

INSPECTION REPORT

PICKHURST INFANT SCHOOL

West Wickham, Kent

LEA area: Bromley

Unique reference number: 101598

Headteacher: Miss G Mallard

Reporting inspector: Mrs Valerie Singleton
23044

Dates of inspection: 4th - 6th February 2002

Inspection number: 198906

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
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Pickhurst Lane West Wickham Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Straker
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Pickhurst is a large infants school with 361 pupils on roll at present, aged 4 to 7, of whom 121 are in the reception classes. This year, the older children joined one of 4 reception classes in September, and the younger children started in January. Standards on entry are generally above those expected nationally. The four classes in each year group are all full, with a balance of boys and girls. Nearly all pupils are white and British, with a minority who are Black British or Asian. Of the 12 pupils who speak English as an additional language, only 3 are at the early stages of learning English. Only 6 pupils have free school meals, which is very low compared to the national average. Most pupils come from a relatively advantaged background. Of the 77 pupils (21.3 per cent) on the special educational needs register, seven (0.8 per cent) have a Statement, both being broadly in line with the national average. The school has won a second Investors in People award, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Health Promoting Schools award.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Pickhurst Infants is a good school, that is committed to being inclusive. The headteacher has created a strong staff team who share her commitment to improving even further the standards of teaching and learning. They are well supported by the governing body, parents and the wider community. Pupils' very positive attitudes towards school and learning are instrumental in helping them attain very good standards in reading, writing and mathematics. They enjoy very good relationships with each other and the whole staff team. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils attain high standards in literacy, numeracy and science.
- The headteacher has built up a strong, effective staff team.
- Pupils have very good attitudes towards their work and they enjoy very good relationships with each other and all staff.
- The very close links developed with parents and the community provides strong support to pupils' learning.

What could be improved

- Refining the new Foundation Stage curriculum for reception classes through teachers' planning and assessment and the development of an appropriate outdoor learning environment.
- Introducing assessment procedures alongside the implementation of the new programme for information and communication technology (ICT).
- Improving teachers' short-term planning of lessons to identify more clearly what skills and knowledge pupils are expected to acquire, and how this will be achieved.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected in December 1997, standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the school's climate for learning and the management and efficiency of the school were all judged very good. Since then, the school has maintained its strengths. In addition, the school has achieved the following:

- termly curriculum planning has been improved for all subjects;
- the Foundation Stage has developed an early years policy, a small outdoor classroom has been created, and new planning documents are in place;
- teachers now consistently share the learning objectives of lessons with pupils;
- pupils use the library, which has improved resources, more effectively;

- a new scheme to teach phonics in reception classes has led to good improvements;
- standards of teaching and learning in ICT have improved;
- assessment procedures are used to track individual and group progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and used to inform teaching and planning; and
- playtimes are more stimulating, with many improved facilities.

However, the issue to improve short-term planning by identifying specific learning objectives could be further refined. Overall, the school has made good improvements since the last inspection, and has good capacity to maintain these and further improve aspects of its work.

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	A	A	A	B
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

In the 2001 national tests for Year 2 pupils, results were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared to similar schools, results were above average in reading and well above in writing and mathematics. Results were similar for pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3). Both boys and girls achieved better than nationally, but girls did better than boys in all three subjects, particularly in reading. Standards have remained above the national average since 1997 and the overall trend is upwards.

Inspection evidence supports these results. Children enter school with standards above those expected nationally, especially in communication, language and literacy skills and in mathematical understanding. They make good gains in their learning in these areas during the Foundation Stage and in their personal, social and emotional development. Pupils achieve well in reading, writing, mathematics and science throughout Key Stage 1 and reach well above average standards by the time they are in Year 2. In Key Stage 1, pupils' speaking and listening skills are well above average and well supported in class discussions, paired or group work. Reading is very good, with pupils reading to staff and other adults very regularly. They use the library and learn how to use non-fiction books to locate information independently. Pupils experience writing for a range of purposes and in different styles. Spelling and grammar are good. Handwriting is less well developed, but this is being given appropriate attention now. Numeracy skills are well above average and the good use of investigations and self-recording promote pupils' mathematical understanding well. Literacy and numeracy are used very well to support learning in other subjects. Based on limited evidence, pupils reach at least above average standards in science by Year 2 and the good opportunities they have for investigations and experiments enhance their achievement. The recent focus on ICT has resulted in some good achievement and pupils are on track to reach the nationally expected standards in this subject by the end of Year 2. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support in class and make good progress. Those with English as an additional language receive good support from a visiting specialist teacher and they achieve well alongside their peers.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children in the reception classes settle well into the school routines and respond well to all activities and experiences provided. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 enjoy school and find learning fun. They concentrate well on their work and are willing to persevere at tasks.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in the classrooms, around the school and in the playground is good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils have very good relationships with each other and with all members of staff. Older pupils take on responsibilities well, such as being 'Playground Pals'.
Attendance	Attendance has improved and is broadly in line with the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Foundation Stage	Years 1 - 2
Lessons seen overall	Good	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 good overall. It is good both in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Of the 21 lessons observed, 2 were very good, 9 were good and 8 satisfactory. One was ungraded. The unsatisfactory lesson was due to weak pupil management. Reception children have good opportunities for both activities directed by a teacher and those which they choose for themselves, and the teachers provide a very positive learning environment. Throughout the school, teachers have secure knowledge of English and mathematics. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and science are taught well, so pupils make good progress. Some lesson plans, however, lack a precise learning objective, so it is not clear at which level pupils are expected to work. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils create a positive environment for learning. All resources are well prepared and, in the best lessons, designed effectively for a specific purpose, or matched to different levels of pupils' ability. This enables pupils to be suitably challenged and involved. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and response and, in the best lessons, of high achievement for all. Very good questioning was a strong feature of the teaching observed, which extended pupils' understanding well. Many teachers use on-going assessment well to adjust the lesson, or to give extra support to a specific group. Teachers ensure that pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are given good support in lessons so they are able to learn alongside their peers. Timings are appropriate, with lessons having a good pace. Better use could be made of the competent teaching assistants at times. Some teachers' marking is detailed and helpful, though this is not always consistent across the school. Homework is set regularly and checked and reinforces pupils' skills effectively.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, which is enriched by good quality experiences provided for the pupils through a ranges of visits and visitors. Special focus weeks add an extra dimension to different curriculum areas. The Foundation Stage has introduced the new recommended curriculum securely, but the limited space in the rooms and lack of regular access to an outdoor learning environment limit the quality of what can be offered in some areas of learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Progress is regularly reviewed and good support offered in lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good support is given by a visiting specialist teacher to help pupils at the early stages of learning English. Pupils achieve well alongside their peers as they progress through the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The school has further improved its provision for cultural development. Moral and social development are particularly strong features of the provision.
How well the school cares for its pupils Assessment	Satisfactory systems are in place to secure pupils' health and welfare. The school provides a warm, caring environment in which all pupils feel secure and valued. Some good and detailed assessment procedures are in place for literacy, numeracy and science, and used well to check pupils are progressing and to adjust teachers' planning. Procedures are not yet in place to check progress in the other areas in the Foundation Stage, nor in ICT.
Partnership with parents	The school has built up very strong links with its parents and the wider community. As a result, parents offer very good support for their children's learning, both in school and at home.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher manages people very well, encourages them to develop skills and uses them effectively to help move the school forward. She has established a close, cohesive, staff team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors have established secure structures to manage their responsibilities and offer good support to the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good tracking procedures of pupils' performance have been developed. Results of national tests are carefully analysed and measured against those of similar schools.
The strategic use of resources	The school seeks value for money for all purchases and is beginning to measure financial decisions against gains in pupils' learning.

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 headteacher offers very good leadership.• Their children like coming to school.• Parents feel comfortable approaching the school with any problems.• Teaching is good and their children are given good challenges and expected to do well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A small minority feel there is a limited range of activities outside lessons.

The team agrees with the parents' positive views. They feel there is a sufficient range of after-school activities available for pupils of this age. Also, the school offers a wide and interesting range of experiences outside lessons, through visits and visitors, that greatly enhance the pupils' learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils attain well above average standards in literacy, numeracy and science due to the good teaching.

1. Results in the 2001 national tests for Year 2 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics were well above the national average. When compared to similar schools, results in writing and mathematics were well above average and in reading they were above. Girls generally do better than boys, although both do better than nationally. Results at the higher level (Level 3) were higher than the national average in all three subjects. The school has maintained high standards in reading, writing and mathematics since the previous inspection and the overall trend is upwards. The school has analysed its results carefully and identified that results in reading are not quite as good as those achieved in writing, when compared to similar schools. As a result, the school is focusing on developing pupils' comprehension skills, their use of non-fiction books to locate and record information and raising standards in boys' reading. These are already having a positive impact and raising standards.
2. Standards on entry are above those expected, especially in literacy and numeracy. In the reception classes, children express their ideas clearly, using appropriate vocabulary. Teachers encourage them to use their language to create roles, as when using the wooden boat outside, becoming the captain or a diver. When visiting the class shop, they act as the optician, receptionist or customer, with good support from the teaching assistant to extend their ideas. The newly introduced and well taught phonic scheme is having a positive impact and children respond well to the multi-sensory approach, with movement, pictures and use of alliteration. Children enjoy reading the class 'big book' and can re-tell the story with increasing accuracy. They know the title and, through good questioning by the teacher, are beginning to see links between the pictures, initial sounds and the text. Some older children are reading simple books independently. The higher ability children, who have been in the reception classes since September, are writing sentences with accurate use of full stops and many words spelt correctly. Nearly all the others re-write the start of a sentence and make their own attempt at completing it, with good use of initial sounds. In numeracy, children count confidently to 20 and print one to ten in the right order. They throw dice and move a counter the correct number of squares. When working with the large Lego bricks, the teaching assistant helps them discuss which is the highest tower and they identify how the different repeating patterns have been formed. Children achieve well in these areas of learning and enter Year 1 with above average standards for their age.
3. In Key Stage 1, pupils develop speaking and listening skills that are well above average. They are confident and articulate, understand instructions and receive information well. Pupils are well supported by the many opportunities provided by teachers to talk and listen in class discussions, by the good use of open-ended questions in whole class sessions and through frequently working in pairs or groups. Some opportunities for role play and drama linked to literacy are missed. Pupils enjoy taking part in school productions, however, which are performed in front of an audience. Reading is well supported and pupils benefit from the many trained adults who regularly come into school and read with them on a one to one basis. Time is allocated for pupils to read in groups, with the teacher working with each in turn, and assessing which skills and strategies pupils are using. By Year 2, standards are well above average. Most pupils know the difference between non-fiction and fiction books, how to use an index and the more able can locate information independently from books and CD-ROMs. They use a range of strategies to help them tackle unknown words. Nearly all pupils reflect on what they have read and can re-tell the main points of a story and predict sensibly. Teachers are using the newly introduced reading assessment sheet effectively to identify where pupils need extra support in developing their reading skills.
4. Teachers provide pupils with many opportunities to write for a range of purposes and in different styles. For instance, Year 1 write the story of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" in the form of a play

and Year 2 examine the characteristics of a Caribbean poem and then find their own rhyming words. Pupils are grouped according to ability across each year.

Two extra teachers work with them to create smaller groups, thereby ensuring pupils receive more individual attention and are given work that is carefully matched to their differing abilities. Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to produce extended pieces of writing, when they develop a story line, describe characters, write poetry and create a dialogue. Teachers provide word lists, dictionaries and word cards to support them. The initial focus is on pupils gaining confidence and fluency when writing, with more emphasis on accuracy as pupils mature and gain the necessary skills. By Year 2, writing skills are above average. Spelling and grammar are good, with many pupils using interesting vocabulary that conveys meaning well, such as, "The Rainbow Unicorn had a glittering, shiny horn". Handwriting is less well developed and, although letter formation is carefully taught, few pupils use cursive writing yet. However, focused teaching of joined script is now taking place and leading to good improvements.

5. Pupils are developing good numeracy skills with the effective teaching of the numeracy strategy throughout the key stage. Year 1 count in odd and even numbers, add on and back in tens, and accurately add the cost of 3 objects up to 20 pence. They are beginning to understand place value and can use apparatus to show the number of tens and units in a two-digit number to 30. By Year 2, standards are well above average. Pupils mentally add the value of three coins together, with the more able working accurately to £2.00. They estimate and measure lines of different lengths and are beginning to understand how to use different scales, prior to measuring mass and liquids. Pupils name 2- and 3-dimensional shapes and list the properties of each. They investigate symmetry and record the results of throwing dice in graph form. Teachers provide some good opportunities for pupils to conduct mathematical investigations and to record investigations in their own way. This allows pupils to extend their thinking and to be challenged at their own level of ability.
6. Teachers effectively plan for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills to support learning in other subjects. For example, in history, pupils create a Victorian time line, calculate the age of each of Queen Victoria's children and research and write an account of the life of a famous person, such as Charles Darwin. In science, pupils research Victorian scientists, measure and then record different temperatures in graph form and write a non-fiction book on electricity.
7. Science is taught regularly and effectively throughout Years 1 and 2, with a good focus on investigations and experiments. In Year 1, pupils investigate whether objects need to be pushed or pulled in order to make them move. They taste and record food that is salty or sweet, and conduct an experiment to see whether beans need water in order to grow. By Year 2, pupils reach standards that are well above average. They understand what is a fair test, predict sensibly what may happen and accurately record the results. They investigate which materials are good insulators and complete a circuit so a bulb lights up. They enjoy a visit to Scadbury Park where they catch and identify a range of creatures who live in water.

The headteacher has built up a very strong, effective staff team who, with the good support of the governors, focus on further improving the high standards in the school.

8. The headteacher is held in high regard by staff, governors and parents alike. Her approach of including everyone in the decision-making and education process has resulted in a very strong sense of teamwork existing in the school. She enables all members of the staff to further develop their skills, both to extend them personally and to help them more effectively move the school forward. The school has maintained its commitment to high achievement and learning for all, as seen at the previous inspection.
9. A clear management structure has been established. Each year group has its own leader, responsible for managing the delivery of the curriculum, for checking that all whole-school decisions are implemented and for providing members of the group with opportunities to share their

ideas or concerns. Each year leader is part of the senior management team, so the team can quickly build up a picture of what is happening throughout the school and is fully informed. Whenever relevant, the same items are included on each year group's agenda, such as when a policy is under review, or a new initiative is being trialled. This ensures a consistent approach to new developments and allows everyone an opportunity to air their views.

Teaching assistants are included in the meetings whenever they wish, or items are of particular relevance. In the Foundation Stage, where the assistants have full-time posts and each works with one teacher, they are more fully involved in the process.

10. Year group leaders are also responsible for managing a subject and aspect of the school's work, so they can develop a clear idea of what is happening year on year. Their subject responsibilities include monitoring teachers' planning, pupils' work and the quality of teaching. These are monitored on a regular basis, with an in-depth focus about every three years as part of the Quality Assurance structure. Frank discussions take place with each year group based on the strengths and weaknesses identified in each. From this, agreement is reached about the need for any adjustments to be made to planning. On-going records are checked to ensure that pupils are making the expected progress and to set individual or group targets for the next term. To date, the headteacher and five teachers have completed the OFSTED approved course on school self-evaluation, in order to widen their perspective and develop their classroom observation skills.
11. The headteacher monitors every pupil's work in reading, writing and mathematics each term and brings any concerns to the notice of the class teacher, subject manager or year group leader, as appropriate. The school is now using a computer program to record and track pupils' progress year on year against National Curriculum levels and to set rigorous targets for results in the national tests for Year 2 pupils. The targets finally set identify the percentage increase required, not only at each level, but also at each of the three stages (a, b or c) within each level. Pupils' answers in the national tests taken are carefully analysed to identify any teaching or learning needs and the school measures its performance carefully against that of similar schools.
12. The governors are very supportive of the school and fulfil their statutory duties. Many have particular expertise, which they use to very good effect. Since becoming a separate governing body, a clear committee structure has been established and the chairs of these are well informed and operate effectively. Governors for literacy, numeracy and special educational needs visit the school each term for informal discussions with the subject managers. They then report back to the full governing body. Other visits do not have a specific focus or purpose. Parent governors maintain good links with parents and welcome those new to the school. All governors have attended training and feel well-informed. Governors are now closely involved in the final formulation of the school improvement plan, which includes a strategic overview, and in the monitoring and evaluation of progress against the targets. Through the systems that are in place to measure outcomes in the school's performance, governors feel they are able to identify strengths and weaknesses in reading, writing and mathematics. The school is now at the early stage of developing a self-evaluation policy. When in place, this should be very helpful in helping the school to analyse rigorously the strengths and weaknesses in all areas of the curriculum.

Pupils have very good attitudes towards their work and they enjoy very good relationships with each other and all staff, which supports them well in learning effectively.

13. Pupils say they really enjoy coming to school and find learning fun. Although they think the work is hard, they enjoy doing it. In most lessons observed, pupils had very good attitudes towards their work, even on windy and stormy days which inevitably created an excited response. The youngest children part happily from their parents and carers and respond well to all the class routines. Parents feel that their children benefit greatly from attending the pre-school class, which is provided on site in the afternoons the term before the children join the reception classes. Also, children are given a gradual introduction to full-time schooling. In class, the children willingly go and work with an adult if asked, and sensibly choose their own activities when free to do so. They

show good concentration and stay focused on a task for a good length of time. In one lesson, two children were tackling a very challenging jig-saw puzzle. They worked very hard and with great determination until it was completed. Others carefully coloured in squares to create a repeating pattern, taking pleasure in making their work neat and attractive. Very few children were observed flitting from one task to another, or losing interest, and nearly all stayed involved throughout.

14. In Years 1 and 2, nearly all pupils listen well to their teachers in whole class sessions and are eager to respond to the questions asked. They often are excited about the activity they are asked to do, as seen in Year 1, when pupils counted the coins they heard dropped into a bucket. They settle quickly and sensibly to group or individual tasks. Some seek help early on, but many are willing to try and solve any difficulties independently, as was seen when Year 2 were working on some challenging written mathematical problems. Pupils with special educational needs who need support are helped appropriately by the teaching assistants, so they maintain interest and motivation.
15. The general good behaviour of pupils is evident in class, when they are moving around school and in the playground. All pupils know and understand the 'Golden Rules'. Some teachers support pupils' positive behaviour by rewarding them after each session, leading to the class enjoying a special award at the end of the week. Pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are given relevant targets in their individual education plans, which are then reviewed each half-term. In the playground, pupils play happily together and there was no evidence of any aggressive or unpleasant behaviour during the inspection. Pupils say that, should there be any incidents, they are dealt with promptly and efficiently. Pupils show good respect for their environment and for each other's belongings. They act responsibly with all resources and equipment.
16. Staff and pupils have very good relationships. This applies to teachers, teaching assistants, midday supervisors and office staff alike. Pupils speak very warmly about their relationships with the adults in the school and have total trust in them. Pupils also enjoy good relationships with each other and this is well supported by the positive role models provided by the adults in school. Good opportunities for pupils to discuss ways of supporting each other, and of listening to and respecting each other's views, are provided in 'Circle Time' lessons.
17. Pupils have many opportunities to be responsible. From the beginning, they take turns in being class monitors. Children in reception are encouraged to ask politely someone of their choice to be their partner. Even those who have only been in school a few weeks are included in these routines. Pupils are expected to manage their own resources and equipment independently, such as filing completed work sheets carefully in their folders. In the library, pupils help collect all the equipment that has to be taken into the lesson and responsibly leave the room tidy and ready for the next class. In the playground, younger children play happily alongside older pupils. The school trains older pupils to be 'playground pals' and they take many responsibilities during playtimes. They comfort those who are upset, ensure minor accidents are brought to the attention of the supervisors and seek out pupils who appear isolated and play with them. Other pupils have high regard for the 'playground pals' and view them as trusted friends.
18. The school has maintained the strengths seen in the previous inspection and improved the opportunities for pupils to develop responsibility and show initiative. The good spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision offers very good support to pupils' overall personal development.

The very good relationships developed with parents and the community provide strong support to pupils' learning.

19. The school has maintained its very impressive partnership with parents and the community to good effect. In both the parents' questionnaire and the meeting for parents before the inspection, very positive views were expressed. Any concerns tended to be based on personal issues and generally not shared by others.
20. Many opportunities are provided for parents to be kept informed about a range of school-related

issues. Prior to their children joining the school, parents attend a meeting with the headteacher. They are given details about the way the reception classes operate and how the basic skills will be taught, so they understand the systems and routines. Advice on how to support their children at home is also offered. As a result, parents respond well and they ensure all homework is completed to a good standard and handed in on time. Parents are invited to talks about writing, reading or mathematics throughout the time their children are at the school. Teachers make sure they have daily contact with parents and carers, as well as at the formal termly meetings. The headteacher always responds to requests to discuss matters of significance with parents.

Details of the work that is going to be covered in each class are sent home and ideas given on how to do fun things at home to support their children's learning in literacy and numeracy. Reports are individual, honest and clear and include positive points on how improvements could be made.

21. The school actively seeks the help of parents to support pupils' learning in school. Those who offer regular support are allocated to a class for a specific purpose and their input planned for each time they come. Where appropriate, for example when hearing pupils read, parents are given training and advice, so their support is truly beneficial. Some parents come to share a particular skill, such as one who showed pupils how to bath a baby and another who demonstrated how to put on a sari. Not only parents come in regularly to help. The school welcomes and enjoys the help of some local senior citizens and residents. The pupils benefit socially as well as educationally from being part of this broad community. At present, over 100 people regularly help in the school, which is exceptional.
22. Parents help in many other ways. The Parents' Organisation not only raises a considerable amount of funds, but helps to bring parents together. Each class has parent representatives and they attend the monthly meetings arranged for parents, together with a member of staff. Thus close links are created between the Organisation, school and parents. The Organisation raises approximately £10,000 per year, which is used to very good effect to enhance facilities and the environment for the pupils. Other parents have successfully introduced 'walking bus' routes.
23. The school continues to have close and successful links with the community. The headteacher now meets with representatives of nine local pre-school groups, to aid the smooth transfer of children into the reception classes, to share good practice and discuss the new curriculum developments. A range of visitors come into school either to extend pupils' learning about a specific topic, or to be part of a week's special focus on a subject. For example, a theatre group set up a Victorian classroom as part of the history topic. The pupils recall with great pleasure how they had to behave and what the experience was like. The fire brigade and road safety department visit regularly as part of the pupils' health and safety programme. Pupils enjoy working with artists, poets and scientists and their learning is greatly enriched by these experiences.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Refine the new Foundation Stage curriculum through teachers' planning and assessment and the development of an appropriate outdoor learning environment.

24. The Early Years manager has worked hard to ensure the secure implementation of the new recommended curriculum for the Foundation Stage. At present, there are two teachers in the team who are new to this age-group, so they are being supported whilst working with the new guidelines and managing a different kind of learning environment. The year group plan together, with teaching assistants included, so the same areas of learning are covered in each class. Also, all adults know which tasks they will be directing and which activities will be available from which the children can make choices. They provide practical experiences through well-presented activities, which develop and reinforce concepts. The good quality display and stimulating learning environments that have been created promote children's curiosity and very positive attitudes to learning. At present, the planning tends to be related to the Early Learning Goals, which are what most children are expected to achieve by the end of the Reception year. However, some of the children, especially the younger group who have just joined the reception classes, are not yet at

this level, but are still on the 'stepping stones' which lead to the Early Learning Goals. Therefore, planning is not yet sufficiently matched to the precise levels that different groups of children need to experience. Also, not all activities have a learning objective. Although the activities provide valuable experiences for the children, planning does not inform what is to be achieved, which would support teachers' assessment of children's learning and recording their progress.

25. A new assessment procedure is being introduced to record children's progress in all six areas of learning, but the school is waiting to receive these from the pre-school groups before using them with next year's intake. At present, children's progress in basic skills is tracked effectively through word and number recognition, phonic checks and their independent writing. Other areas of learning are not formally assessed. However, staff are well placed to introduce some checks, for they carefully record which children take part in the teacher-directed tasks, most of which have a clear learning objective. Therefore each child's achievement could be checked and recorded at the same time, ensuring accurate and secure judgements being made. In this way, staff could more easily identify which children need to re-visit an activity and which are ready to move on.
26. The school is aware of the need for an outdoor learning environment to be available to children in the Foundation Stage. A small area has been developed for this purpose, with some imaginative resources included. For instance, there is a large wooden boat, in which several children can develop role play together and mathematical games painted on tables and the wall. However, the area is away from the classrooms, so children have to be taken there in a large group, for a set amount of time each week. This means it cannot be used, as the guidelines recommend, as part of the daily learning environment, where all areas of the curriculum can be addressed, and where children can make choices about working outside or inside, in a flexible way. Also, the area is a difficult shape and quite small, so children can not run about safely, and it is difficult for the teachers to work with a specific group as well as supervising all the others, unless extra adults are available. Teachers work hard to use this area as effectively as possible, but there is insufficient room for any climbing apparatus or wheeled vehicles to be used. At present, there are no opportunities for children to dig, explore and investigate outside and plant seeds or bulbs, although the school plans to address this by providing some tubs. Reception classes have a time-tabled lesson in the hall for physical activities and they have a formal playtime outside in the main playground each morning, both of which are more appropriate for pupils in Key Stage 1. Also, although they are very well-organised and resourced, the classrooms are somewhat small for 30 young children to have access to all the necessary experiences.

Introduce assessment procedures alongside the implementation of the new programme for information and communication technology (ICT).

27. The development of ICT has been a major focus of the school improvement plan. The school received a generous donation of second-hand computers via a parent and now has a computer suite with enough machines for a class, and each classroom has at least 3 computers. The subject manager has purchased some useful programs and built up a scheme of work based on the national guidelines. He regularly monitors teachers' planning to check the scheme is being implemented as planned and recently has had the opportunity to monitor teaching. This good start has had a positive impact on learning and pupils are having regular opportunities to acquire and practise their computer skills and use of different programs. Some areas are more firmly embedded than others, but all are planned to have appropriate coverage across the key stage. Pupils are on track to reach the required level in all strands of the subject by the end of Year 2.
28. However, there are no specific assessment procedures in place yet, so it is difficult to clearly identify exactly where there are strengths and weaknesses in learning. Teachers tend to evaluate each lesson against the learning objective, but this does not provide a clear picture of on-going progress, after the completion of a unit of work. Teachers, therefore, have insufficient information to know exactly how secure pupils' skills and knowledge are in each strand.

Improve teachers' planning of lessons to identify more clearly what skills and knowledge pupils are expected to acquire, and how this will be achieved.

29. The school has improved medium-term planning in the foundation subjects in Years 1 and 2 since the previous inspection. For instance, that for science indicates where experiments and investigations take place to ensure this aspect is adequately covered. Design and technology includes investigative and disassembly tasks, focused practical tasks so pupils are taught specific skills and the opportunity to design, make and evaluate their own products. ICT offers a broad and challenging programme. Cultural and multicultural aspects are included in many subjects too. Literacy and numeracy are based appropriately on the National Strategies throughout the school, with a good balance of the different strands within each subject.
30. Teachers also plan for each lesson. Those for literacy and numeracy are reasonably detailed and indicate the focus for each part of the lesson. Other plans have minimal information. Most plans seen included a learning objective and listed the activities for each group of pupils. Some include key vocabulary and list the resources required. This indicates teachers are preparing thoughtfully for every lesson. In the best examples, teachers identified key questions, well linked to the development of subject-specific skills and knowledge.
31. However, learning objectives are often very broad, for example "to estimate and measure". This does not indicate the level to which pupils, or groups of pupils, are expected to work. As teachers use these objectives to evaluate learning outcomes, the lack of precision lessens the usefulness of this as an assessment tool. Plans do not indicate how teaching assistants (TA's) and individual support assistants (ISA's) are to be used. As teaching assistants support more than one class, they are not able to be involved in the initial planning process. Teachers ask them to work with a specific group and sometimes give them written instructions so they are clear about what they are doing. Then teaching assistants offer good support, particularly to pupils with special educational needs, or when working 1:1 with pupils using the computer. However, they do not have the overview of the whole lesson and so do not always know what to do during whole class sessions. Some good examples were observed, such as when an ISA sat and worked with a small group during the introductory part of a mathematics lesson. She ensured they fully understood the concept and kept focused on the task. In many lessons, however, TA's were not used during the whole-class sessions either to record pupils' responses, work with a small group, or conduct assessments, and so their valuable time was not used to the best effect.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

32. In order to further improve the work of the school, the governors and headteacher should:

(Each is followed by a reference to the paragraph(s) in which it is discussed.)

- (1) Refine the Foundation Stage curriculum by:

- taking account of the 'stepping stones' in the teachers' planning;
- matching activities to specific areas of learning, with clear learning objectives;
- building assessment opportunities into the planning; and
- exploring ways to provide a secure outdoor learning environment which the children have access to at all times.

(see paragraphs 24 – 26)

- (2) Develop assessment opportunities in ICT to clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning.

(see paragraphs 27 – 28)

(3) Improve teachers' lesson planning by:

- including precise learning objectives of the knowledge and skills pupils are to acquire; and
- showing how teaching assistants and individual support assistants are to be used effectively in lessons.

(see paragraphs (29 – 31))

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	21
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	2	9	8	1	0	0
Percentage	0	10	45	40	5	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 five percentage points.

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)	361
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	77

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.0
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	66	53	119

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	59	63	65
	Girls	52	53	53
	Total	111	116	118
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (92)	97 (93)	99 (97)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	62	65	64
	Girls	53	53	53
	Total	115	118	117
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (94)	99 (97)	98 (96)
	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	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	214
Any other minority ethnic group	9

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)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	222

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	754759
Total expenditure	734079
Expenditure per pupil	2051
Balance brought forward from previous year	30084
Balance carried forward to next year	50764

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.8

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	361
Number of questionnaires returned	135

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	33	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	40	1	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	49	0	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	46	8	1	2
The teaching is good.	65	33	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	48	7	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	24	0	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	33	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	56	34	7	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	77	20	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	39	1	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	36	9	6	13