse, facts about the sinking of the Titanic and when writing an imaginary police report. Standards in writing could be even higher at both key stages particularly in handwriting at Key Stage 1 and in narrative writing across the school.

51. Pupils use their literacy skills well in the other subjects to read, research and record their ideas. However, at times they complete worksheets and this diminishes their opportunities.

52. At the time of the last inspection standards were judged to be in line with national expectations at the end of each key stage and pupils' progress was sound overall. Therefore, standards have risen since the last inspection although one common feature remains. The previous report highlighted that 'pupils are slow to learn a joined style of handwriting and this prevents them from gaining higher grades in the Key Stage 1 national tests'. This is still the case and is highlighted for action by this report.

53. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was very good at both key stages. Teachers know their subject well and directly teach subject skills very well indeed, which is the reason that pupils' progress in lesson is almost always at least good across all ability ranges. These are very busy, hardworking teachers. They do not waste time and ensure that the lessons flow at a pace which pupils can sustain but with a high expectation for performance and output of work. Not all pupils listen well and many speak out of turn. There are examples in both key stages of pupils who clamour to make their opinion heard regardless of whom is speaking and what they are saying. Teachers are vigilant in not tolerating this but nevertheless at times the pupils' own attitudes hinder their own and others' progress.

54. In Key Stage 1 the teachers' persistence ensures pupils remain on task and attentive to improve their speaking and listening skills. For example, when sharing a non-fiction 'big book' during literacy hour, pupils improve their learning in listening, speaking and reading skills prompted by the teacher's direct questioning and request to listen carefully and answer in sentences. *'What kind of book is this?' 'What does the cover tell us?'* Pupils make clear responses and reply that *'It is a new book, a big book with information in it, it's about 'Keeping Healthy' because it says so on the cover'*. The teacher then profitably uses these responses to explore what sort of information the book might contain and prompts the pupils to search for clues. The teacher capitalises very well on the pupils' interests and introduces a range of reading cues such as *'Look at the contents page, look at the picture, look at what letter the word starts with, can you spot any sounds we know?'* It is this thorough approach to using every opportunity to take the pupils forward in their learning, which is at the heart of the teaching. In another lesson, the excellent teaching by the teacher job sharing the class, builds well on what pupils have learned previously by broadening the range of activities used. The teacher successfully assesses how much the pupils have remembered about information books and moves the learning forward to compare these with different styles of narrative writing using a range of books on the theme of 'Goldilocks and the three bears'. The teacher commands the pupils' attention and accepts no nonsense from individuals who want attention for themselves, but carefully and cleverly involves them in the learning. The text is well chosen, allows pupils to use their own knowledge of the sequence of a story and a very good amount of time is spent in reinforcing and teaching letter sounds, blends and phonics to support reading and writing. Before the pupils settle to work the teacher gains the attention of all to remind them of rules for writing sentences. A particular point is made about not using 'and then' repeatedly. A Year 1 pupil says *'Yes, when you think of 'and then' think of the next word instead and use that after a full stop.'* Resources are very well prepared, effective use is made of other adults and the teacher employs information technology in a variety of ways to reinforce the learning. Pupils listen to a story and follow the text in a book and they complete a range of activities using the mouse and arrow keys to identify initial letters and whole words.

55. In Key Stage 2, the teaching is overall very good with some teaching, which is good. As in Key Stage 1 the major strength is high expectation for attention, no time wasting, pupils listening and getting on with the tasks. All work is carefully matched to the range of ability and this is significant in enabling learning to move on at a pace, which challenges pupils but does not daunt

them. In the cross key stage class the teacher organises the pupils as well as she is able in the cramped conditions for shared reading. Some pupils lose attention because of this but are quickly drawn back to focus. The theme is 'Myths and Legends' and initially very good attention is given to the pupils recapping what they know about the differences between myths and legends. This work links in capitally with the class geography topic on India. When asked to predict what might happen, in order to develop reading skills, the pupils give quite complex responses. They are as ever, keen to make their ideas heard but the teacher uses positive statements to focus on those who wait their turn and put up their hand. Word meanings are explored and clarified, pupils' phonic knowledge is built upon and used to decode unknown words. Pupils have clearly understood the theme and observe that *'We don't know for certain that this story is true because it has been passed down over the centuries and might have been changed'*. The teacher introduces the notion of compound words very clearly and uses examples from the text to reinforce this; a game grasps the pupils' interest and reinforces their understanding and knowledge. Many pupils are quite constructively critical in commenting on whether a word is correct but a minority are rude and have little care for others' feelings. The plenary session rounds the lesson off well, checking on what pupils' have understood or not. An important point is that the teacher recognises the pupils need more time and has already planned to provide it later in the day so that the impetus of the learning is not lost. The oldest pupils build very well on all that they have learned lower down the school because the teacher's high expectations do not change. Discipline is firm but caring in this class. This is necessary as some pupils lack an awareness of social graces at times. The literacy hour is well adapted to the suit the learning needs of pupils and to focus for sufficient time to pursue issues in depth. This must be a contributory factor to the quality of pupils' understanding about their work and is a strength of the teaching. Very useful teaching points about fluency and expression are made when pupils read text aloud and the importance of taking account of punctuation is highlighted. The oldest pupils focus very intently when listening to the poignant story of Prince Llewelyn and his dog, Gelert and readily answer technical or comprehension questions but only a few show the emotion which might be expected.

56. Overall in both key stages it is the high quality teaching and expectations focused on skills and regular reinforcement married with careful planning based on assessment of what pupils already know which contributes most significantly to the good standards.

57. The subject is well managed and the coordinator has carried out an audit and reviewed the progress of the implementation of the literacy hour. The delivery of English meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Resources are adequate but there is ample scope to extend both fiction and non-fiction reading material as funding allows.

MATHEMATICS

58. The results of the 1999 national tests for 11 year olds in are very high. Against all schools nationally, and against schools which are similar in intake Bridgemere School is well above average. Both boys and girls perform equally well. Results at Key Stage 1 were equally as impressive; however, boys outperformed the girls, which goes against the national trend. The school is in the top five per cent nationally for attainment in mathematics.

59. The inspection evidence shows that the majority of older pupils are attaining above the national average and are on course to do well in the national tests for 11 year olds. Pupils have a good grasp of number and are extremely competent with the four rules of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They use mental recall strategies effectively and respond with speed and accuracy during the daily challenge of mental arithmetic. They have a good knowledge and understanding of standard units of measurement. They use their literacy and numeracy skills well in solving problems involving space and shape, having a good breadth of mathematical language

on which to call on. Their data-handling skills are well developed and they use them effectively to collate, record and analyse information for example, in science whilst investigating materials and their different properties. However, their use of information technology to support and extend their work is limited. Pupils of all abilities successfully apply their knowledge and understanding to investigate problems and to further improve levels of application across all aspects of the subject. At Key Stage 1, pupils are attaining in line with national expectations, with examples of higher attainment in number, particularly in mental recall of mathematical tables and number bonds. Pupils have a sound working knowledge of all aspects of the subject. Pupils in Class 1 can count to 20 and can sequence numbers when they are mixed up. Pupils in Year 2, are able to provide number bonds in order to make up 20, such as $14 + 6$ or $7 + 13$. They have a good idea of place value and understand how to add together three different units such as $5 + 6 + 7 = 18$. They know which numbers are odd and even, and the higher attaining pupils can sequence numbers to 100.

60. The good levels of attainment achieved by the pupils within both key stages reflect the teachers' careful work in the analysis and interpretation of data from the national tests and internal on-going assessment procedures. This thorough analysis and detailed planning enables the teachers to match work to the needs of the pupils whatever their age or ability. The school is making good progress in developing tracking systems for monitoring the success of individual pupils. Lessons are well organised and managed. Pupils settle quickly to their tasks and are secure in the routines of the numeracy hour. Time is of an essence and results in pupils generally making good progress. The pupils respond well to the teachers' high expectations and enjoy the challenge presented to them through the variety of graded activities. They work well both independently and with each other and are prepared to wait their turn for shared resources. The teachers' skilful questioning during lessons and particularly in the plenary sessions has a positive effect on standards and the development of the pupils' speaking and listening skills.

61. Overall the quality of teaching is very good and throughout the school pupils respond well and have a positive attitude to the subject. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented successfully. Work is well matched to the needs of the pupils with special educational needs who along with the higher attaining pupils generally make good progress. The school is aware that focusing their efforts on the numeracy strategy has caused a slight restriction in the range and level of challenge being presented to the pupils in the way of investigative mathematics. This is to be the central focus of next termly subject review meeting.

62. The school has made very good progress in raising standards of attainment since the last inspection, when they were in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. The quality of teaching, which was good overall, is now very good.

63. The subject is well managed and effectively organised throughout the school and delivery meets statutory requirements. The part time coordinator has a thorough knowledge and understanding of how the subject is being taught and is aware of the strengths and aspects of the numeracy hour which require further evaluation and review. Resources are adequate for the delivery of the subject. Future resourcing is determined by agreed budgetary decisions and is reviewed regularly by the Headteacher, staff and governors in the process of strategic planning.

SCIENCE

64. Standards of attainment in the 1999 national tests for 11 year olds were very high compared with all other schools nationally and with similar schools. The school is in the top five per cent nationally for science. At Key Stage 1, 100 per cent of pupils attained Level 2 or above which was well above national expectation.

65. The inspection evidence shows that pupils at the end of both key stages attain above national expectation. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 understand and use fair testing procedures well, for instance when investigating whether light travels in a straight line. They have a good knowledge and understanding of natural and physical phenomena and they can relate their work in class to other situations. For example, the girls were able to use their knowledge of air pressure and electrical circuits in successfully following and carrying out instructions to develop CAD and CAM activities using computers, during their visit to their partner high school. Whilst the boys were confident in making predictions in the changes that would occur to the separate ingredients of their cakes after being placed in the oven for the directed amount of time. The pupils also made good use of their reading skills to follow instructions, which had been compiled for secondary aged pupils. During discussions they recalled information about light sources, sound and materials, have a working knowledge of the solar system and the classification of liquids, solids and gases. Pupils in Year 2 with support conduct investigations into the use of electricity, classification of materials and the making of different sounds. They are able to name and understand the function of the major organs of the human body. From first hand, practical activities, they understand the conditions required to support life in plants, They know the requirements for their own healthy eating and this is actively supported by the school cook, who prepares and serves a healthy diet daily. This initiative by the school is heartily applauded by the parents. The youngest pupils are able to recognise and classify objects made of similar material such as wooden objects within the classroom.

66. The high attainment is directly related to the quality of planning and preparation of lessons and the direct teaching of subject skills within a clear framework of investigative activities. Pupils are well motivated by the creative and enthusiastic approach to the subject by the teachers. Such as when the youngest pupils were presented with a wide range of interesting artefacts made of wood as an introduction to materials and their properties. Pupils enjoy the practical activities, listen carefully to instructions and show initiative and responsibility in the selection and use of materials and apparatus. The teachers provide an appropriate balance of teacher directed activities and pupil determined enquiries. For example, when pupils in Class 2 investigated shadows and ended up in shaking hands by shadow movements. Pupils in both key stages use their literacy and numeracy skills well in reading instructions, recording their findings and in analysing data. However, the use made of information technology to support the process is limited.

67. Standards have improved since the last inspection especially at Key Stage 1. The overall quality of teaching is now very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and understanding of the aspects they teach. They have high expectations of the pupils. The policy statement and scheme of work driven by the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA) documentation, which was an issue in the last report, effectively safeguards continuity and progression. The coordinator has a sound knowledge of the pupils' attainment and progress throughout the school even though she has only recently taken over responsibility for the subject. Tracking systems to monitor pupils' progress are working effectively and are having a positive effect on standards. Resources are adequate for the delivery of the subject and good use is made of the local environment, educational visits and the facilities of the partner high school. The size of Class 2 hinders the organisation of practical work and puts a burden on the teacher in the amount of preparation and management needed for the investigative aspects of the subject.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

68. Pupils do not attain as expected nationally in information technology by the ages of seven or 11. Whilst teachers plan a range of experiences, recently allied to the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA) scheme of work pupils have not had systematic teaching over their time in primary school to acquire the knowledge and skills in the subject necessary to fulfil the National Curriculum requirements. Little direct teaching time is allocated to the subject although teachers are beginning to recognise this as a strategy which needs to be incorporated if pupils are to build up their knowledge. Most work is linked to word processing in other subjects and the use of the computer for solving number and reading activities.

69. Examples of work which show pupils are making some progress in their learning include, pupils in Year R and 1 practising skills linked to word recognition. The teacher had set up the activity, which was well matched to the pupils' abilities and they were successful in using the mouse to select objects on the screen. Other pupils are able to operate a tape recorder and one young child knew how to extract the tape and turn it over and then set it to play the other side. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have regular access to this type of activity. In the Year 2 to 4 class pupils practise tables skills using the computer and the teacher in here has begun to have whole class lessons to teach skills. Older pupils have used the computer as a spellchecker, for word processing, to record and interrogate data, some work using a program called DART to measure angles and a small of work using spreadsheets. Pupils also use a CD-ROM to research information in history and some work linked to geography. However, their knowledge and understanding of control and modelling, gathering, handling and interrogating data, using spreadsheets extensively and designing procedures is limited. Pupils are not having sufficient regular access, the subject is not given enough time, the school's resources are inadequate to deliver the full curriculum and overall it is not meeting statutory requirements. Standards in the subject have declined against what was said in the last inspection report but to be fair the curriculum requirements have changed significantly since then.

Other subjects

70. The focus of the inspection was literacy and numeracy. This meant that very little teaching was seen in the other subjects. One art and one history lesson were observed. However, scrutiny of work, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of teachers' planning and assessments enables the judgement to be made that pupils by the age of 11 have covered a suitable range of work, allied to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study in art, history, geography, music and physical education. They often achieve well in art. Overall standards have remained the same in the other subjects since the last inspection except in design and technology where they have declined. Brief examples, which reflect the available evidence follow.

ART

71. Only one lesson was observed and the teacher had a good knowledge of the artist 'Matisse' and his techniques which was well communicated to the pupils. There was very good direct teaching of skill, application of paint, printing techniques and the discipline of selecting only one colour at a time. The learning was good, pupils were enthusiastic but disciplined in selecting and applying the paint. They developed the skill of making repeating patterns well. Other work in the classroom shows that pupils have made progress in their learning using inkpads for printing, cutting, free painting and sticking. In Key Stage 1 pupils extend their skills to express ideas and feelings and illustrate work in other curriculum areas for example, designing calligrams and in their work on India. There is a highly structured approach to the development of skills in Key Stage 2. Pupils have experimented widely with artistic styles such as Turner, Picasso and Van Gogh and there is clear evidence of their ability to use similar techniques. By the time the pupils

leave the school they have experienced a good breadth of learning to gain knowledge and understanding and they achieve as well as generally found and at times better.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

72. In design and technology, by the age of 11 there are gaps in what pupils know, understand and can do. Pupils have some sporadic experiences but the planned programme is not systematically covered in depth. The pupils' skills in making are sound but they do not have a good base knowledge in the design process nor do they regularly evaluate and seek to improve their work, draw plans or consider the implications of using a range of materials to suit the task. This is because insufficient attention has been given to the subject. There was hardly any work to judge learning and achievement by. The subject has been planned for in the long and medium term but is not systematically taught. There is a weakness in resources particularly construction equipment for all ages. Overall it is judged by the inspection and acknowledged by the school that the subject is an area for improvement and that pupils do not achieve as usually found by the end of either key stage. The oldest pupils have had some useful experiences linked to work at the partner high school related to food technology and whilst this is beneficial it is not sufficient to develop the range of skills. There are plans to develop these inter-school links further.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

73. These subjects are taught on a rolling programme and geography was not a major focus for teaching during the inspection. Scrutiny of past work and discussions with pupils shows that they have a sound knowledge and understanding of people, places and events related to the present and the past and make systematic steps in their learning using the National Curriculum Programmes of Study as a basis for their work. Their mapping skills are quite good. In a history lesson in the cross key stage class the quality of teaching was very good. The teacher recapitulated well on the previous lesson to assess what pupils had remembered. The theme was Egypt. The pupils were challenged to use their literacy skills, sequencing events and writing a newspaper article about the death of a 'pharaoh'. They made useful gains in using their reading skills to find information. Pupils were able to read their captions aloud with confidence and place them correctly against the appropriate picture in the sequence. By the end of the lesson pupils understood that being a pharaoh was rather like being a god. When all evidence is taken into account pupils achieve as usually found by the time they leave the school in both subjects and recorded work shows that they use their literacy skills regularly; some overuse of commercial worksheets diminishes the impact of this. There are well written policies in place and the school plans to use the QCA schemes of work. Resources are only adequate. The school makes good use of visits to places of historical and geographical interest, for example, Beeston Castle.

MUSIC

74. No music lessons were seen but planning shows pupils have the opportunity to listen to, and make music regularly. No overall judgements can be made about achievement or progress in learning. There is a policy and scheme of work in place to safeguard continuity and progress in teaching and learning. The pupils sang well in assembly and they showed their ability to sing in the round, which required considerable concentration. Recorder lessons are available to all pupils and the quality of playing in assembly was good. In addition, peripatetic music teachers visit the school weekly to support individuals with keyboard playing and wind instruments. The school involves pupils in musical concerts both in and out of school, pupils take part in singing in drama productions and they regularly use physical education. All of these activities suggest that pupils have access to a balanced curriculum. In music, they sing well and have a range of experiences using instruments. Some are able to perform well playing the recorder in assembly.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

75. Physical education was not observed but teachers' planning covers all aspects including swimming. Pupils have shared their enthusiasm for working towards gaining their certificates. They also talk about the range of team games they play and the after school club for football which involves them in competing against other schools. The hall is far too small in size for the safe delivery of gymnastics but the school makes other arrangements to ensure pupils have access to the curriculum by using a nearby facility. Resources are adequate and there is a good range of small equipment through the Top Sport initiative. All indicators suggest that pupils have access to a broad and reasonably well balanced curriculum within the limitations of the accommodation.