

INSPECTION REPORT

WHITEFRIARS INFANT SCHOOL

Rushden, Northants

LEA area: Northhamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121909

Headteacher: Mrs Madeline Malthouse

Reporting inspector: Mr Alan Blank
8358

Dates of inspection: 7 – 8 May 2002

Inspection number: 196083

Short 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:	4-7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Boughton Drive Rushden Northants
Postcode:	NN10 9HX
Telephone number:	01933 359269
Fax number:	01933 311748
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Simmonds
Date of previous inspection:	July 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Whitefriars Infant School has 180 pupils aged between 4 and 7. It serves the immediate housing estate and a few other pupils who travel from other areas of Rushden. It shares a site with the neighbouring junior school, to which most pupils transfer when they are seven. The ethnic background of the pupils is white and there are no pupils who have English as an additional language. The school has an average number of pupils with special educational needs (34). There is a very low number of pupils eligible for free school meals that does not reflect the other circumstances of the area such as housing and parents with higher education, which are average. Children entering the reception class have a range of ability and pre-school experience, but overall standards of attainment when children come to school are average. The school is full in all age groups and consistently has more children wanting to attend than it has places for.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Whitefriars is a good school that enables its pupils to make very good progress and reach well above average standards. Teaching is consistently good and the school is well led. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in 1997 and it provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- From average attainment on entry to the school, pupils make very good progress to reach well above average standards by the time they leave.
- Teaching is consistently good, teachers are well informed and they make good use of support staff.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good and this enables them to learn well.
- The school is well led by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and chair of governors, and the day-to-day management of the school is efficient.
- The curriculum is broad and very good use made is made of wider experiences through visits and visitors.

What could be improved

- Strategic, long term planning of school development and the systems for self evaluation.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The high standards in pupils' work seen and results in national tests have been maintained. Improvements have been made in the structure and planning of the curriculum in the foundation stage and further up the school, and this is now good. Teachers' subject knowledge in science and both design and information and communication technology have been improved. Significant improvements have been made to the accommodation, including a new computer suite and playground equipment. Overall, good improvement has been made since the last inspection in 1997.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
reading	B	A	A	A
writing	A	A	A	A
mathematics	A	A	A	A

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

Results in national tests show that attainment is well above the average for schools nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, and that this is a consistent picture. When compared to similar schools, attainment is also well above average. The school has a very low figure for eligibility for free school meals, but other information shows that the background and ability of pupils when they come to school are broadly average. Standards observed throughout the inspection were above average in general and they may again prove to be well above in this year's tests and tasks, particularly in writing and mathematics where the standards observed were very good. The school is successful at getting lower attaining pupils to reach at least average standards. The number of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment in reading writing and mathematics is very high compared to schools nationally, indicating that pupils of all abilities are challenged and make very good progress. Though no formal year group targets are set, the school has high expectations for the attainment of individual pupils, and is determined to continue the pattern of consistently high standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They are very attentive and demonstrate very good levels of determination and concentration.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in classrooms and around school is very good. Pupils are respectful of adults and share equipment and space well.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is well catered for. They learn about basic health and hygiene and are taught to be caring and sensitive to each other's needs.
Attendance	Standards of attendance are very good, well above average.

Pupils come to school keen to learn and eager to share their experiences with teachers and classmates. In news and class circle time, pupils talk openly about out-of-school activities, and classmates listen with interest. The school involves a large number of outside speakers, such as nurses and the representatives of the RSPCA, to enrich pupils' personal development. Pupils settle down to work quickly, groups move around school with a minimum of fuss and as result time is used well to help pupils to learn. Pupils are clearly influenced by parents, who help to develop positive attitudes to learning by ensuring that their children are at school promptly, and lose little time through absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	N/A

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.

Basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are taught well. In the reception classes, children learn the sounds of individual letters and begin to build words so that they are able to read simple words phrases and sentences. Teachers know how young children learn best. They provide a wide choice of practical learning activities, developing children's skills and confidence and monitor their progress carefully. Further up the school, teachers build on pupils' emerging knowledge and skills using teaching methods that show a firm understanding of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Pupils are taught in ability groups for literacy and numeracy. These are often smaller than normal classes and frequently use learning support assistants to work with groups of pupils. The quality of learning in these small groups is nearly always good as pupils are given close attention and teachers have a smaller range of abilities to cater for. Very occasionally learning is less than good when assistants are unaware of how to move pupils on beyond what has been planned. At other times, learning moves at a very brisk pace when teachers have prepared extension activities for the most able pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress when they work individually with assistants who are well trained and who are confident in helping pupils to learn.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum had some weaknesses at the time of the last inspection. It is now well planned and has good breadth and balance.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are well cared for. They have detailed targets for learning and are well supported, especially when working individually and in small groups with learning support assistants.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on feelings and things of beauty in lessons and assemblies and to be aware of their own and other cultures. Provision for moral and social development is very good. Pupils are given clear guidance on right and wrong, how to take responsibility for their actions and to care for each other.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for child protection and general care of pupils are good. Adults know pupils well and make the best of family links to provide continuous care.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is well led. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are an effective team who involve the staff and school community in reaching decisions and provide clear and decisive action when it is required.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors work very closely with the school and monitor the school budget and spending effectively. They are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses and are committed and closely involved in school life.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has systems to monitor the academic performance of pupils and some aspects of teaching and learning. However the school does not have a long-term, formal system of self review.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are deployed effectively. The large proportion of the school's budget used to employ support staff provides good value for money particularly in supporting pupils with special educational needs. The school development plan does not have a sufficiently long-term perspective. Governors and the school management are rigorous in finding the best quality and most competitive rates for goods and services.

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 provides a warm and stimulating environment for their children to learn in. Teaching is good. They are kept well informed and are very involved in their children's learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant areas were identified by parents.

Parents, both openly at their pre-inspection meeting and confidentially in questionnaires, were very supportive of the work of the school. They believe it provides an excellent education for their children.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

From average attainment on entry to the school pupils make very good progress to reach well above average standards by the time they leave.

1. Pupils enter the school with broadly average attainment. During the foundation stage, in the reception classes, children make very good progress generally, and many children exceed the expected learning goals in the areas of communication, language, literacy and mathematical development. Children in reception recognise letters and begin to build words as their early reading skills develop. They can count reliably to twenty and know that twenty-six is two tens and six units. They can write letters and some words with help.
2. Results in national tests taken in 2001 by pupils in year 2 were very good, as they were in earlier years. Results in tests in reading, writing and mathematics were well above the national average. In science assessments, marked by teachers, pupils' attainment was above average. When the higher levels of attainment are considered, pupils exceed national averages easily in reading, writing, mathematics and science; this indicates that higher attaining pupils achieve very well and are challenged and extended. Similarly, the number of pupils who have special educational needs is average, but the school manages to get many of these pupils to standards expected of average pupils.
3. Pupils show good reading skills and many read books commonly associated with older children, such as the 'Harry Potter' novels. Pupils' writing is very good. Year 2 pupils write quite lengthy pieces describing a visit to Warwick Castle. The writing is both interesting and accurate. Well formed letters, neat handwriting and accurate spelling and punctuation makes the work look advanced and sophisticated. This is a good example of how the school uses writing skills across the curriculum.
4. In a lesson linking information and communication technology with mathematics, pupils program a floor robot to move in a series of directions. Pupils display their awareness of mathematical language when they say, "It will only rotate for 90 degrees. We can't get diagonals of 45 degrees."
5. In science, pupils begin to understand the need to control certain features of tests and experiments if they are to provide reliable results. For instance when testing objects for friction, they gradually increase the angle of the surface until the different objects begin to slide.
6. Overall the progress made by all pupils is very good.

Teaching is consistently good, teachers are well informed and they make good use of support staff.

7. Teaching throughout the school is consistently good and no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. This is an improvement since the last inspection when some unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teaching is characterised by good planning that has clear intentions for pupils' learning. These are frequently shared with pupils, so that they know what is expected of them. Preparation is thorough. Teachers ensure that equipment is ready in good time, for instance P.E. apparatus is taken out

during break times so that no time is wasted. No very good or excellent teaching was observed during the inspection.

8. In the foundation stage teachers are aware of how young children learn best; they set out interesting activities, make learning fun and keep children's attention. Teachers make good use of opportunities to advance children's communication skills in play activities and use calling the register as a chance to practise counting skills. In one lesson children were being introduced to the letter 'Z'. The teacher introduced the letter using 'Zig, Zag, Zebra', a story that captivated the class. She then moved on to a range of activities such as alphabet jigsaws and sticking objects that begin with 'Z' into a book.
9. A general feature is the very good relationships that teachers and support assistants have with pupils; they know them well and are sensitive to their needs. Support assistants are well trained and confident in their work with individuals and small groups of pupils. When classes are divided between several teachers and assistants, all adults are clear about what is to be taught and what is to be learnt. Very occasionally support assistants are uncertain as to how extend the work beyond what is planned when children complete the allotted tasks ahead of time.
10. Introductions to lessons and conclusions are carried out well. Teachers encourage pupils to extend their answers and explain their ideas, which extends speaking and listening skills effectively.
11. Numeracy and literacy are taught well. In these lessons classes are divided into ability sets. This reduces the range of ability to be taught and by using learning support assistants sets are often reduced in size. These smaller sets enable teaching to be precisely targeted and learning to maintain a good pace. For instance in one year one class pupils added 7 and 6 by first breaking the six into two parts; adding 7 to 3 to give 10 and then $10+3$ to give the final answer 13. Pupils talk about their thinking and how they reach their answers with confidence.
12. Teachers manage pupils very well. They use quiet but clear instructions and maintain the very good standards of behaviour that promote pupils' learning.

The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good and this enables them to learn well.

13. Children come to school with positive attitudes. They enjoy lessons and are keen to show their work to adults and talk about what they have learned. Children listen attentively to teachers when they give introductions and explanations and are well mannered when asking or answering questions.
14. Pupils' attitudes are so good that teachers can provide them with opportunities to work independently and take risks in their teaching. For instance, in one numeracy session in Year 2, pupils survey the whole class to discover what season each pupil was born in. Pupils moved about in a sensible and controlled manner, being polite and staying on task until they had collected all the information for their graphs.
15. Pupils share equipment and resources sensibly, taking turns and cooperating on tasks. In one lesson in Year one, pupils moved quietly to the ICT suite from their own class base. They quickly settled down and listened to the teacher as she introduced a program for drawing graphs on the computers. After the short introduction pupils went in pairs to the machines and began to input the information. Pupils took turns to read

out, input information and then discuss the finished graphs. Pupils' behaviour was very good; this time was well used and learning was good.

16. The very good behaviour and positive attitudes of pupils create a very positive climate for learning.
17. Pupils enjoy play times where they are encouraged to be energetic in their play, making good use of the school grounds and equipment. This means that they return to class refreshed and ready to begin work.
18. Pupils are given an increasing degree of responsibility and choice in their work. This growing confidence begins in the reception classes. For example, in the physical development sessions children become more confident using apparatus in the school hall, experimenting and exploring a range of movements and exercises. Further up the school, in Year two, pupils' growing confidence allows teachers to give them choices in their work. In a science lesson where pupils experiment with friction and forces, the teacher discussed with pupils the way they wished to record the work; some chose to write about their work, others decided to use pictures and another group agreed to use a mixture of both. This exemplifies pupils' growing maturity and their ability to make choices.

The school is well led by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and chair of governors, and the day-to-day management of the school is efficient.

19. The headteacher provides strong and clear leadership for the school. She has led the school well in responding to issues raised in the report of the previous inspection; the school has made good progress in addressing these issues and maintained high standards. The headteacher is known and respected by the school community for her determination and commitment to the school, and its pupils. The headteacher works very closely with the deputy headteacher and involves her in making decisions and managing aspects of the school, including monitoring teaching and learning. The deputy headteacher takes a lead in the training of learning support staff. This has a major impact on the effectiveness of the school. The proportion of the school's budget spent on support staff is high and they provide good value for money. Pupils with special educational needs and other groups of pupils make very good progress as a result of this support. Support staff also enable pupils to be taught in sets in literacy and numeracy that have fewer numbers and pupils of similar ability. This helps teaching to be more precise and the school to achieve high standards.
20. The chair of governors is a regular visitor to the school. As chair of the finance committee he keeps a keen eye on the budget and spending, ensuring that suppliers provide goods and services that are of suitable quality and at the most competitive price. He has a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provides positive leadership of the governing body.
21. Subject coordinators display elements of leadership in their own subject areas. They have taken on board the writing of new curriculum documents and devising systems for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress.

The curriculum is broad and very good use made is made of wider experiences through visits and visitors.

22. At the time of the last inspection, there were several criticisms of the school's curriculum. The curriculum for the under fives was not planned with sufficient regard

for national learning goals and in the infant years too much time was devoted to English. Other subjects such as science were taught as part of themes and projects and this limited the value of the subjects. Work in the reception classes is now planned clearly in line with national guidance for the foundation stage curriculum, and children in these classes receive an interesting and varied range of learning opportunities.

23. In the infant classes the curriculum is now planned in discrete subjects, but links are made when they are relevant. For instance children writing about their visit to Warwick Castle link English and history and use computers to produce graphs of information gathered in mathematics. The focus on individual subjects does allow teachers to plan for the development of subject specific skills such as carrying out investigations in science.
24. Parents are involved in their children's learning. General targets are shared with parents so that they know what is being expected of their children and this enables them to participate and support them.
25. Parents also play a significant part in school, listening to children read and helping in classes on a voluntary basis.
26. The curriculum is enriched through displays around school that consolidate children's learning. For instance a display on castles extends pupils' vocabulary with words such as portcullis, rampart and torture chamber. The development of the new ICT suite has improved opportunities for pupils to use computers in their learning.
27. The curriculum offered to pupils is enriched and extended through a wide range of visits and visitors. These include African musicians, a puppet theatre and shoe makers, and visits to local theatres, zoos and churches.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Strategic, long term planning of school development and the systems it has for self evaluation.

28. The current school development plan runs on an annual basis and is a useful document that sets out what the school intends to do during the year. It has sensible categories and developments are costed properly. In nearly all areas it guides school development appropriately, providing goals to aim for and the means to achieve them. On the odd occasion, the choice of success criteria is not specific enough to enable the school to see how effective changes have been. For instance in 2001-2 there was an initiative involving training for the numeracy strategy. The associated success criteria was 'the staff receive further training'. This did not specify results that were measurable such as an improvement in a particular aspect of numeracy or perhaps greater use of ICT in mathematics; something that could be monitored and evaluated. The current arrangements directing the work of the senior management team are fairly informal and lack clearly defined systems for operating and reporting. Whilst this system functions soundly with existing, established and long-serving personnel, it does not provide a strong, basic structure for the school in the future.
29. The school does not have a written long-term, strategic plan. The senior management team have a vision of how the school may develop in the longer term, but it is not recorded formally so that it is not shared and understood by all staff and governors. Similarly the lack of a written plan means that it cannot be reviewed and adapted

systematically. At a lower level in management, subject coordinators are capable and effective in monitoring their subjects on a day-to-day basis. However they do not have action plans of how their subjects can be developed and how they will monitor changes and developments in the longer term; plans that could then form part of a whole school approach to long-term planning and self review.

30. The school has maintained high standards for several years indicating that the major elements of provision, teaching and learning, the curriculum and the management of the school are effective and successful. A long term plan for development and systematic review will help the school to maintain the high standards and to respond to changes that may arise in areas such as staffing in the future.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

31. In order to ensure that the current high standards and the quality of education provided is maintained or improved the school should:

(1) generate a long term, strategic plan for school development that looks at the full range of school performance including management structure, policies and systems, teaching and learning, marking and assessment;
(paragraphs: 29,30,31)

(2) provide subject co-ordinators with opportunities to plan developments and monitor provision over a longer period of time, ensuring that these are given priority as part of a rolling programme.
(paragraphs: 29,30,31)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	17
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	0	13	4	0	0	0
Percentage	0	0	76	24	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR– Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	180
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR– Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	34

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	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	95.5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

National comparative data	93.9
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	35	25	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	34	32	33
	Girls	24	24	24
	Total	58	56	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (97)	93 (95)	95 (97)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	33	33	34
	Girls	24	24	24
	Total	57	57	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (94)	95 (92)	97 (94)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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	180
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR - Y2

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	140

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	n/a
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a
Total number of education support staff	n/a
Total aggregate hours worked per week	n/a
Number of pupils per FTE adult	n/a

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

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	1	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.

Financial information

Financial year	2002
	£
Total income	390,950
Total expenditure	399,520
Expenditure per pupil	2,219
Balance brought forward from previous year	26,460
Balance carried forward to next year	17,890

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	180
Number of questionnaires returned	45

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	78	22	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	76	24	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	40	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	49	51	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	78	22	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	49	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	20	0	0	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.	56	42	0	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	73	27	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	78	20	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	31	7	2	33