

INSPECTION REPORT

BIRCHES GREEN INFANT SCHOOL

Erdington, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103169

Headteacher: Mrs Ellen Smith

Reporting inspector: Colin Henderson
23742

Dates of inspection: 21st – 22nd January 2002

Inspection number: 198493

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:	3 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Birches Green Road Erdington Birmingham West Midlands
Postcode:	B24 9SR
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Marie Lewis
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	16
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	16
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	17

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Birches Green Infant School is situated three miles north of Birmingham city centre. It is similar in size to the average infant school and currently has 222 pupils (112 boys and 110 girls). The number of pupils has increased since the last inspection. Most children come from the surrounding estate, from mainly rented housing. It is an area of relatively high unemployment. Twenty-nine per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average. Pupils are mainly of white, United Kingdom ethnic background. There are 16 pupils from ethnic minority groups. Thirty-eight pupils (17 per cent) are on the school's register of special educational needs, most of whom have moderate learning difficulties. There are two pupils (1 per cent) who have specific statements of special educational need. This is broadly average. Attainment on entry is wide-ranging with significant variations from year to year. It is broadly average overall. The school was rebuilt during the last school year in a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) partnership with a major building firm.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Birches Green Infant School is an excellent school. It is a very caring, harmonious and supportive school community in which every child feels valued and is encouraged and expected to achieve well. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and gives a very clear direction to the work of the school. The strong team approach and the consistently very high quality of teaching enable pupils to achieve, and maintain, standards well above the national average. Pupils clearly enjoy school. They work and play together enthusiastically and are proud of their achievements and of their school. Very effective management focuses strongly on maintaining high standards in all aspects of school life. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils attain standards that are well above the national average, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is very good and frequently excellent. All teachers have very high expectations.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership, focused strongly on maintaining very high standards. She gets very good support from her influential deputy, a very strong staff team and an active and enthusiastic governing body.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to school. They are enthusiastic about their work and are very keen to achieve high standards.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good. They are friendly and courteous. They show respect and express delight at their success and that of others. Relationships are excellent.
- The school provides excellently for pupils' personal development. Staff know their pupils very well. They provide consistently high quality support and guidance to enable all pupils to enjoy school. Pupils grow in confidence, flourish and achieve very well.
- The very good Foundation Stage enables children to make a very good start to their schooling. The school builds on this very successfully to ensure that pupils continue to make consistently very good progress throughout the school.
- The school provides a very good range of learning activities. It fully includes all pupils. Teachers match activities closely to pupils' learning needs to enable them to achieve their full potential.

What could be improved

- The school has no significant weaknesses.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made excellent progress since its last inspection in November 1997. The very positive report identified no key issues. It is exceptional that the school has maintained very high standards over these last four years. During that time, staff and pupils have coped with having their old building demolished. They used temporary accommodation for a year. They moved into their new and very good quality accommodation in September 2001. The school introduced and quickly established new procedures. Staff and pupils are now benefiting from greatly improved accommodation and enhanced resources, especially in information and communication technology. The school has implemented strategies for literacy and numeracy and a new Foundation Stage curriculum very successfully.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

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

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

A* indicates that the school's standards are in the highest 5 per cent nationally.

The school has maintained its well above average standards reported in the last inspection. Consistently very good teaching and a high expectation of pupils to achieve their best work enable it to maintain high standards. National test results show that almost all pupils achieve the nationally expected Level 2 at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who achieved the higher than expected Level 3 was above the national average. The 2001 test results were especially high in writing where the proportion of pupils achieving Level 3 was almost twice the national average. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils attain well above average standards. Children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress in all areas of learning. The teaching of basic skills is excellent. Teaching and support staff work very successfully together to make excellent use of the very high quality resources and facilities. All children attain the expected early learning goals by the end of the reception class. Many exceed their goals, especially in aspects of language and literacy, social, mathematical and physical development. The headteacher and staff use assessment information to identify any weaknesses in pupils' work. Teachers then focus on improving these aspects. This enables all pupils to make very good progress. For example, teaching and support staff enable pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, to be fully included in all activities. They make very good progress towards their learning targets. Teachers use extension activities very effectively to ensure that more able pupils are challenged to extend and apply their knowledge and skills. Inspectors noted the particularly high quality of pupils' speaking and listening skills. All staff encourage pupils to extend these skills consistently both in and out of lessons. This showed clearly in the very good use of language in high quality formal and informal discussions.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have excellent attitudes. They clearly enjoy being at school and are positive and enthusiastic in everything they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in lessons, in collective worship and around the school. All pupils get on well together. They are friendly, polite and courteous.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent relationships throughout the school promote excellent personal development. Staff provide very good role models. They encourage pupils to show respect, take on responsibility and care about each other. Pupils are expected to tell the truth at all times.
Attendance	Good. Attendance rates are improving and are currently just above the national average.

The excellent school ethos allows pupils to grow in confidence and flourish. The school maintains high standards in all aspects of personal development. This contributes to promoting high attainment.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and reception	Years 1 – 2
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching has been maintained at the very high level reported in the last inspection. Very good teaching is a significant factor in enabling pupils to achieve well above average standards. Teachers have excellent expectations of children, from nursery onwards, throughout the school. Teachers make excellent use of on-going assessment to ensure that they match learning activities closely to meet the needs of all pupils. This ensures that every pupil, irrespective of ability, gender or ethnic background, is fully included in every activity. Teachers make excellent use of support staff and high quality resources to challenge all pupils effectively to extend their skills and knowledge. The teaching of English and mathematics is very good. Teachers have implemented the school's literacy and numeracy strategies very successfully to enable pupils to develop well above average skills. These are clearly reflected in the high standards of reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers also challenge pupils to apply these skills successfully in other subjects, for example, in extending their information and communication technology skills. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers work closely with the special educational needs co-ordinator and support staff to focus carefully on pupils' learning targets.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school provides a broad range of learning activities, enhanced effectively by visits and visitors. Detailed curriculum planning ensures that all pupils are fully included and activities meet the full range of needs and abilities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. It is very well organised. Class teachers, support staff and the special educational needs co-ordinator work successfully together to focus closely on achieving pupils' learning targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The school quickly identifies pupils' English language needs. Very good teaching and the effective use of good quality resources enable these pupils to make very good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent in all aspects. This underpins the school's caring and supportive approach. It fosters respect; a clear understanding of right and wrong and the pupils' growing appreciation of the beauty, values and traditions of the world in which they live.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. Staff know their pupils well and show great concern for their welfare and education.

The school strongly emphasises the need to ensure that all pupils are fully included in all aspects of the curriculum. There is a very strong commitment to enable all pupils to develop their abilities to the full. The school supports pupils very effectively by very good care and guidance and by promoting pupils' personal development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher provides strong leadership to ensure that very high standards are maintained. An influential deputy and strong management team give her very good support. They have established a very strong staff team who support each other very well. Complacency is not allowed!
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	A supportive and enthusiastic governing body is effectively involved in working in close partnership with the headteacher. Governors are well informed and have a good understanding of the strengths of the school. They were especially supportive and helpful during rebuilding.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The headteacher, together with subject post holders and governors, regularly monitor and evaluate teaching and learning. They make excellent use of assessment information to identify areas where teachers should focus. This directly improves pupils' attainment.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes effective use of a good school development plan to ensure that it targets finances effectively on priorities. The current high level of budget surplus resulted from delays in completing the new building. The school is using it to maintain and extend the very high level of very good quality resources.

The excellent leadership and strong team approach are key factors in achieving and maintaining high standards. Everyone working in the school is very strongly committed to its success. The school makes good use of the principles of best value, with good support from the local education authority. The very high standard of accommodation and learning resources enhance the range of learning opportunities significantly.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The inspection team considered parental responses from the 64 questionnaires (29 per cent), written comments and comments from the nine parents who attended the parents' meeting. The team also interviewed some parents during the inspection. Parents' views were very positive.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of teaching is good. The school is well led and managed. Their children like school and they make good progress. Standards of behaviour are very good. The school has high expectations. It helps the children mature and take responsibility. The school works closely with parents and keeps them well informed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of activities outside of lessons.

Inspection evidence fully supports parents' positive views. The strong links between the school and parents significantly promote a very high quality of education. Inspectors found that the range of activities outside of lessons is good, considering the size of the school and the age of the children.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils achieve standards that are well above the national average, particularly in English and mathematics.

1. Pupils attain standards by the end of Year 2 that are well above the national average. The results of the national tests for seven year olds show that the school has maintained standards in reading, writing and mathematics at a high level for the last four years. Standards are particularly high in writing. The 2001 test results show that 17 per cent of Year 2 pupils achieved above average standards in writing, compared with the national average of 9 per cent. Over one in every three pupils achieved above average standards in reading and mathematics, which was well above the national average. Compared with similar schools, pupils achieve standards in reading and writing that are in the top 5 per cent nationally.
2. Inspection evidence confirms these well above average standards in reading and writing. Most Year 2 pupils write in detail and in increasing length. They use a very good range of descriptive phrases and words to convey mood and atmosphere in their imaginative work. For example, one pupil uses the phrase 'spits out fire of gold' to describe a Catherine Wheel firework. Teachers from Year 1 onwards place a strong emphasis on extending vocabulary in written work. They focus closely on extending pupils' word-building skills. This is reflected in the confident way in which pupils use and spell complex words accurately in their writing, such as 'accidentally' and 'amazed'. Pupils develop their handwriting skills systematically throughout the school. Teachers expect pupils to use their very good skills in all their written work. This results in very high quality presentation of work in a range of subjects, for example, history and science as well as in literacy. Many Year 1 and Year 2 pupils read with enthusiasm and increasing fluency and accuracy. For example, in a Year 1 literacy lesson, the teacher used a teddy bear effectively to focus pupils' interest and attention. She encouraged them to contribute their ideas to build up a class story about the bear. The classroom assistant wrote down their story on a whiteboard as the ideas developed. The teacher asked a pupil to read the story back to the rest of the class. He read confidently, accurately and fluently, with no hesitation over words such as 'roaring', 'cheetah' and 'scratching'. The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills, from nursery onwards. Teachers make the most of every opportunity to challenge pupils to extend their skills. For example, before two Year 2 pupils returned the attendance and dinner registers to the school office, they were asked what they were going to say to the school secretary. Both pupils were expected to say more than 'Good morning, here are the registers'. With ideas from other pupils, they agreed that one would speak about the damp, grey weather and the other would comment that it was going to be sunny in the afternoon. They felt that this would make the school secretary happy if she knew that the weather was going to get better! Inspectors noted similar expectations in many classes and pupils spoke clearly and confidently either in a small group or in full class activities.
3. Pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding are well above average. They have very good number knowledge and skills. Teachers challenge pupils effectively to apply their skills to solve problems. They use the National Numeracy Strategy very successfully, especially to extend pupils' mental number skills. For example, in a very good Year 2 numeracy lesson, the teacher challenged pupils to extend their understanding of adding and subtracting sums of money. Pupils confidently added up sums then subtracted the total from 20p to work out what change they would receive. The teacher then challenged them to use sums up to 50p. More able pupils added 26p and 27p accurately, then worked out how much change from a pound. They explained the strategy they had used to work out their answers. The teacher used questions excellently to check on other ways of

working out the problem. This extended pupils' skills in adding on in 5p coins into enabling them to use the 5 times multiplication table to work out their answers.

4. Pupils use their high quality literacy and numeracy skills to attain well above average standards in other subjects. For example, Year 2 pupils produce very good quality word processing work in information and communication technology. They use their number knowledge successfully to work out different measurements in practical science investigations, for example, when studying the effect of forces.
5. All pupils make very good progress consistently throughout the school. The key factors in promoting these high standards are:
 - teaching
 - school and subject leadership
 - pupils' attitudes
 - the match of learning activities to pupils' needs.

These are explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Teaching is very good and frequently excellent. All teachers have very high expectations.

6. Teaching was excellent in two of the 18 lessons observed and very good in a further 13 lessons. The quality of teaching was never less than good. The school has maintained teaching quality at the high level reported in the last inspection. The very good teaching is consistent in every year group. It is a significant factor in achieving and maintaining well above average standards. Parents recognise and value it. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils and pupils respond enthusiastically and are keen to achieve. Teachers expect children in the Foundation Stage¹ and pupils in Years 1 and 2 to take increasing responsibility and always make a great effort to produce their best work. This is reflected in many aspects of daily school life. For example, teachers and support staff in the Nursery informed children when they had to finish their activities. They all knew what that meant and did not try to continue with their activity. They all stopped and then helped each other to tidy up and put away the resources in their correct places. The children soon realise that the school expect them to do this as part of their normal routine. They do it efficiently and with the minimum of fuss. In other year groups, teachers expect pupils to take more responsibility for and become more independent in their learning. For example, in a very good Year 2 science lesson, the teacher expected the pupils to work in groups and carry out their own investigation into forces, especially friction. She provided very good equipment, for example, several wooden ramps and toy cars. She then challenged the groups to plan and carry out a fair test into how far the car will travel on different surfaces. Pupils quickly organised their groups. There was no disagreement over who was doing what. They discussed in detail how they intended to carry out their test. Most groups agreed that they would all take a turn at releasing the car, measuring and recording. They responded very positively to the challenge, worked very hard and were very keen to share and discuss their results.
7. The teaching of English and mathematics is very good. Teachers are particularly successful in promoting the literacy and numeracy strategies and, consequently, this is promoting high standards. Teachers use a very good range of teaching methods to capture pupils' interest and attention. For example, in an excellent Year 2 English lesson, the teacher read the story of '*The Owl Babies*' in a very sensitive and expressive manner. This captured pupils' attention and allowed the teacher to focus closely on the objective of

¹ The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and finishes at the end of the reception class year. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to language, literacy and communication; mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development, but also include knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

the lesson – ‘how to use vocabulary to create mood and atmosphere’. Pupils began to understand and explain why the little owls were sad and later happy. The teacher made full use of every opportunity to check on and extend pupils’ use of words. In looking at the illustrations in the book, the teacher used questions successfully to encourage a pupil to explain what he meant when he said that the illustrator had used ‘perspective’ in his drawings. The teacher used the book very effectively to remind and extend pupils’ knowledge and use of such terms as ‘alliteration’ and ‘rhyme’. She encouraged pupils to show how good they were with words by naming some that rhyme. This allowed her to list some examples, for example ‘power’ and ‘flower’, ‘crown’ and ‘clown’. She then maintained an excellent pace to the lesson by moving the pupils quickly into their groups and getting them started on follow-up activities linked to the ‘Owls’ story. All pupils made very good progress as their group activities were matched closely to their language needs. One of the key and consistent features evident in the high quality teaching was the excellent way in which teachers use assessment information and their knowledge of the pupils. They ensure that they plan and organise a wide range of different activities, linked to the lesson objective, which allows all pupils to participate fully and extend their skills and knowledge.

8. Teachers consistently focus on encouraging pupils to achieve their highest standard. They use a very good range of strategies to challenge pupils to improve their initial answers. For example, in a Year 2 science lesson on friction (see paragraph 6), the teacher used questions and word-prompts very effectively to extend pupils’ knowledge on how a toy car is less affected by friction on a smooth, tiled surface than on a carpet. She then developed this further to enable pupils to improve their scientific knowledge by considering which factors had to remain the same for the test to be ‘fair’. In a reception science activity, the teacher organised a very good range of different materials to enable children to test which was the best for making into a drum. She repeatedly challenged pupils by asking ‘What will happen if...?’ This required them to check each material carefully. They realised that different materials made different noises when hit, for example, metal foil and writing paper. They also found out that some paper was thinner than others, for example tissue paper, and became torn when hit. This enabled pupils to extend their scientific knowledge and understanding to well above expected standards.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership, focused strongly on maintaining very high standards. She gets very good support from her influential deputy, a very strong staff team and an active and enthusiastic governing body.

9. The headteacher continues to provide a very strong and positive direction to the work of the school, as reported in the last inspection. She has an excellent knowledge and understanding of the school’s strengths. The very high quality of her leadership is valued greatly by parents. It was particularly appreciated over the last two years when the school had to cope with the stress and upheaval caused by the demolition of the old building and the construction of a new one. The school was sited in a temporary double-storey building which, in itself, led to some further building problems. The headteacher was determined to ensure that pupils’ education did not suffer and that high standards were maintained. She was supported very effectively by a very strong staff team and enthusiastic governors. The school community continued to be very successful throughout the time of rebuilding. They are all now benefiting from the results of the PFI (Private Finance Initiative) partnership and enjoy excellent accommodation and high quality facilities and resources. The strong leadership of the headteacher is strongly focused upon using these new opportunities to raise standards even higher – no-one is allowed to become complacent!
10. The headteacher, working very effectively with an influential deputy and a very good senior management team, has established excellent systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. They analyse a very good range of assessment information to identify what is being done well and what areas need improvement. They look carefully at any

differences in terms of age, ethnic groups and gender. For example, when weaknesses were identified in boys' writing, the staff introduced strategies specifically focused on this aspect. This led to a significant improvement. Boys now achieve well above average standards. All subject post-holders regularly evaluate teaching and learning within their subjects. The headteacher, supported by senior staff, advisory staff from the local education authority and some governors, monitors teaching. The strong team approach encourages teachers to share good practice and to maintain high quality teaching. The staff carry out a school review at the end of the school year to reflect on what has been achieved and point out any areas for an increased focus the following year. They use a good quality school development plan to target priorities and ensure that finances are used efficiently to focus on improvement. As the school was anticipating a new school building over the last three to four years, the headteacher and governing body carried forward a budget surplus ready to use once they had moved into the new building. They have identified specific priorities and, together with some funds from the Excellence in Cities project, are beginning to use these funds. These include some further developments in using information and communication technology.

Pupils have excellent attitudes to school. They are enthusiastic about their work and are very keen to achieve high standards.

11. Pupils clearly enjoy school. They are keen and enthusiastic, running happily into the playground at the start of the day. They maintain this positive attitude throughout lessons and this contributes positively to what they achieve. Pupils know that teachers expect them to try their best. They are continually encouraged and respond excitedly when they are rewarded with 'a marble in the jar' or a certificate. They listen attentively to teachers' explanations and instructions and are eager to answer questions. Consistently high quality teaching and the use of very good quality resources, together with frequent praise and encouragement, sustain pupils' interest and concentration for long periods. For example, in a music lesson, the teacher encouraged all pupils to be involved fully. Her careful choice of music, on the theme of machines, encouraged boys and girls to participate enthusiastically. The very good individual support given to pupils with special educational needs enables them to be fully included and to make thoughtful contributions to the work of the class.

Pupils' behaviour is very good. They are friendly and courteous. They show respect and express delight at their success and that of others. Relationships are excellent.

12. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. The school has maintained the high standards reported by the last inspection. The school expects all pupils to 'be friends with everyone'. This reflects clearly in the friendly and courteous manner in which pupils talk to teachers, visitors and each other. During play-time, pupils play and share equipment without arguments. All teachers are excellent role models. They are calm, friendly and polite. They quietly and constantly remind pupils of the way in which they should behave, for example, not talking when someone else is. Relationships are excellent throughout the school. The headteacher provides a clear lead by knowing every pupil in the school and constantly encouraging them to show how good they are. She regularly talks with pupils rather than at them. All staff enthusiastically praise pupils over their achievements. Pupils' facial expressions reflect their delight when their achievements are recognised. They also show genuine delight in the achievements of others, for example, some of the achievements and contributions of pupils with special educational needs.

The school provides excellently for pupils' personal development. Staff know their pupils very well. They provide consistently high quality support and guidance to enable all pupils to enjoy school. Pupils grow in confidence, flourish and achieve very well.

13. The school is successful in achieving its aims, set out clearly in its 'Guide for Parents', especially those relating to 'foster a sense of community' and 'develop positive attitudes so children may become valuable members of our multi-cultural society'. These reflect in all aspects of the day to day life of the school. All staff give high priority to caring for and supporting children. For example, one parent reported that her child had had extended periods in hospital. She had received cards and letters every day from pupils and staff. The school achieves excellent promotion of racial harmony and tolerance. It gives every child a strong sense of self-worth. Pupils grow in confidence and this promotes a consistently positive attitude to school. Pupils are rewarded for helping each other and benefiting the community. For example, one pupil, not knowing that he was being observed by a member of staff, carefully picked up a coat that had fallen down. He replaced it on a peg then continued on with what he was doing. He was delighted to receive a headteacher's certificate for his responsible actions. Parents are very appreciative of the knowledge that their children are cared for very well in a safe and secure learning environment. This helps their children to mature and take on increasing responsibility.

14. Through very good teaching and well-ordered procedures and routines, the school promotes all aspects of personal development very effectively. For example, pupils have an excellent understanding of how they should behave. Each class develops its own agreement on behaviour issues. Teachers enable each pupil to become a valued member both of the class and of the school. They expect pupils to treat each other with courtesy and respect. During the inspection, the team observed many pupils working together effectively in groups, for example, on an information and communication technology activity or in a practical science investigation. In an information and communication technology lesson, only three out of the four groups could use the good resources to show their control skills. The fourth group was given the task of using pencil and paper to draw and work out what directions they would need to guide a programmable toy through a maze. All of this group worked as enthusiastically together as the others to complete the activity, knowing that they would get their turn soon to use the equipment. Pupils take increasing responsibility as they move from year to year. The older pupils look after the younger ones. Many take turns as monitors, helping in different ways around the school. Teachers expect older pupils to become more responsible for their work. For example, they challenge them to work together to use their knowledge to solve problems in mathematics and science. Teachers also enable pupils to appreciate the wonders of the world in which they live. For example, they use literature, art and music very successfully to allow pupils to express and understand their feelings. In an excellent music lesson, the teacher used her very good subject knowledge to extend pupils' appreciation of the effect of music on their senses. Pupils interpreted the rhythm in their movements to link it to the movements of machines. The teacher used staccato rhythm to enable them to emphasise the particular movements. She then changed the style and mood and required the pupils to reflect on how this would affect their movements. This enabled pupils to gain a greater understanding of how moods can change and contributed significantly to their personal development.

The very good Foundation Stage enables children to make a very good start to their schooling. They make very good progress in their learning. The school builds on this very successfully to ensure that pupils continue to make consistently very good progress throughout the school.

15. Children in the nursery settle quickly and happily into school routines. They benefit from very good teaching, very effective teamwork and a stimulating learning environment. Attainment on entry is wide, although broadly average overall. Children make very good progress towards their early learning goals². Most exceed them by the end of Reception Year, especially in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, personal, social and emotional development; and physical development. All staff have excellent, warm and caring relationships with all the children in their care. Children are happy and clearly enjoy the wide range of learning activities. They understand and respond very positively to the high expectations which staff have. For example, as soon as they arrive, children collect their names and badges to let staff know that they are here! All staff work excellently together to ensure that all children are fully and purposefully involved. A particular strength is the focus on developing children's speaking and listening skills. Every opportunity is taken to involve children in talking to staff and to each other. For example, the teacher called the attendance register and involved each child by asking questions about the day and the weather. This is a feature, initially started in the nursery, which teachers extend very effectively throughout the school. It enables pupils to attain well above average standards. Most become confident, polite and articulate speakers.
16. The nursery has clear, well-established systems and procedures that children quickly understand. This enables them, with guidance where needed, to participate fully in all activities. Staff make good use of on-going assessment to record how individual children are progressing. The teachers then use this information to focus their attention on a particular activity in order to extend children's knowledge and skills. Adults in the Foundation Stage ensure that children know what is expected of them in terms of their behaviour and the way they respect others and their property. This is a major factor in allowing staff in other years to extend pupils' personal development and to contribute to the harmonious atmosphere within the school. For example, one nursery child accidentally caught another with a toy train. The other pupil was upset, but the teacher intervened very effectively and encouraged the child to apologise for the hurt caused. The teacher then explained 'Wouldn't it be helpful if we all say sorry when we hurt someone?' The children agreed. This contributes to the very caring and supportive approach, which is clearly evident throughout the school. The strong Foundation Stage team work very closely together to ensure that the Reception Year activities build very effectively on the work covered in the Nursery. They provide detailed information on each child to the next class teacher, which ensures that teachers consistently build progress on prior learning. This pattern is then repeated as pupils move from year to year and on to the adjoining junior school.

The school provides a very good range of learning activities. It fully includes all pupils. Teachers match activities closely to pupils' learning needs to enable them to achieve their full potential.

17. The school provides a very good curriculum. It focuses on the teaching of basic skills, particularly in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Teachers ensure that they make full use of the recently improved resources for information and communication technology. For example, teachers' plans and lesson observations show that teachers give pupils frequent opportunities to use their information and communication technology skills. For example, pupils use computers, digital cameras or

² Early learning goals – these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer mainly to achievements children make in the following six areas of learning; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

tape-recorders, to extend their literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers make very good use of computer programs directly linked to the topic being taught, especially in mathematics. This reinforces and extends pupils' knowledge and understanding. The school has retained a very good range of curriculum activities. It promotes these, for example in music and physical education, very successfully by very good resources and facilities. It enhances the curriculum by a good range of trips, for example to Middleton village, Aston Hall, Rookery Park and Birmingham museum, and visitors such as the local police, fire service and a local artist. These extend pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, for example, of the history and geography of the local area.

18. A particular strength of the school's curriculum programme is the way in which teachers plan the range of activities to meet pupils' learning needs. Teachers use on-going assessment information to check on how well pupils have grasped a particular skill or concept. They use written comments when marking work to assess if the pupil has understood or still has some uncertainty. They then use these comments to keep pupils informed about how well they are doing and to plan the next stage of the work. Teachers use this information to focus on particular weaknesses and to organise their activity groups. They plan a very good range of activities to challenge pupils of different ability. They make very good use of extension activities, which require more able pupils to apply their knowledge, for example, to solve more difficult mathematical problems. Teachers work very closely with support staff to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are fully included in all activities. The school emphasises very strongly that all pupils are fully involved in all activities and they must receive good guidance and support where needed to ensure that their needs are met. For example, high quality support is given in a physical education lesson to enable a pupil with special educational needs to work on the large apparatus. This allows him to improve his confidence and extend his physical skills.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

19. The school has no significant weaknesses. It provides an excellent education for its pupils and enables them to attain very high standards.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

20. The headteacher, staff and governors should maintain the excellent quality of education the school currently provides. By continuing to monitor and evaluate the standards closely, they should identify any areas for further improvement.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	2	13	3	0	0	0	0
Percentage	11	72	17	0	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)	6	216
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	65

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	36

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	16

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	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.28
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 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	30	30	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	29	27
	Girls	27	29	28
	Total	54	58	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (97)	97 (97)	92 (98)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	26	27
	Girls	27	28	27
	Total	54	54	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (97)	90 (98)	90 (98)
	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	8
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	98
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.1
Average class size	28.7

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	7.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	144

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.0
Total number of education support staff	2.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	58
Number of pupils per FTE adult	12.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 / 01
	£
Total income	540,201
Total expenditure	519,489
Expenditure per pupil	2,351
Balance brought forward from previous year	105,010
Balance carried forward to next year	125,722

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 29 per cent

Number of questionnaires sent out	222
Number of questionnaires returned	64

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	80	20	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	89	11	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	80	20	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	61	31	3	2	3
The teaching is good.	94	6	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	70	28	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	16	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	86	12	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	81	15	2	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	89	11	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	94	5	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	34	13	4	4