

INSPECTION REPORT

ROBIN HOOD INFANTS' SCHOOL

Sutton, Surrey

LEA area: London Borough of Sutton

Unique reference number: 102981

Headteacher: Mrs P Cook

Reporting inspector: Mr Christopher Gray
21037

Dates of inspection: 30 June - 1 July 2003

Inspection number: 246255

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 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Robin Hood Lane Sutton Surrey
Postcode:	SM1 2SF
Telephone number:	0208 643 3688
Fax number:	0208 661 1200
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A Haizelden
Date of previous inspection:	9 March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

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PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils' attainment is well above average by Year 2 in English, mathematics and science

1. Few pupils begin in Reception with knowledge of letters and writing, as their earliest work shows. By the end of their third term, pupils have learnt consistent letter formation and higher-attaining children are ready to join letters. During the inspection, children were learning about cows and how important they are to humans. Surrounding their own drawings of a cow, they wrote many of the products we get from them. Most children had written more than six words, most of them recognisable in the attempted spellings, naming products such as *leather* and *butter*. One higher-attaining child volunteered to write a book about cows, to which she added a page a day, with a drawing and a few sentences of her own story, and which she read clearly and with expression to an inspector.
2. Pupils in Year 1 combine their reading and writing skills when they use small reference books to write suitable questions about bees. Many children knew words such as *thorax* and *abdomen*. One higher-attaining pupil wrote, 'How many stripes does a bee have?' and then, after looking through several books, realised for himself that his question did not have an answer.
3. Year 2 pupils use their literacy skills in many subjects, as is shown by work in religious education when they retell the story of Jesus's calming of the storm. In science, pupils write up experiments in their own words and draw conclusions from what they have learnt; for example, 'Bigger ears are better for hearing.'
4. Pupils keep *Golden Books*, which form permanent records of their development in writing and are used as part of the target-setting process. These records show that pupils of all abilities make very good progress from the start in Reception, and are rightly valued by parents.
5. Records show that pupils for whom English is an additional language also make very good progress. Teachers monitor carefully their levels of speaking, listening, reading and writing and analyse appropriate targets for future development. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported - for example, through the extra step in identification called *class action*.
6. In mathematics, pupils of all abilities have a clear understanding of place value; higher-attaining pupils round numbers to the nearest hundred, using their knowledge of larger numbers. Pupils write their own problems for given sums and interpret those written by others. They understand simple equivalent fractions and higher-attaining pupils work out the halves and quarters of numbers up to 50.
7. Pupils in Year 2 were observed using their numeracy skills in a very good science lesson, where they were testing the relationship between stretch in a rubber band and the force applied to a plastic ball. Careful measurement and recording was needed to investigate the circumstances for the longest distance travelled. Attainment in science was also high in this lesson. Most pupils could explain what was required for a fair test and could connect the stretch of the band with the propulsion of the ball; as one higher-attaining pupil put it, 'The more you pull the elastic, the more force it pushes the ball with.'

Pupils are keen learners. The school places strong emphasis on pupils' personal development and they are starting to grow up with a clear awareness of their responsibilities.

8. A feature of this school is the extent to which pupils enjoy their lessons. They answer questions enthusiastically, work hard at written work and contribute thoughtfully to class discussions. In

drama, they immerse themselves in a role, following the very good example of their teacher. Part of a key issue at the last inspection was to involve pupils more in their own learning by helping them to assess their own work. An important feature of this is the high quality of marking evident in much of pupils' written work. As an example, in the record of the Year 2 science work, pupils responded very well to teachers' written encouragement, showing them how to draw conclusions out of what they had observed; for instance, a higher-attaining pupil wrote after an investigation into friction that it showed, 'The smoother the surface, the faster the car', rather than simply saying what had happened, as in earlier work.

9. An important initiative during the current school year has been the target-setting day. On a day's closure, parents were invited to make 15 minutes' appointments with the class teacher and to bring their child along. The school made other arrangements for families unable to attend on that day, so that parents of all pupils were met. Parents and children arrived in advance of the appointment, and children explained their work to their parents. The school provided crèche facilities for those parents who chose to meet the teacher without their child. The result of the day was that each child had a target in English and mathematics, which was agreed with parents and children and signed by all parties. An inspector met a group of Year 2 pupils to discuss what they had thought of the process. It was clear that all of the children knew what their targets were, used them in their work and were aware of how far they had achieved them. One girl could even comment on how well her friend was doing. Parents also spoke highly of the value of this to their knowledge of their children's progress.
10. The school council is a good forum for encouraging pupils to take responsibility for school life; for example, the council records show that pupils discussed how to make lunch-times better, and their suggestions included not only what adults could do for them (such as lunch-time games) but also how the pupils themselves could help - politeness, or less mess on the floor. The record also shows that the ideas met with some success. A very good idea at lunch-times is the 'Golden Table', which is spread with a neat cloth and flowers. Pupils whose behaviour has been commended by the meal-time assistants are invited to have their lunch there and their names are announced in assembly.
11. The curriculum for personal, health and social education is very good. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported by the *Take Time Project*, with simple exercises for ten minutes a day, designed to improve balance, co-ordination and body control. A study of the effects of this shows a marked improvement in writing skills, letter recognition and general willingness to learn. All pupils have regular 'Circle Time', where the class sits in a circle and follows agreed rules so that all who want can express an opinion. These sessions are well focused because the co-ordinator has planned a very clear curriculum. A very good example was seen in Year 1. After several fun exercises designed to settle the children and get them to relax in front of others, the circle considered in pairs what we need for health and happiness. Particularly good ideas - such as 'friends' or 'smiles' were written by the teacher in the Golden Book. The pupils went on to consider what pets need, and how far it is the responsibility of humans to look after these needs. Children showed a real awareness of how pets differ from wild animals and what they personally are responsible for if they have a pet.
12. Pupils also act as mentors to others in certain lessons. For example, in a Year 1 writing lesson, one boy is regularly chosen to work with a girl whose writing skills are less well-developed in order to discuss with her what can be written down. This was seen in action and both pupils produced work of good quality, independently.

The quality of leadership of the headteacher and senior staff is very good and governors are well involved.

13. The school prides itself on a rich and broad curriculum and inspection evidence corroborates this very good provision. Pupils attain high standards in core subjects and use their literacy and numeracy skills well to enhance their learning in other subjects, as displayed work on topics such as *Africa* or *North American Indians* demonstrates. Standards are high in physical education, but

the inspection, being short, provided insufficient time to judge standards in other subjects. None the less, the quality of pupils' displayed art and written work suggests the success of the initiative to keep a broad curriculum. The school is a very happy community, which sets the integration of all groups of adults and children at its heart; for example, the good effects of 'Circle Time' are extended to the meal-time assistants.

14. This shows that the vision of the headteacher for the school's development is very good, and her educational direction is clearly shared by her deputy, whose leadership skills complement those of the headteacher in a very effective way - for example, in her monitoring of the *Take Time Project*, mentioned in paragraph 11. The responsibilities of the senior management team are clearly delineated and carried out effectively.
15. A clear timetable for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching means that all teachers have their work evaluated about three times a year. Responsibilities are delegated well and the headteacher undertakes dual monitoring to ensure that the same standards are applied by subject leaders. The findings are tied effectively to Performance Management; for example, recent monitoring showed the need to increase the amount of time given to investigation in science, and the sample of pupils' work scrutinised by the inspection shows that this is now a strong feature of pupils' understanding. Monitoring by senior management has also identified the inconsistency in marking in a few classes, though action taken has not yet been fully effective in all cases.
16. Governors are more strongly involved in future development than they were at the last inspection. A recent initiative has been the sharing of a full evening meeting between all staff and governors to evaluate the success of past plans and to set priorities for a three-year period. Funding is used wisely to meet objectives, though the split between the financial year and the school year, on which the school improvement plan is based, means that priorities and budget cannot be planned simultaneously. Special needs funding is very well spent and pupils are taken off the register as well as added. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests, all pupils with special educational needs reached average levels.
17. Governors make good use of the principles of best value in contracts and services. They also study analysis of the school's results and compare pupils' results with those of similar schools. Systems for monitoring the cost-effectiveness of individual initiatives are informal.
18. The school office is run efficiently. Office staff are welcoming and give a very good first impression of the smooth running of the school. An example of how smoothly it runs is that the school was undergoing serious building works during the inspection, yet the school appeared to run as smoothly as if there were no holes in walls or leaking roofs. Finances are kept in good order and the most recent audit was responded to in detail. A budgetary surplus of nine per cent of income is being used to fund the recent change in admissions, whereby children enter the Reception class in September and January but no longer after Easter. This means extra classes for part of the year, and will use up the surplus within two years.

The quality of teaching is very good.

19. The principal reason for the success of teaching is teachers' high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This was evident in pupils' recorded work from across the year as well as in lessons. In an excellent science lesson for Year 1 pupils, the teacher expected pupils to be able to explain the meaning of *investigate* and *predict*, and they were quite clear about the terms. When they were investigating which material could keep a teddy bear from getting wet in the rain, she pressed her questioning to make the children see for themselves a difference in types of material. The conversation went along these lines:
question: 'What can you say about this material?'
answer: 'Fabric does not keep teddy dry.'
question: 'But isn't an umbrella covered with fabric? [Yes] So why does an umbrella keep teddy dry?'
answer: 'Because it's special fabric.'

Further questioning elicited the word *waterproof* from a higher-attaining pupil, and the class was delighted with the test that followed, when the teacher poured water over a pupil dressed in a cagoule.

20. In two very good English lessons for Year 1 pupils, the teachers set clear time limits and told the class how much was expected from each group in that time. Pupils were writing their own questions about bees, but they also had to be able to answer them, using reference books and appropriate technical vocabulary.
21. Occasionally, teachers' expectations miss their mark. This happened during the inspection, where a series of Year 2 mathematics lessons had been planned as an investigation into fractions. Here, the lesson objectives for different ability groups were not sufficiently distinguished, with the result that a few lower-attaining pupils struggled.
22. Teachers' relationships with their pupils are also very significant in the pupils' high achievement. Teachers clearly like their pupils and this is obviously reciprocated. In a very good drama lesson for Year 1 pupils, based on the theme, *Bears on the Moon*, pupils mimed bears entering a space ship and landing on the moon. Working in pairs, they planned the bears' movements, circling and stretching in a range of shapes. The lesson was very exciting but this did not stop the behaviour from being very good. The teacher trusted the pupils to do their best and they responded without inhibition, so that the level of discussion, performance and suggesting refinements was high.
23. Teachers are clear about what pupils are intended to learn from a lesson, and they explain this to them at the outset. This helps pupils to learn very well, because they know where the lesson is going and are expected to assess their achievement in terms of the objective. In a very good science lesson in Year 2, the objective was to investigate the relationship between forces of pushing and pulling. This experiment was described in paragraph 7. By the end of the lesson, pupils were able to make a link between the amount of pull exerted by the user and the amount of push that resulted. The lesson had been planned to take place outside, but, the unseasonable July rainstorms preventing this, the classroom was cleared of furniture to allow a large space for firing the balls. The pupils' sense of responsibility and their good co-operative skills helped the lesson to be a success.
24. Good use of well-trained teaching assistants contributes to pupils' very good learning. In the science lesson just referred to, the teacher and assistant both used careful questioning to lead pupils towards the lesson objective. In the Foundation Stage, assistants develop pupils' letter recognition skills effectively while the teachers support other groups.
25. Foundation Stage teaching is supported by a very well planned curriculum, with good emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Assessment is very clearly organised, and the co-ordinator has devised a system of levelling in numeracy and literacy which is based on pre-National Curriculum levels. The co-ordinator is exemplary in promoting high standards of personal responsibility in young children.

The school's partnership with parents is an important part of its success and parents respond with very good opinions about the school's work

26. The value set by parents on the school's work to involve their children in their own learning was discussed in paragraph 9. Parents also appreciate the work of the school in all its aspects, as shown by the results of the parents' questionnaires. The response rate was about 25 per cent and over 90 per cent of parents agreed or strongly agreed with eleven out of the twelve questions - a very strong message of parents' good opinions. The remaining question was about the range of activities outside school, which 17 per cent thought could be stronger, though inspectors found the number and range to be good for an infants' school.
27. As well as formal parents' evenings and meetings, parents are able to speak to teachers at the end of the school day, because teachers see all pupils from their classroom into the playground, and this ease of access to parents is welcomed by parents. The school has a good range of

information on curricular matters and on day-to-day issues. Parents are encouraged to help in school and many respond with a regular commitment, as well as helping children to read at home they assist with spellings and mathematics homework. The Friends' Association is active and raises a lot of money for school initiatives.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school should ensure that the very good use which many teachers make of marking of pupils' work is applied consistently in all classes

28. The clear effect of teachers' very good marking was discussed in paragraph 8, above, based on evidence from pupils' science work. However, not all teachers make such thorough use of written encouragement, preferring to make verbal comments. Since pupils have good literacy skills and are clearly influenced by their own knowledge of their progress - as discussions with a group of Year 2 pupils showed - a written record of teachers' comments and tips is much more beneficial to pupils' development. It is also useful for parents who want to help their child learn at home.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

29. This is a very good school and there are no major key issues. However, the school should consider ways of ensuring consistency in teachers' use of marking and analysis of work to set appropriate objectives for all pupils.
(Paragraphs 21 & 29)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	17
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	8	5	3	0	0	0
Percentage	6	47	29	18	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 almost six 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)	247
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	36

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	43

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	35

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	36	40	76

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	31	32	33
	Girls	39	39	38
	Total	70	71	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (93)	93 (93)	93 (99)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	31	32
	Girls	39	39	39
	Total	69	70	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (92)	92 (96)	93 (99)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
182	0	0
1	0	0
21	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
7	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
2	0	0
8	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
5	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, 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)	10.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.3
Average class size	27.4

Education support staff: YR– Y2

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	135

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002/3
	£
Total income	588,775
Total expenditure	608,575
Expenditure per pupil	2,464
Balance brought forward from previous year	73,051
Balance carried forward to next year	53,251

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	3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	247
Number of questionnaires returned	65

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	27	3	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	27	0	3	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	68	29	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	54	38	6	0	2
The teaching is good.	81	14	0	3	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	38	2	3	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	25	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	24	0	3	0
The school works closely with parents.	59	35	3	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	78	19	0	3	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	30	0	3	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	51	6	11	8