

INSPECTION REPORT

BANSTEAD INFANT SCHOOL

Banstead

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 124936

Headteacher: Mrs. Sue Clinch

Reporting inspector: Mr. Robert Greatrex
19924

Dates of inspection: 27th – 30th March 2000

Inspection number: 194684

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Horseshoe Banstead Surrey
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Roy Bedford
Date of previous inspection:	March 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a larger than average community infant school for boys and girls from 4 to 7 years of age. It has 235 boys and girls on roll. Overall, pupils' attainment on entry to the school is very good. The school has 34 pupils identified as having special educational needs, a figure lower than the national average. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Banstead Infant School is a very effective school. Pupils achieve very high standards because they are given a very good start in the early years' classes, which is built upon effectively in subsequent classes. Teaching is very good; the work given is demanding and carefully matched to each pupil's level. The headteacher, governors and staff work well together, both to maintain the present high standards and to constantly strive to improve. The areas for improvement exemplify how carefully and accurately the school monitors itself. In the school development plan, information technology is already identified for improvement. Prior to the inspection, lunchtime arrangements were identified for discussion at the next governors' meeting. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Results in National Curriculum tests are very high, reflecting the school's commitment to enabling all pupils to make very good progress and achieve high standards.
- The quality of teaching is very good and staff constantly look to improve their work.
- The headteacher is an effective leader who is very well supported by governors and staff in managing the school, evaluating its effectiveness and planning for the future.
- Provision for the under-fives is very well managed and they receive a very good start to their education.
- Pupils are very keen to learn; their very positive attitudes are an important factor in the good progress they make.
- The support that parents give to their children's learning, both in school and at home, is an important factor in how well they do in school.

What could be improved

- Pupils have limited access to computers and consequently make less progress than they might in this area.
- Some parents are unhappy about the arrangements the school makes for lunchtime.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Good progress has been made since the previous inspection report in 1996. Particularly impressive is the way in which the school used the report as a useful tool for self-review and improvement. All key issues have been tackled or investigated appropriately. High standards have been maintained and opportunities planned for pupils to pursue their own lines of enquiry. Marking throughout the school is consistent and more useful to pupils. Cost effectiveness is measured better. Some thought has gone into improving lunchtime, but more remains to be done. Professional advice has been taken and followed regarding the pond.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 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	A*	A	A	A	above average B
science	A*	A*	A	A	average C
					below average D
					well below average E

Standards reached by seven-year-olds in the 1999 national tests in reading were very high, and in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. In the equivalent tests in writing and mathematics, standards were well above average. Over the last three years, high standards have been reached and maintained. In the assessments done by their teachers, pupils also reached well above average standards in science.

Challenging targets are set for reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress towards them is carefully checked and, when necessary, additional support given.

Standards in literacy and numeracy are high. Great emphasis is placed upon the importance of these skills and staff and parents work in close partnership to enable pupils to fulfil their potential. Standards in information technology, and the progress pupils make, are satisfactory despite pupils' limited access, largely because pupils learn quickly from the good teaching they receive. The work pupils were doing during the inspection confirms these high standards and very good rate of progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to their school and their work are very good. They have a thirst for knowledge and show interest and enthusiasm in all they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is exemplary.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very positive and pupils willingly take responsibility. All work well together.
Attendance	Attendance is good and pupils generally enjoy coming to school.

Partly because of the very good procedures for preparing and introducing them to school life, the four-year-olds settle quickly and happily in their new environment. Staff take the trouble to make sure they feel at home.

Pupils mix, work and play together very well. When working in pairs or groups, they listen to one another, consider each other's views and willingly share. If they see a class mate struggling, they readily offer to help.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	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.

The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teaching was very good in half of the lessons seen, and excellent in approximately one in twenty. Three-quarters were good or better, and all teaching was satisfactory or better. The proportion of very good teaching is particularly high.

In the most effective lessons, teachers provide stimulating and thought-provoking activities that fully engage pupils' interest. Consequently, pupils want to learn. Hands shoot up in response to the well thought out questions. Teachers' questions make pupils think. In these lessons there is a real sense of purpose. No time is wasted. While lessons move with good pace, teachers recognise when pupils need longer to fully understand. Pupils' success is celebrated with an encouraging smile and teachers convey a real sense of enjoyment in what they are doing.

Literacy and numeracy are both taught very well. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is strong. All elements of the national strategies for these lessons are taught effectively. The teachers analyse what they do, and constantly strive to do better. The needs of all pupils in the mixed-age class are met, largely through careful planning and skillful teaching. Work planned is invariably of a level right for each pupil, based upon how well they have done previously. Whether a pupil struggles in a subject or finds it comparatively easy, their needs are clearly identified and this information is used wisely.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is very carefully planned. Literacy and numeracy are given high priority while a broad and balanced curriculum is maintained.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision fully meets the needs of these pupils. Good use of assessment enables the school to quickly recognise pupils' needs. Support is then carefully and effectively targeted to enable pupils to make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision is made for pupils' moral development, and much is done to enable even the very youngest to begin to understand what they may expect of others, and others may expect of them, in the school community. Provision for pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils well and there are good arrangements for child protection.

The school gives good emphasis to literacy and numeracy, whilst still providing a rich, varied and stimulating variety of tasks, activities and events. However, pupils have limited opportunities to practise or use information technology skills.

The school constantly checks on how well pupils are doing, and this is very beneficial to the very good progress they make. Attendance and punctuality are monitored closely. Very good use is made of assessment to decide what pupils need to learn next.

A real sense of community is engendered in assemblies where the school allows pupils to choose where to sit, perhaps with friends, brothers or sisters, or near a teacher from a previous class. However, at lunchtimes opportunities for social development are more limited.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership ensures a very clear educational direction for the school. The headteacher has tremendous drive and purpose. The deputy headteacher leads the early years very well. Senior staff are proactive and influential in their subjects and areas of responsibility.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Duties are taken very seriously. Within very clear systems and procedures they use their individual expertise very effectively. Governors contribute a great deal to the school's success.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has a culture of constantly striving to improve. Within this positive climate, staff willingly share successes and concerns with the intention of raising standards and improving the quality of education provide further.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The resources available to the school are well used.

It is largely through purposeful leadership that high standards have been reached and maintained. The headteacher gives tremendous drive to the school. Staff and governors share her clear vision of the sort of school this should be. Everyone's talents are recognised and utilised. Staff and pupils have high expectations of their success. The ethos engendered is at the heart of both the school's past success and current achievements. Staff are deployed effectively. Children under five have additional support for only about half of the week. Although these children receive consistently very good teaching, when this support is available to the teacher they achieve more. The school applies the principles of best value well.

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 school has high expectations of their children. • Teaching is good. • The school helps their children become mature and responsible. • Behaviour is good. • The school is well led and managed. • Their children make good progress at school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside school. • The school's expectation that their children should take school meals.

Parents overwhelmingly support the school and appreciate the very good education their children receive. With the exception of the question relating to activities outside lessons, at least nine parents in every ten who responded to the questionnaire tended to agree or strongly agreed with every question. In the case of nearly all of those stated above, all parents agreed. However, a small number of parents are unhappy about the school's expectation that their children will take school meals. Furthermore, some parents feel the school does not listen sympathetically to their concerns. Inspectors believe the range of activities provided in school hours is good with many enriching opportunities, and the provision outside lessons is typical of an infant school. Inspectors support parents' views about lunchtime.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Results in the National Curriculum tests are very high, reflecting the school's commitment to enabling all pupils to make very good progress and achieve high standards.

1. Excellent standards are reached in reading, largely due to staff expertise and a shared commitment by both staff and parents to maintain this as the highest priority. Every opportunity is taken to develop and practise reading skills in the widest range of activities. Many relevant and stimulating real-life writing tasks enthuse pupils and lead to good quality discussion and writing. Staff carefully maintain the balance that ensures pupils develop technical skills alongside their creativity. Reading and writing are used effectively to support learning across the school.

2. Pupils have very good understanding of number, and show good mental recall and dexterity in how they go about solving problems. In subjects such as science they apply their knowledge well. They make sensible estimations. Young pupils are able to recognise that, when a programmable floor robot travels about half the distance they require, they should double the number entered in order to succeed.

The quality of teaching is very good and staff constantly look to improve their work.

3. Teachers think deeply about their work, share ideas and always look to improve. Thoughtful discussion followed evaluation of the recently introduced national initiatives. Teachers observed one another, sharing expertise, experience and concerns. As a result adaptations have been tried with the clear intention of making the most of teaching time. Positive pupils' attitudes and well-focused teaching lead to much very good learning, particularly in shared reading and writing sessions. Quick-fire questions begin most three-part numeracy lessons, clearly setting the scene for the high quality teaching and learning that follows. Mental mathematics is used to encourage problem-solving. In the most effective teaching, the depth of thought behind discussions of the various methods used is impressive.

4. The needs of all pupils are fully met, largely through very good use of assessment of one lesson in planning the next. Pupils with special educational needs have tasks tailored closely to their needs. Any additional support focuses on specific difficulties and they make good progress. Equally, the most able pupils are catered for, and this is a good improvement since the previous inspection. In an excellent science lesson, pupils were able to plan how they could carry out an investigation using a helpful planning 'frame'. At just the right time they were given the subtle prompts necessary to help them succeed. When the investigation was successfully completed, they compared what they had found out with what they had predicted, and understood the need to revise their thinking. Finally they were challenged to use what they had learnt in a new investigation. Through all these parts of the lesson pupils were asked to use and apply their knowledge and practise good problem-solving techniques. They learnt to persevere and consider a range of options.

5. In the most effective lessons, tasks are often practical and follow a thought-provoking question from the teacher. In the youngest class, discussions are skillfully handled so everyone is drawn in and given the opportunity to explain, for example, what is special to them. Teachers continually challenge pupils to use what they know and think

through problems and situations. In these lessons learning is fun and teachers often create and fully exploit situations which engender wonder in pupils, for example when they first see a paper clip, controlled by a magnet, move across a piece of paper.

6. The planning process is a useful tool that uses assessment to ensure tasks are matched to pupils' needs. All staff, including classroom assistants, play a part in discussions about the day's achievements and how they should be built upon.

7. The present organisation creates a gender imbalance in some classes. Teachers recognise this and invariably work hard to enable all pupils to participate fully and succeed in the task.

8. Staff commitment is very high. For example, they give up much of their own time to lead guided reading groups. They are regularly seen working productively with pupils at lunchtime.

The headteacher is an effective leader who is very well supported by governors and staff in managing the school, evaluating its effectiveness and planning for the future.

9. The headteacher is at the centre of the school's drive to maintain what has already been achieved and seek to build upon it. She demonstrates enormous drive and commitment.

10. Nothing is done without a purpose. Every procedure, every policy is of benefit to the efficient and effective operation of the school. Well defined procedures give everyone a clear understanding of their own responsibilities and the roles of others. For example, the annual monitoring cycle gives headteacher, staff and governors the information they need to enable them to check the school is working efficiently and effectively. Everyone knows and agrees the focus of any monitoring, thereby ensuring the benefit can be maximised. A common format, with which everyone is familiar, is followed. This helps make feedback useful to all parties.

11. Governors' involvement is of very high standard. Training is seen as a high priority and governors have a very good grasp of their roles and an equally clear understanding of current educational thinking. They work closely with subject managers, for example in literacy and information technology, to help school improvement. Their clearly defined roles successfully enable them to monitor both the academic and pastoral development of pupils.

12. Parents are offered a real say in their children's education in a number of ways. An innovative approach is the meeting to discuss the school development plan, held annually and including a number of parents. A representative of the parents' association fills a place on the governing body. In these ways the school keeps abreast of parental thinking and views, and acknowledges their close partnership. This is reflected in the overwhelmingly positive response to the parents' questionnaire. However, a small proportion of parents find the school difficult to approach when they have concerns about school policies, and feel they are not listened to sympathetically.

13. Expertise is fully utilised. For example, the knowledge of the information technology manager is used to encourage and enable staff to improve their own competence as a prerequisite of successful teaching. Training is accompanied by helpful guides to each aspect. This is very effective. When a program "crashes", for example, staff are able to remedy the problem and proceed with the lesson quickly.

14. Initiatives are introduced thoughtfully to ensure that they impact positively upon pupils' learning. A detailed plan is drawn up, incorporating all that needs to be done. Training is rightly seen as crucial.

15. An important factor in the very good standards pupils reach is the good links maintained with the main feeder playgroups and nurseries, and the junior school. A smooth transition is achieved, so that pupils settle readily and learning is continuous. Where possible, staff from the two schools share training and this is seen as another very useful aid to pupils' learning.

Provision for the under-fives is very well managed and they receive a very good start to their education.

16. By the time children join the school, staff know them well and this is very beneficial. Visits to home, playgroups and nurseries, and children's visits to school, give much valuable information. Children settle in quickly and begin to develop the positive attitudes towards their new environment that stay with them through the school. Baseline assessment confirms strengths and relative weaknesses, and the school's policy of immediately intervening to identify and support needs pays dividends.

17. Activities are carefully planned and encourage learning through relevant tasks. Work on nursery rhyme themes gives the geographical maps and routes for a programmable robot to follow. A doctor's surgery is used to encourage writing of prescriptions.

18. Teaching in adult-led activities is very effective. Stimulating activities arouse curiosity and interest, skillful questioning engenders motivation and builds upon children's instinctive eagerness to learn. At other times, well structured play activities encourage children to make choices and develop independence and social skills.

19. Teaching is particularly successful when the qualified assistant is working alongside the teacher. They work well as a team and ensure pupils progress at a particularly good rate. At other times, although teaching remains of very good quality, learning can take place at a slower rate. Although accommodation is less than ideal, staff work hard to overcome the shortcomings.

Pupils are very keen to learn; their very positive attitudes are an important factor in the good progress they make.

20. Pupils demonstrate equally positive attitudes when working with teachers, classroom assistants and volunteers. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and their teacher are excellent. Parents give many examples of pupils' unhappiness when they are not able to go to school.

21. Pupils enter the classroom ready to learn. They concentrate, try their best and behave impeccably. Even the youngest recognise when a classmate is struggling, and offer to help. They have a thirst for knowledge and do much to enable the lesson to flow smoothly, for example listening patiently to one another's points of view in discussions. Teachers, too, are listened to carefully and pupils are very keen to answer questions. The atmosphere created by staff encourages pupils to try. Perseverance and concentration are very good and much is achieved through pupils' determination to succeed.

The support that parents give to their children's learning, both in school and at home, is an important factor in how well they do in school.

22. Many parents and other volunteers do much to support the school. They are deployed effectively to guide small groups of pupils with tasks that may otherwise not receive such close support. This is beneficial to pupils' learning, for example as pupils are helped to read and select library books or use the programmable robot. Skills are used to good effect. The curriculum is enriched by such activities as stitching and weaving.

23. At home, parents are fully involved in supporting their children's education. There is good, day by day communication between parent and teacher so that both are fully aware of all issues relating to the pupil. Parents are appreciative of the efforts of teachers.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Pupils have limited access to computers and consequently make less progress than they might in this area.

24. Pupils have limited opportunities to use computers. Unless they have access to computers out of school, they may not develop the skill, speed and competence of which they are capable.

25. Staff give clear and succinct introductions to programs and activities. Even so, for pupils sitting a long way from the screen it is difficult to see what is happening in these whole class introductions. Although teachers explain clearly, because pupils cannot see the cursor move or the cell being referred to, their understanding is often less than would otherwise be the case. In addition, because of the limited use of computers, it can be up to two weeks before pupils have the opportunity to put what they have seen into practice on the specific skill taught. Clear exposition by the teachers, very careful concentration by pupils and their ability to remember instructions, means that many pupils manage this. However, it is far from ideal and all pupils would benefit from much quicker access to the computers. Staff do much to give pupils access as quickly as possible. For example, they will often work with pupils during lunchtimes.

26. Staff themselves have some concerns about the use of computers and this accurately reflects staff's ability to identify areas for improvement. For example, staff have yet to resolve how to use computers effectively in literacy and numeracy lessons. Little use is also made of information technology in science, for example to handle data from experiments.

27. Much has been done to upgrade computers recently, and this is beneficial to the quality of activities offered to pupils.

Some parents are unhappy about the arrangements the school makes for lunchtime.

28. It is made clear to parents in the school prospectus that their children are expected to have school meals. Most do so, but a few bring in packed lunch.

29. At the meeting for parents held before the inspection, in the questionnaires and during the inspection a number of parents raised concerns about these arrangements. Some parents whose children currently bring packed lunch state that their children are treated differently from those taking school meals. For example, they are made to eat everything in their packed lunch and are kept behind until they have done so, while those

taking school lunch can leave food they do not want. Parents must give half a term's notice to cancel school meals, but they can start immediately. Parents have reservations about the quality of school meals and limited choice, too.

30. These parents feel under pressure to comply with the school's arrangements as any questions about the policy are not met sympathetically. Parents feel the school should be more sensitive to their choice and recognise that the policy can cause difficulties for parents, for example with religious requirements or by imposing a financial burden.

31. Parents do not understand the rationale behind the school's policy, or why a school that otherwise seeks to involve them should not do so over this one policy. The vast majority of parents are unaware of the reasons for the present policy.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

32. In order to build further upon the very good quality of education provided by the school, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- (1) Improve pupils' access to information technology hardware and software by:
 - reviewing the use of equipment so that it is used more efficiently during curriculum time;
 - seeking ways to improve the number of machines available;
- (2) Improve provision for lunchtime by:
 - seeking ways to improve the quality of lunch and lunchtime;
 - providing greater choice for parents;
 - giving parents more information about lunchtime organisation and policies.

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
1	7	5	4	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 – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	235
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	34

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	40	36	76

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	39	38	40
	Girls	35	35	36
	Total	74	73	76
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (96)	96 (95)	100 (98)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	39	38	40
	Girls	35	35	36
	Total	74	73	76
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (94)	100 (98)	100 (96)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	171
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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 – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.5
Average class size	29.4

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	83

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
	£
Total income	399 392
Total expenditure	402 095
Expenditure per pupil	1 764
Balance brought forward from previous year	11 320
Balance carried forward to next year	8 617

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	235
Number of questionnaires returned	114

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	31	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	35	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	72	27	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	53	44	3	1	0
The teaching is good.	77	23	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	38	3	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	26	6	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	82	18	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	71	26	2	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	85	14	0	1	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	76	24	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	43	23	7	0

Other issues raised by parents

At the meeting some parents expressed concerns about the school's expectation that their children will take school meals.