

Briar Hill Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125563
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	328359
Inspection date	19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	268
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Hawke
Headteacher	Gillian Makin
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Coppice Road Whitnash Leamington Spa CV31 2JF
Telephone number	01926 422834
Fax number	01926 450423

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with specific reference to acquisition of basic skills of writing
- the effectiveness of the school's strategies in raising standards in writing and mathematics
- the impact of the school's systems for promoting community cohesion
- the school's systems for monitoring and maintaining high standards over time.

Evidence was gathered from a wide range of school documentation and lesson observations, and from interviews with the headteacher, staff and the chair of governing body. Interviews were also held with parents and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school serves the local community of Whitnash. Approximately one third of the pupils come from minority ethnic groups, particularly Indian, only a small number of whom are at the early stages of learning English. A small number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, some of whom have specific behaviour problems. The present headteacher has been in post for three months. The school has received many awards, including a Race Relations Award and Healthy School status. There is a privately run Briar Hill Out of Hours club on the school site which caters for 65 children in total.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Provision for care, guidance and support is outstanding and results in pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. Attendance is good and pupils love coming to the school. Parents are very supportive of the school. 'You know that the children are going to have a great day every day because of all the interesting things that they do,' said one parent, speaking for many. This opinion is supported by a pupil's comment, 'nine am is the best time in the world because that is when school starts.'

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with broadly average skills in all areas of learning. They get off to a good start as a result of good teaching and learning, exciting learning opportunities and outstanding welfare provision. All adults devote their attention to making learning fun without losing sight of ensuring that all children, including those learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good gains in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, more capable children are not always given tasks which consistently challenge them as staff are not yet consistently using information from observations of learning to plan their next steps. Nevertheless, the vast majority of children achieve well from their starting points and reach standards which are above average when they start in Year 1. In personal, social and emotional development, children's achievement is outstanding because they are all treated as unique individuals and are taught in a very safe, caring and enabling environment. This sets the springboard for learning in Years 1 and 2 and ultimately contributes to the high levels of children's independence and outstanding behaviour and attitudes throughout the school.

Good progress in learning continues throughout Years 1 and 2, where teachers' assessments and the school's own records show that pupils have been attaining high standards over five years in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' achievement is good but it is outstanding in speaking and listening because of the many good opportunities provided for pupils to talk about their learning. More capable pupils do really well and attain high standards but there are some missed opportunities in lessons to push them even harder so that they excel even more. As in the Early Years Foundation Stage, not all staff use information from assessments of pupils' learning to plan challenging tasks to increase these pupils' rates of progress. This is particularly noticeable in mathematics and in writing.

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning because they get on very well with their teachers, find learning stimulating and respond to the excellent relationships throughout the school. They feel very secure and try out new things because they are confident that they will be supported in all that they do. Teaching and learning in this school are characterised by staff planning creative learning opportunities such as allowing boys to dress up as wounded soldiers during the Crimean War to write about their wartime experiences. Writing in role gives pupils in this school the opportunity to write from the heart. One pupil said, 'The best thing about this school is the group of lovely teachers who try many different ways to make learning fun.' Teachers use questions and discussions very effectively to extend pupils' understanding and make them think for themselves. As a result, pupils show excellent skills of independent learning. Teachers' marking is regular but it is not consistent throughout the year groups. The best marking tells pupils what to do to improve their work and gives them the opportunity to correct their mistakes. This, along with their good achievement of basic skills, prepares them very well for their future.

The curriculum is well thought out and enriched with an outstanding range of clubs, visitors and after-school activities. Teachers generally make good links between subjects but the use of too many worksheets restricts more capable pupils from developing their own ways of recording, especially in science. Pupils have many varied opportunities to learn about the beauty of nature, how to look after the planet, how to develop their imagination and creativity through music and art, distinguish right from wrong, work in teams and learn about other cultures. This contributes to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are very aware of the needs of others and collect monies for charities in order to help those less fortunate than themselves. They respect different faiths and cultures and are familiar with a range of places of worship.

Pupils have excellent knowledge about healthy eating and the need for exercise; this fully justifies the Healthy School Award. Pupils interviewed said that they feel very safe in school. The redesigning of the playground, where pupils have zoned areas for play, has paid dividends. Parents are delighted with the way in which the school takes on board pupils' concerns and gives them a say in all aspects of school life. Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements and all the necessary checks are regularly carried out to ensure pupils' safety. The school promotes community cohesion well. The local community is used to promote pupils' awareness of belonging and many opportunities are taken to celebrate pupils' ethnic backgrounds. 'It's great to have so many different friends,' said one pupil, speaking for many others. Nevertheless there is room for improvement as international links within the curriculum are not as strong as local ones.

Central to the school's success are the good leadership and management of the headteacher, governors and senior staff. The headteacher leads by example and knows the needs of the pupils. Data is analysed and any suspected underachievement is rectified. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support pupils' learning and standards continue to rise. The governing body are committed, hard working and supportive and are knowledgeable about the school. The capacity of the school, based on its trend of maintaining high standards, is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Within the good provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the provision for children's welfare and for their personal development is outstanding. Confidence, enthusiasm, independence and a zest for learning are characteristics of the children's learning. Parents are seen as true partners in their children's learning and are regularly informed of their children's progress. Induction processes are very well planned and, as a result, children settle in easily. Staff work very closely with a wide range of agencies to ensure that parents are signposted to appropriate agencies for help with any social, emotional or academic difficulties. Children are very happy and learn at a fast rate as a result of good teaching, an exciting curriculum and very high levels of care. Good gains are made in basic skills and children have plenty of opportunities to write about their learning. Nevertheless, more capable children are not challenged to the full in all activities as too often they undertake the same tasks as their peers. In lessons there is a good balance between play in which children are able to investigate a range of resources and structured learning opportunities led by adults. Teaching assistants make a very valid contribution to learning as they intervene in children's learning. The outdoor area is imaginatively used to interlink physical activity with creative play but planning is not yet taking into account the opportunities to develop the full range of tasks from indoors to outdoors. Leadership and management are good, with accurate evaluations made of provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics even further by:
- ensuring that information from assessment is rigorously used both in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, to consistently challenge more capable pupils
- giving pupils more opportunities to record their work independently by making less frequent use of worksheets.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that marking informs pupils of the next steps of learning and opportunities are provided for pupils to learn from their mistakes.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Briar Hill Infant School, Leamington Spa CV31 2JF

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing all the interesting work that you do. We agree with your headteacher that your school is a good school where you are happy and learn well. Here are some of the good things we found about your school.

- You love coming to school, participate well in all activities and attendance is good.
- You behave exceptionally well; you are very well mannered and have excellent relationships with your teachers.
- You have an excellent knowledge of healthy eating and keeping safe.
- You achieve high standards in reading, writing and mathematics and make excellent progress in speaking and listening.
- Teaching and learning are good and you enjoy all that the school offers, especially the good learning opportunities you are given.
- Adults in school make sure you are safe and very well cared for.
- Your headteacher, senior staff and governing body provide good leadership for your school.
- You are well prepared for your next stages in education.
- You have good links with the community.

There are a few things that we have asked your headteacher and governing body to do to make sure that your school is even better. You can help by:

- telling your teachers if the work is too easy in writing and mathematics
- writing at length without the use of worksheets
- correcting your mistakes after your work has been marked by the teacher.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

Lead inspector