

INSPECTION REPORT

**BRACKEN LANE PRIMARY AND NURSERY
SCHOOL**

Retford

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122560

Headteacher: Mrs K Brittain

Reporting inspector: Nicolas Hardy
29262

Dates of inspection: 24th – 27th March 2003

Inspection number: 248360

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 – 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bracken Lane
Retford

Postcode: DN 22 7EU

Telephone number: 01777 705017

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Gary Longden

Date of previous inspection: 3rd November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
29262	Nicolas Hardy	Registered inspector	Mathematics Art and design Physical education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9348	Mary Lamage	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23801	Jenny Kime	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Science Design and technology Special educational needs	
32751	Linda Maskill	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Geography History Music	Education inclusion
4303	Simon Reynolds	Team Inspector	English Religious Education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bracken Lane Primary School is situated in the market town of Retford in Nottinghamshire. The school is attended by 210 full time pupils and a further 68 part-time children attend the nursery making it larger than most primary schools. All pupils are from a white background and no Traveller or refugee children attend the school. A majority of pupils live within walking distance of the school and most come from private housing. The percentage of pupils having free school meals is below the national average. The number of pupils having special educational needs is below average as is the percentage of pupils who have statements of special educational needs. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is above that expected for their age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a satisfactory school with many strengths. The school has successfully improved standards in English and in mathematics since the last inspection and attainment in these subjects is at above average levels. Inspection evidence finds that above average standards are currently being attained in science. Standards in geography are at similar levels to those seen at the time of the last inspection and remain above expected levels. Improvements in other areas of the curriculum such as information and communication technology and art and design have been achieved and these too are now at above expected levels. Standards in religious education and in music were unsatisfactory at the time of the last report but are now satisfactory. Standards of teaching are satisfactory overall. There are examples of good teaching throughout the school but most of the very good and sometimes excellent teaching is concentrated in Years 5 and 6 and this enables pupils to make rapid progress at this stage. There are four mixed age group classes, taking pupils from reception and Year 1 and from Years 3 and 4. The progress made by pupils in these classes, while being satisfactory, could be improved if teaching consistently took account of the needs of pupils of differing ability and age groups and provided a greater challenge. The leadership and management of the school, which were criticised in the last report, are now good and enable subject co-ordinators to contribute positively to the development of the education offered by the school. The value for money provided by the school is good.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching provided in Years 5 and 6 is of very good quality.
- Current standards of work are above average in English, mathematics and science.
- The provision for and progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The quality of pupils' behaviour and the relationships they establish with one another are very good.
- The procedures for eliminating bullying, racism and sexism are very good.
- The very good leadership provided by the headteacher has ensured that the school has a clear focus for future improvements.
- The shared commitment of the school staff to the improvement of the academic and personal development to the pupils is consistently high across the whole of the school.

What could be improved

- The quality of teaching by ensuring that the assessment information gathered is used by all teachers to improve the quality of planning so that pupils of differing ages and abilities learn consistently well.
- The training of teachers working with children in the reception age group to ensure that they develop a clear knowledge and understanding of what pupils in this age group are to learn and the practical means by which they do this.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1997. Since that time, standards in religious education and music have been improved and are now at satisfactory levels. Standards in English, mathematics, information and communication technology and art and design have also improved. Subject co-ordinators are now in a position to influence the development of their subjects through the checking of colleagues' planning and regularly completing a scrutiny of pupils' work. The quality of the teaching of English and mathematics is checked regularly and the school agrees that this should be extended further to cover other subjects. The identification of training needs for teachers and support assistants is now good and staff are given a wide range of opportunities to extend their knowledge and skills. Good quality systems to assess pupils' progress are now in place, but could be used more extensively to help teachers plan what pupils of differing ages and abilities are to learn next. Schemes of work are in place for all subjects. The leadership and management of the school are much improved so that there are greater opportunities for the discussion and development of school policies and practice. Governors are also now fully involved in this process.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	All schools			Similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	B	A	A	B	well above average A above average B Average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	A	A	B	C	
Science	A	A	C	D	

In the national tests taken in 2002 by pupils in Year 6, standards in English were at well above average levels when compared to all schools and have improved consistently since 1999. In mathematics, standards are above average and, despite a fall in 2002, have remained above average since 2000. The findings of the inspection show that current standards in science are above average although results in the 2002 tests fell to average levels. Standards in information and communication technology, geography and art and design are also at above expected levels. In other subjects, standards are at expected levels. The national tests for pupils in Year 2 conducted in 2002 reveal that standards of reading and mathematics are at

above average levels, and standards achieved in writing are within the top five per cent of those achieved in the country.

Since 1999, results in English have risen sharply and more rapidly than those seen nationally, before falling slightly in 2002. Results in mathematics also rose steeply between 1999 and 2000 before gradually falling. Over the four-year period from 1999, results in mathematics have risen at rates similar to those seen nationally. In science, results improved well between 1998 and 2001, before falling to average levels in 2002. Based on the results of pupils taking the tests in 2002, progress in English is good and is satisfactory in mathematics and science when compared to their attainment on entry to the school. The school's targets for 2003 are based on pupils' previous achievements and offer a good level of challenge for both teachers and pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils are interested in what they are given to learn and enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are polite, courteous and caring towards others and this creates a positive atmosphere towards learning.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are very good. Where provided, responsibilities are taken willingly. Pupils' understanding of the values of people from different faiths is more limited.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above the national average and good punctuality promotes prompt starts to lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	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 amount of teaching that is satisfactory or better is very similar to that seen in the typical school but there is less teaching that is good or better than is usually found. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced well and this is helping to raise standards in both English and mathematics. The quality of teaching varies between year groups and this inconsistency in learning is preventing standards being higher. The teaching in the nursery is usually good, although some learning experiences are too directed. In the mixed reception and Year 1 classes teaching is satisfactory overall but contains some teaching that does not enable reception age children to learn through practical experiences and this is unsatisfactory. Teaching in Years 2, 3 and 4 is satisfactory and enables pupils to make the appropriate amount of progress, but higher standards could be achieved if the teaching was consistently focused on meeting the needs of pupils in different age groups and

of differing abilities. The teaching in Years 5 and 6 is good with several lessons that are very good and some that are excellent. The teaching of English and mathematics is satisfactory in most classes and good in Years 5 and 6. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are usually well taught. The relationships between pupils and teachers are positive and this, together with the good behaviour management, is a strong feature of the teaching. What pupils of different levels of attainment are going to learn is not always consistently built into lesson plans or sufficiently evident in all of the teaching or work provided, and this is the main reason for the variations in the quality of learning and achievement. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is consistently effective although the quality and detail in some individual education plans for these pupils should provide more specific and measurable targets for what they are to learn.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The range and quality of the curriculum have been improved well since the last inspection and additional activities including lunchtime and after-school clubs, visits and visitors, add positively to pupils' educational experiences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The needs of pupils are identified at an early stage and good levels of support are provided through experienced and skilled teaching assistants. More detailed individual educational plans for some pupils with special educational needs would improve planning and provision.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. Spiritual and moral development is good and shows itself in the quality of pupils' behaviour, and attitudes towards school and to other pupils. Social development is very good with a wide range of activities for pupils to be involved in, including residential visits for older pupils. Pupils' understanding of their own culture is good but their knowledge of the diversity of different cultures in Britain is not as well developed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Child protection procedures are good. No examples of bullying, racist or sexist behaviour were seen and pupils report that any minor incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively.

The school has a positive partnership with parents and many parents are actively involved in providing help in school, for example through the 'Better Reading Partnership' and providing safety cover during swimming sessions. The information provided for parents is satisfactory but does not always provide sufficient detail on what pupils will be learning during the next term.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall but with very good leadership by the headteacher which ensures a very clear educational direction to the work of the school and has contributed strongly to higher standards. The improved management structures are making a positive contribution to developments across the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are very supportive of, and committed to, the school and are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about their role.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Improved assessment procedures and an effective analysis of test results of strengths and weaknesses enable pupils' progress to be tracked throughout the school. The priorities for action as detailed in the school improvement plan are very clear.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school has worked hard to improve its efficiency since the last inspection enabling it to target its scarce resources at areas for improvement. The principles of best value are applied well to most areas but the school does not yet apply them to all areas of major educational development.

The levels of teacher and support staff are appropriate for the size of school. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge to meet the needs of the full National Curriculum. The external accommodation is satisfactory with a spacious playground and field. Internal accommodation is unsatisfactory in several respects. The size of the school hall restricts opportunities for full classes to undertake the gymnastic elements of physical education and lessons are often interrupted because pupils need to pass through rooms to reach other parts of the school. Resource levels are satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy coming to school and behaviour is good. • The teaching is good and this enables their children to make good progress. • Their children are expected to work hard and do their best. • They would feel confident in approaching the school with a problem. • The school is well led and managed. • The school is helping their children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of information that they receive on how their child is progressing. • How closely the school works with parents. • The range of extra-curricular activities on offer to pupils.

become mature and responsible.	
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The inspection team agrees with parents that their children enjoy school and are well behaved. Teaching was found to be satisfactory overall but with much very good teaching for older pupils. Information received by parents could be improved by providing more detail on what pupils will learn. The school does provide a range of opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's work. In contrast to views expressed by a small number of parents the inspection found that the range of extra-curricular activities, especially those for older pupils, is good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The evidence from the inspection shows that standards being attained by eleven year olds are good in English largely because of the good progress pupils make in developing writing skills. Standards in mathematics and science are also above the levels expected. Since the previous inspection standards have improved in English in the juniors, while standards in mathematics have improved at both infant and junior stages. Since the previous inspection standards in science have been maintained at above average levels, except in 2002 when results fell to average levels.

2. In the 2002 national tests for eleven year olds, pupils achieved well above average results in English, above average results in mathematics but average results in science where standards fell from well above average results achieved in 2001. In English and mathematics, a much higher than average number of pupils achieved the more difficult Level 5. Very few pupils did not attain the expected Level 4 in English, but in mathematics, one in five pupils failed to attain the average or above average levels. This resulted in lower overall results in mathematics. In science, although almost all pupils achieved the expected Level 4, not enough pupils reached the above average Level 5.

3. When compared to schools taking their pupils from similar social backgrounds, the standards attained in the national tests in 2002 were above average in English, at average levels in mathematics but below average in science. When compared to the results achieved when these same pupils were at the end of the infant stage, progress made in English is satisfactory, that in mathematics is below expected levels, but it is well below the levels expected in science. There are some differences in the performance of boys and girls from one year to the next. In English, for example, girls usually achieve higher results than boys. In mathematics and science the reverse is true, with boys performing at higher levels than girls. In almost all cases the results achieved by pupils are above the national average, except in science where the results of girls sometimes fall to below average. When trends over a period of five years are taken into account in English, mathematics and science, these show standards rising sharply from 1999 before very gradually falling from a high point reached in 2001. Rises in overall attainment are similar to those seen in most other schools.

4. In 2002, the seven year olds achieved standards that were above average in reading and mathematics but well above average in writing. When compared with standards achieved by pupils from similar schools, standards were at average levels in reading and mathematics but well above average levels in writing. In both reading and mathematics an above average number of pupils attained the more difficult Level 3 and few pupils failed to achieve the expected average Level 2. In writing however, a high percentage of pupils achieved Level 3 when compared to other schools and this strongly influenced results. Results over the previous five years show a rise in standards in writing at rates much faster than those seen in most other schools. Standards in reading are similar to the above average levels seen in 1998. There has, however, been a fall in overall standards in mathematics.

5. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the good provision for them, including the extra teaching support and the sensitive way staff help them take a full part in lessons. Personal targets are outlined in the pupils' individual education plans but these sometimes lack detail to help teachers in their planning to meet some pupils' needs. The school does not have a policy for the education of gifted and talented pupils and does not maintain a register of pupils who may fall into this category.

6. When children first enter the nursery, their attainment is above that usually expected for their age. Many are confident and articulate and quickly settle into the established routines. The progress made by nursery children is good, thanks to the good teaching they receive. Children of reception age only make satisfactory progress, largely because there are insufficient opportunities for them to learn by undertaking practical activities to increase their understanding of different ideas and concepts. A lack of space for teachers to organise these activities, together with a limited understanding of how young children learn, slows progress.

7. The school's targets for English and mathematics for pupils aged eleven have been set in consultation with the governors. The targets are appropriately based on extending their prior attainment by more than the expected amount and should form a good challenge for both pupils and teachers.

8. Standards in a range of subjects have improved since the previous inspection. Above average standards in English have been maintained in the infants and improved to above average in the juniors. Standards in mathematics have been improved in both the infants and juniors and are now at above average levels. A scrutiny of current work in science indicates that standards are above average by the end of Year 6. Improvements in information and communication technology have been made and attainment is now above average by the end of the juniors. In both religious education and music where standards were unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, improvements have been made and attainment is now at expected levels. Standards in history and design and technology remain at expected levels but are above average in geography and art and design. No overall judgement can be given on the quality of pupils' work in physical education except in swimming where standards are well above average.

9. The standard of speaking and listening is above average across the school. By the age of eleven most pupils are confident and articulate speakers who use a wide range of technical vocabulary accurately. A good example of this was in a science lesson where pupils discussed the varying factors that would influence the brightness of a bulb in an electrical circuit and set about testing these. Pupils have well-developed skills in reading and most reach the required standard by the end of the infants. Standards of reading remain above average by the end of the juniors although most of the emphasis remains on the reading of fiction rather than on the development of non-fiction reading. By the end of Year 6 the quality of writing is above average with many pupils writing in mature and imaginative styles using a neat and legible script. The progress pupils make in English is good overall.

10. Standards in mathematics are above average by the time pupils reach the end of the juniors. A recent focus for mathematics has been the development of pupils' problem solving skills. This, together with a good understanding of mathematical vocabulary and an ability to explain the strategies they have used to solve the problems, has helped to raise standards. Progress is good for pupils in Years 5 and 6 and is satisfactory for pupils in Years 3 and 4. This is because older pupils receive a greater level of challenge and the tasks they are expected to complete are a better match for their needs. Good use is made of mathematics in other subjects such as science and geography, and pupils are gaining experience in the use of information and communication technology in collecting and using mathematical data.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The attitudes, values and personal development of pupils in the school are good and have a positive impact on standards attained. This aspect of the life of the school has been maintained since the last inspection.

12. Throughout the school pupils show interest and enjoyment in the tasks they are set and parents are almost unanimous in saying that their children are enthusiastic about all aspects of school life. Over the whole school, pupils have good attitudes to their work. As they move through the school pupils generally demonstrate increasing concentration and application, so that in Years 5 and 6, attitudes to work are very good. Occasional lapses in concentration by individual pupils are skilfully dealt with by adults so reducing the disruption to the learning of the class as a whole.

13. Behaviour in the school is very good overall and has improved since the time of the last inspection. There have been no exclusions in the last year. On occasions, behaviour is excellent. Exemplary behaviour was seen in several school assemblies. Pupils entered and left the hall without the need for adult intervention. During each assembly they sat quietly and still, showing great self-discipline and respect for all those present. This very high standard of self-discipline was also seen in the dining hall where minimal supervision is necessary to ensure a very pleasant, social occasion for pupils. The playground is harmonious and pupils play happily together on a wide range of attractive outdoor equipment. When minor squabbles do occur, the school's behaviour policy is applied consistently, encouraging pupils to try and resolve the situation for themselves with adult support available if necessary. This approach encourages pupils to develop self-discipline and not rely on imposed discipline. It is very successful. There were no incidents of bullying seen during the inspection and pupils say such incidents are very infrequent. Nevertheless, pupils are very aware of the way in which they should deal with such situations.

14. The personal development of pupils is good. From their earliest days in school pupils are encouraged to reflect on the consequences of their actions and how they may affect other people. This approach is extended in 'Circle Time' where pupils talk about their feelings and how others may feel in certain circumstances. Relationships are very good throughout the school. There are positive relationships between all groups of pupils in the school: older pupils play with younger ones, boys and girls work and play together and pupils of all abilities co-operate well in lessons, frequently helping each other. Pupils respond well to the opportunities they are given to take responsibility for jobs around school and the recently formed school council is increasing these opportunities. Pupils have shown initiative by organising fund-raising activities for charities of their own choice. However, opportunities for pupils to show initiative or take responsibility for aspects of their learning are less well developed.

15. Attendance at the school is good, although it has fallen a little since the time of the last inspection, because of the number of pupils who take holidays in term time. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting were very aware of the need for their children to attend school and to inform school of the reason for absence. In addition, the questionnaires completed for the inspection indicate clearly that children enjoy school and want to attend

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Some teaching, especially that in Years 5 and 6, is very good with some lessons being excellent. This helps pupils make rapid progress when they are in these classes. The teaching in other classes is mostly satisfactory although a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen for younger pupils.

This was because the teaching did not take account of the needs of all the pupils, resulting in some pupils not learning enough.

17. The teaching in the nursery and in the mixed reception and Year 1 classes is satisfactory overall. In the nursery, teaching is often good with the teacher and teaching assistants working well as a team. Staff use many opportunities to extend children's language and their understanding in the different areas of learning by questioning them skilfully. Activities are usually interesting and well organised and this motivates children well, although at times there are sessions where the teacher is talking are too long and children become restless. This often occurs at the beginning of the session. The nursery teacher has a good knowledge of what children need to know and understand, and organises and arranges practical activities to meet this need. This enables children to make good progress. On some occasions activities are, however, too teacher directed. Teachers of children in the mixed reception and Year 1 classes do not always plan and provide sufficient opportunities for the younger children to learn by experiencing practical activities. On a number of occasions, reception age children were asked to complete the same tasks as the older pupils and this was inappropriate because the younger children had not yet acquired the basic skills through practical activities. This resulted in learning and lessons that were unsatisfactory and progress was slowed. Where practical activities are provided, for example in an art activity, children become more interested and enthusiastic learners.

18. The teaching in Years 1 to 4 is satisfactory. Some good and occasionally very good teaching is also seen for this age group. In these lessons, the teachers' plans enable all pupils to complete work that provides a good level of challenge that extends their thinking and increases their learning. This is not always the case. On some occasions, teachers' planning does not take sufficient account of individual pupils' needs, resulting in more able pupils being asked to complete work at similar levels to that provided for their average and less able peers. This slows the progress of the more able in these lessons. While progress is usually satisfactory, standards could be higher if the quality of teaching was consistently raised to that of the best. Teaching improves in Years 5 and 6, largely because all pupils are well challenged, required to think carefully about the answers they give, and teachers' expectations of what pupils will know and can do by the end of the lesson are higher. What pupils of all abilities will learn in these lessons is made clear to them, and teachers return to these ideas regularly during lessons to check what has been learned. Questioning is often very good at this stage and pupils are expected to provide full and reasoned answers. Tasks are challenging and result in most pupils working hard.

19. Pupils with special educational needs continue to be supported well, particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons, and this helps them to make good progress towards the targets set for them in their individual education plans. In some pupils' individual education plans the targets for what they are expected to learn next are too general and lack the necessary detail to help teachers in their planning. Support staff working with individuals or small groups of pupils with special educational needs give effective help enabling these pupils to take a full part in lessons. Staff encourage pupils with lots of praise and this boosts confidence and means that they concentrate well on the tasks set for them.

20. The quality of the teaching of English and mathematics is satisfactory in the infants and good by the end of the juniors, largely because of high proportion of very good teaching in Years 5 and 6. Much of this teaching is enthusiastic, interesting and energetic with teachers demonstrating good levels of knowledge in many lessons. Basic skills are taught well, especially towards the older end of the school, resulting in standards in reading, writing and mathematics being above average. The management of pupils is consistently good in both infants and juniors. As a result of this, lessons have purpose and pace, and most pupils know what they are expected to do and acquire the skills and knowledge expected. Pupils are

expected to work hard. This was seen to advantage in a scrutiny of pupils' work where the tasks given were completed and regularly marked with good advice given on how and where to improve the quality of work. This is helping to raise standards. When available, teaching assistants provide good levels of support for all pupils and enable them to join in fully with lessons. Homework is regularly set and at the levels recommended. It is regularly marked and forms an important addition to pupils' work in lessons.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

21. The curriculum has improved substantially since the previous inspection and is now good. The curriculum for children in the nursery is good, being firmly based on the required areas of learning so that all children make good progress towards, and sometimes exceed, the expected goals before they move into the reception classes. Currently, reception children are taught in mixed-age classes alongside Year 1 pupils. This results in unsatisfactory provision for the reception group, slowing their progress where the curriculum is not appropriate for their age.

22. Coverage of the National Curriculum and religious education is now planned much more systematically so that statutory requirements are met and progression in the teaching of skills and knowledge is organised more methodically and consistently. Time allocations for different subjects are appropriate, although the time set aside each week for class music is limited and that allocated to physical education is higher than in most schools due to the time taken up by the swimming programme. Literacy and numeracy are given appropriate priority, providing pupils with a secure basis for their learning in other subjects. Some useful links have been forged between subjects, for example when aspects of the geography curriculum are drawn into work in English or in the computer suite. Generally these links are not planned at a whole-school level and opportunities are missed for literacy and numeracy skills to be applied systematically in some other subjects.

23. The statutory curriculum is enhanced by a developing and successful programme for personal, social and health education. The headteacher offers a strong lead in this area, integrating well-planned class lessons with recent initiatives such as the school council and records of achievement and with the programme of assemblies. Prominent displays in the entrance area publicise the importance placed on this aspect of the school. Good use is made of external support to provide sex and drugs education for older pupils.

24. A satisfactory range of other links has been forged that enhances and enlivens the curriculum. Visits, such as a recent day at Southwell Minster, are carefully planned to fit in with the topics being studied, in this case the study of pilgrimage by older pupils in religious education. Visitors and special events such as a recent Africa Day make a positive contribution. Some opportunities are missed, for example in religious education, to use first hand experience to help pupils understand elements of different faiths whilst also supporting staff whose knowledge of a number of religions may be limited. The range of extra-curricular activities is good. Whilst mainly provided for older pupils, as in most primary schools, staff voluntarily organise popular clubs that cover sport, music, computers and other areas. Pupils have an opportunity to begin to learn a modern foreign language or to play the violin and there is a lunchtime club for capable mathematicians run in association with another local primary school. A residential event is organised annually for older pupils.

25. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They are sensitively supported by staff and given effective extra teaching help in some lessons, particularly literacy and numeracy. Pupils with special educational needs usually work alongside their

peers and are given tasks that help them make good progress. They are appropriately withdrawn for further help to learn basic skills. The school takes due regard of the new Code of Practice for special needs and has adapted its procedures in accordance with it. The school has a policy for high attaining pupils, but this does not currently include gifted and talented pupils. Following external advice, staff felt that there were no pupils that would fit into the definition. The school needs to re-examine this and establish a policy that would identify and, if appropriate, help cater for pupils who are found to be gifted or talented.

26. Curriculum planning has been transformed since the previous inspection. A two-year programme has been agreed which is carefully monitored and adjusted in the light of experience. Currently the programme does not match the organisation of the reception and infant classes into a three-year unit. The school recognises this and are taking action. Medium-term plans, making use of national guidance, set out the learning to be covered each term, often providing specific guidance about planning individual lessons. These ensure a common experience where there are parallel classes.

27. In some parts of the school there are weaknesses in the way the medium-term plans are translated into lessons that match the profile of each class. In the best cases, teachers use their knowledge of what the pupils already know to fine-tune the lessons, providing different groups with appropriately challenging work. Too often this does not happen and pupils are all presented with the same work regardless of what they have already learned. In mixed-age classes, too little account is taken of the two age groups, for example to provide added challenge for the older pupils. For example, in a Year 3/4 English lesson on using a thesaurus, the older pupils already had experience of this. The planning did not clarify what new skills they were expected to learn, although the higher attaining pupils did benefit from an extension activity where their knowledge was applied in constructing interesting sentences for a glossary.

28. The school is strongly committed to social inclusion. Every effort is made to ensure all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and other school activities. A notable example of this is the way pupils with special needs – and particularly those whose needs are profound and long term – are supported to take a full part in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Instances were seen where the response of other pupils was extremely positive, with a remarkably high level of mutual respect. Where pupils are withdrawn from lessons for a short period of intensive teaching, staff are generally sensitive to the need to change things round to make sure that the same lessons are not being missed each time. Further work is needed to ensure that all staff are aware of any gender issues, for example when selecting pupils to read out their work or to undertake special duties.

29. Good links exist with other schools in the locality. The ‘family’ of primary schools meets regularly for training and support. Good contacts exist with the main secondary school in the town to which most pupils transfer. Unusually, these contacts start in Year 5 and some joint curriculum work in literacy and information and communication technology is planned between the two phases. Satisfactory use is made of the community, including the initiatives of the school council to gain support and funding from local businesses. These links could be further extended to give pupils greater insights into the world of work and enterprise.

30. Overall, provision for pupils’ personal development is good as it was at the time of the last inspection. It is developing strongly as it is a priority in the school’s improvement plan.

31. Arrangements for pupils’ spiritual development are good. The school provides pupils with opportunities to explore their own values and beliefs and those of their classmates in personal, social and health education lessons and when discussing stories in their literacy lessons. Lessons in religious education give opportunities to learn about the beliefs of the

world's major faiths. Daily assemblies, as a whole school, or in class bases, include an act of collective worship which incorporates a period for quiet reflection, but sometimes this is too short for pupils, especially the older ones, to truly reflect and order their own thoughts. There are also limited opportunities for quiet, reflective time during lessons, although pupils do reflect on their behaviour and the effect it may have on others. They are encouraged to contribute ideas in lessons and, increasingly, on wider aspects of school life. Pupils' contributions to discussions are valued by the adults in school. Throughout their time in school, pupils are encouraged to listen to their peers and respect their views.

32. Pupils' moral development is well promoted, beginning with the very good role models presented by all adults in the school. There are seven clearly expressed values, which form the code of conduct in the school and pupils are aware of them. In addition, assembly is frequently built around a moral story or message. This is picked up, as appropriate, in classes during the day. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong, showing respect for the needs, interests and feelings of others. Consequently, pupils show respect for property and care for the environment. Older pupils have the opportunity to discuss moral issues in the news. The personal, social and health education lessons create opportunities for pupils to explore moral concepts such as rules, honesty and rights. Pupils are given opportunities to help others by supporting a range of charities.

33. The school's provision for social development is very good. All staff encourage pupils to collaborate and support each other. The school council should provide a very good means of involving all pupils in the development of the school. Although it was only formed at the beginning of this school year, pupils have already influenced school life through improved playground provision and water being available throughout the school day. The school is truly inclusive, where pupils from a range of backgrounds and widely differing abilities work very well together. Pupils frequently demonstrate in lessons mature social development. They know how to encourage each other, use praise effectively and willingly help each other.

34. Arrangements for pupils' cultural development are satisfactory overall. Pupils have a good knowledge of British culture and there are some opportunities for pupils to consider the influences that have shaped this culture through visits to places of historical interest in the locality. Through lessons such as art and music pupils are made aware of the artistic and cultural heritage of various parts of the world. Visits, such as taking part in a World War II experience, and visitors, such as a Nigerian musician, enhance the cultural development of the pupils. The school places emphasis on giving the pupils a global dimension to their learning and wherever possible reference is made to maps in all areas of the curriculum. Religious education lessons give the pupils an awareness and some understanding of the major faiths of the world. However, the pupils' awareness of the diversity of cultures that are represented in their own locality and throughout Britain, is too limited.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. The steps taken by the school to ensure the welfare, health and safety of its pupils are good and have improved since the time of the last inspection. This is undoubtedly a caring environment where the safety of pupils is given high priority in lessons and the welfare of pupils is very well catered for in the daily life of the school. However, although there is a culture of care in the school and pupils are well known by members of staff, procedures to underpin some aspects of safety in the school need further development. At the time of the inspection there is no comprehensive risk analysis in place for the school. The vigilance of the caretaker ensures that any damage providing a potential hazard is quickly seen and repaired.

36. Child protection within the school is good with the appropriate procedures being known by all staff including the lunchtime staff. Awareness of child protection issues are raised on a regular, planned basis across the school but the person responsible for child protection matters in the school has not received training for a number of years. This is well understood by the school, and action to rectify this is planned for the near future.

37. The effectiveness of educational and personal support and guidance in raising pupils' achievements is satisfactory. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting desired behaviour and very good procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour. The school successfully uses its aims and values as a focus for the life of the school, establishing a very supportive community. This consistent focus on values has a significant impact on ensuring that the very small amount of unacceptable behaviour rarely escalates to the level of oppressive behaviour. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

38. The monitoring and supporting of pupils' personal development are satisfactory and improving. At present it is informal, but with the implementation of the new personal, social and health education curriculum, this monitoring will become more standardised across the school. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory and appropriate to the circumstances of the school.

39. The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress are good and there is a continuing programme of improvement being undertaken to make the information more useful and accessible. The deputy headteacher collects and analyses results from national and optional tests and this is providing an increasingly clear picture of the areas in which standards need to be raised. There have been considerable improvements in the quantity and quality of information available to teachers since the last inspection. The information covers not only English, mathematics and science but also provides judgements on progress in the other subjects in the curriculum. Regular updates are made to this data. Information and communication technology is used well to record the information and this is made available to all teaching staff. However, when planning lessons, not all staff use this information to clearly identify the needs of all pupils and this results in some inappropriately challenging work being provided for some pupils. Currently there is no policy for the teaching of gifted and talented pupils, nor is there a register of pupils who may fall into this category. This needs to be rectified.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. There is a very effective partnership between the school and the parents and this aspect of school life has improved since the time of the last inspection. Parents feel this is a very good school. The inspection broadly endorses parents' positive viewpoints. A small minority of parents believe that the school needs to provide a greater range of activities outside of lessons, that the school could work more closely with them and that they should be given more information about the progress of their children. The inspection found these aspects of the life of the school to be at least satisfactory, with the range of activities outside of lessons to be good.

41. The impact of the involvement of parents on the work of the school is good and parents make a very good contribution to children's learning at school and at home. There is a home/school reading system that is very well used to enable parents to support their children's reading. A brief guide on how parents can support their child's reading, together with reading diaries, provides very clear advice on improving pupils' reading. Examples of a very good dialogue between parent and teacher, sometimes involving pupils, were seen in

these diaries, giving excellent three-way support. Parents also receive copies of their child's current writing targets and are able to comment on their child's progress. In other areas of the curriculum, information about how to support their children is less formal. However, the usual practice in the school, of homework being recorded in a homework book, enables parents to see where the teacher is focusing and to add their support in the appropriate areas.

42. Parents contribute to children's learning by accompanying school visits, are very supportive of school functions and raise significant funds for the school. This involvement enhances the learning opportunities available to pupils in the school. In addition, large numbers of parents work in school on a regular basis as volunteers, some having undertaken specialised training to work as reading partners in school. The contribution of all volunteers is highly valued by the school and makes a very positive contribution to pupils' learning. A very good example of this was seen in swimming sessions where a group of dedicated parents provide safety cover while pupils are undertaking swimming lessons.

43. The quality of the information provided for parents is satisfactory. The school prospectus contains all necessary information in a clear and informative way, but there are some minor omissions of statutory information in the governors' annual report to parents. The school is aware of these. There are opportunities for regular contact with parents through reading books, homework, school newsletters and open evenings. Curriculum newsletters are produced each term by class teachers and give a general overview of what is going to be taught. The annual reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory overall, although the quality is variable across the school. All give good descriptions of what pupils know and understand in all subjects of the curriculum, but they do not all explicitly report on progress. They make no reference to attainment in relation to national or personal expectations except at the end of each key stage. This makes it difficult for parents to know how their child is performing in relation to national expectations or judge the rate of progress being made. Some reports give some indication of the next step for the pupil in English, but rarely in any other subjects. No reports clearly state any targets for the pupil.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The leadership and management provided by the headteacher are very forward looking and positive and have enabled the school to move forward strongly since the previous inspection when the quality of leadership and management was a key issue for improvement. The headteacher and her effective deputy headteacher have a clear vision of what the school needs to do to improve in the future and have introduced well-developed systems and strategies to do this. In this she is ably supported by teachers, support staff and governors, who share her goals and aspirations. There is also a clear recognition that there are still areas for improvement and these, too, are shared by staff and governors. The school's priorities for its future development are very clearly set out in the school improvement plan, which not only provides a blueprint for the future but also assesses the success of the systems already in place. A willingness to listen to new ideas and to re-assess current practices is a consistent feature of the management and teaching in the school. The school has an agreed set of aims for the development of its pupils and these reflect the high standards it sets, not only in pupils' educational development but also in their development as responsible and mature young people. This is shown in the above average standards it achieves, particularly in English and mathematics for eleven year olds, and in the conduct of pupils. There is now an effective management structure across the school. The headteacher has delegated responsibilities for subject development, for assessment and for teachers' training needs well, and this too is helping to raise standards across the school. Teachers now write their own plans for the development of their subjects, and check on the quality of

colleagues' planning and the progress made by pupils. The quality of teaching is also regularly checked in English and mathematics but this remains to be developed extensively in other subjects. This is recognised by the headteacher who plans further developments in this area.

45. The governors fulfil their statutory duties satisfactorily although some minor issues remain to be tackled. Through the positive leadership provided by the chair of governors and the headteacher, and through undertaking appropriate training, governors' understanding of the standards achieved by the school has improved and is now good. Governors now have the confidence and knowledge to find out answers to their questions, rather than wait to be told. Individual governors work closely with subject co-ordinators to investigate the quality of planning and teaching as well as the plans for the further development of each subject. This is proving effective in giving governors a greater insight into the running of the school and enabling them to prioritise future developments. It has also enabled governors to develop a realistic view of the strengths and areas for development needed in the school and to provide well-informed support for the headteacher in the making of decisions.

46. The systems in place for checking the quality of teaching are good especially in English and mathematics where the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators regularly monitor the quality of teaching in classrooms. The monitoring of teaching in other subjects is less well developed, a fact recognised by the headteacher. Written reports are provided after each monitoring visit and where necessary, additional training is provided. Governors regularly observe the subject co-ordinators working in classrooms. Reports written by governors following their observations are made available to the full governing body. Systems to support teachers' training are good and the responsibility of a senior member of staff. The training needs of teachers are identified at an early stage and support provided through external agencies or through the school's own systems. Most training is to support the school's own priorities for improvement. The support for new members of the teaching staff is good and enables these staff to settle quickly into their new roles.

47. The financial management of the school is good and effective systems are in place to keep a close check on what has been spent. Income and expenditure are a little below average for the size of school and result in spending being carefully considered and spent on areas that will most benefit the education of pupils. A good example of this is in the employment of skilled and knowledgeable teaching assistants to support pupils with special educational needs. These staff add considerably to the quality of the education provided for these pupils. The headteacher and governors ensure that the school operates within its budget and value for money is obtained with basic resources. Comparisons are also made between the results of the school and other similar schools and judgements made on the quality of courses attended by teachers and other staff. However, the principles of best value are not yet sufficiently rigorously applied to major educational developments such as the improvements in information and communication technology.

48. Teacher and support staffing levels are satisfactory and consideration has been given to ensuring that there are good levels of subject expertise on the staff. The school has satisfactory levels of learning resources to enable it to deliver the National Curriculum except in information and communication technology where resource levels are good. The school is located on a pleasant open site with suitable outdoor facilities for infants and juniors and protected areas for nursery and reception children. Internal accommodation is cramped for many classes. Interruptions to lessons are often caused by pupils needing to pass from one room to another. This is unsatisfactory. Limited accommodation in the school hall also makes it difficult to use the hall safely for physical education with a full class of older pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

49. The school has improved standards in English and mathematics through the effective introduction of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies. In addition, standards in information and communication technology and in art and design have improved to above average levels. The last inspection report identified standards in religious education and music as being unsatisfactory and these have now improved to satisfactory levels. There is,

however, some variation in the quality of teaching across the school and in order to raise standards further the headteacher, staff and governors should:

(1) Improve the consistency of teaching for pupils in reception and in Years 1 to 4 by ensuring that the assessment information gathered is consistently used by teachers to improve the quality of planning of what pupils of differing abilities and ages should learn next by:

- using the good quality assessment information and the information gathered from the marking of pupils' work to improve teachers' understanding of what pupils need to learn next;
- ensuring that all pupils receive an appropriate challenge to extend their thinking and learning; and, thinking and learning for example, reviewing the use of work sheets in subjects such as history and religious education to fully utilise pupils well above average writing skills.
- ensuring that teachers' planning contains sufficient detail of what pupils of differing abilities are to learn in each lesson and that practice matches what is planned.

Paragraphs 16, 17, 18, 21, 27, 39, 60, 72, 75, 80, 83, 88.

(2) Improve the quality of teaching for pupils in the reception age group by ensuring that teachers improve their knowledge and understanding of what pupils of this age need to learn and how this can be achieved. This is currently included in the schools improvement plan.

Paragraphs 51, 52, 56, 58.

50. In addition to the major issues for improvement, the governors should consider including the following in their action plan:

- Ensure that there is an appropriate policy for the identification of gifted and talented pupils and that a register of these pupils is kept.
- Give greater opportunities to pupils to experience the different cultures and faiths of modern multi-cultural Britain.
- Make additional representations to the appropriate authorities for improvements to be made to the layout of classrooms to ensure that pupils are not constantly disturbed by the need for others to use some rooms as a thoroughfare to move from one part of the school to another.
- Ensure that the detail contained in the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs contain targets for improvement that are short term, achievable and that progress can be accurately measured.

Raised in paragraphs 5, 19, 24, 25, 34, 39, 48, 121, 123.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	7	20	20	2	0	0
Percentage	4	14	39	39	4	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 two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	34	210
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	24

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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
	2002	18	8	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	16	17
	Girls	7	8	8
	Total	22	24	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (95)	92 (95)	96 (90)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	17	17
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	24	25	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (95)	96 (90)	96 (88)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	20	23	43

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	15	18
	Girls	20	17	19
	Total	39	32	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91 (91)	74 (87)	86 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	15	18
	Girls	20	19	18
	Total	37	34	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	86 (74)	79 (83)	84 (91)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	209	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	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 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.3
Average class size	26.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	114.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	34
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	47.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	11.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
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.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	583,829
Total expenditure	554,907
Expenditure per pupil	1881
Balance brought forward from previous year	47,990
Balance carried forward to next year	76,912

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	244
Number of questionnaires returned	151

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	31	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	40	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	49	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	50	8	2	4
The teaching is good.	62	35	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	47	13	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	30	6	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	28	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	40	43	13	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	60	32	6	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	45	1	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	34	17	4	17

Other issues raised by parents

At the parents meeting a small number of parents expressed concerns about the time it took to identify pupils with special educational needs. The inspection evidence found that pupils with special educational needs are identified quickly and additional help is provided promptly by the school.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

51. When children enter the nursery their attainment is above what is typical for children of their age. Children make good progress in the nursery, due to the good provision and effective teaching in each area of learning. Nursery staff work well as a team to help children learn. Children make satisfactory progress in reception, as a result of the overall satisfactory quality of teaching in each area of learning. Their rate of progress in reception, however, is slowed down, because, at times, insufficient opportunities are provided for children to learn through interesting practical activities. By the end of the reception year, most pupils are above expected levels of attainment in their personal, emotional and social development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. They reach expected levels in physical and creative development.

52. The school has changed its admission policy this year and children now start school a term earlier, at the beginning of the term in which they reach the age of five. Planning and teaching have not yet fully taken account of this change. At times, activities are too structured and directed by adults for the younger age group now in the nursery, particularly at the start of each session. Teachers in the mixed reception and Year 1 classes lack sufficient knowledge and understanding of how young pupils learn effectively through practical tasks. The cramped spaces, lack of storage space and physical separation of nursery and reception areas hinder good provision for this age group. For example, the book corners in nursery and reception classes are not well organised to be comfortable and inviting places for children to independently read books. The school has identified the need to make improvements to the provision for reception pupils; this is a main priority of the current school improvement plan.

Personal, social and emotional development

53. Nursery staff support children's personal, social and emotional development well through the way they provide many interesting activities for children to choose during the main part of each session. Children confidently go to different activities and often concentrate for extended periods on the various tasks. They put on aprons by themselves before painting and co-operate very well in imaginative play situations, for example when 'packing up furniture to move house'. At times, opportunities are missed to encourage children's independence, especially during registration at the start of each session, when children sit listening to instructions for too long.

54. In the mixed reception and Year 1 classes, reception pupils' personal, social and emotional development is promoted satisfactorily. During a whole-class introduction to oral number problems, for example, careful questioning by the teacher at the appropriate level of difficulty enabled reception pupils to increase their confidence as well as their mathematical skills. Opportunities are provided for the reception pupils to choose activities, though there is often too sharp a distinction made between formal 'work' when pupils are told what to do and opportunities to 'play'. This results in slowing down the rate at which pupils learn to work independently and co-operate with each other. By the end of the reception year, almost all of the pupils' personal, social and emotional skills are above those expected for this age, though their level of independence is not as well developed.

Communication, language and literacy

55. Nursery staff provide many opportunities to extend children's language and literacy skills and children make good progress. This was seen, for example, when a small group of children worked with a member of the support staff on a problem solving activity. Using toy cars and materials such as string they discussed how to remove a fallen tree lying across a road so that cars could pass. With skilled questioning and support by the adult, children discussed what needed to happen, predicted the outcomes of using various methods and successfully solved the problem together. Nursery children are given many opportunities to develop their listening skills at the start of each session though staff do not use this time well to promote children's speech. Many books are shared with nursery children and they listen with real absorption to stories. Children are encouraged to write their names and the older nursery children attempt simple sentences.

56. In the mixed reception and Year 1 classes, teachers promote reception pupils' language and literacy skills satisfactorily. Pupils listened well to a play script of the *Three little pigs* that the teacher read with good expression and they enjoyed joining in the repetitive parts. The task that followed for the majority of the reception pupils, to cut out pictures of the characters in the story and match them with simple speech phrases that the teacher had written, satisfactorily reinforced pupils reading and writing skills. More able reception pupils appropriately worked with Year 1 pupils, writing their own sentences under pictures of the characters. Opportunities were missed, however, to create interesting ways for the pupils to learn, for example, by asking the pupils to act out the story and decide what each character would have said, then to write it, and to read out their writing as a little play. By the end of the reception year almost all reception pupils are likely to be able to read simple books and write a few sentences. Many can already do so and are working at levels beyond those expected.

Mathematical development

57. Nursery staff organise many practical ways to extend children's understanding of numbers, shapes and sizes. For example, in one session the teacher used toy teddies 'bouncing on the bed, one fell off and bumped his head' to demonstrate subtraction effectively. The children became very involved with predicting then counting the number of teddies remaining and stating it as a 'take away' sum, though many lost interest and were inattentive when the teacher wrote the sums down.

58. In the mixed reception and Year 1 classes, staff support pupils mathematical development satisfactorily overall. Pupils learn to count objects, write the correct numerals and understand what putting one more object in the group would mean. More able reception pupils work appropriately with Year 1 pupils on simple addition. Too much of the work given to reception pupils, however, is 'sums', without the pupils having a clear understanding of what they are doing and why and so the rate of progress slows. In one lesson the teaching was unsatisfactory and most of the reception pupils learnt little from their tasks. Teachers miss opportunities to set meaningful mathematical problems, for example by counting the numbers of different toy animals, adding two groups of animals sharing the same 'field' that is marked on the mat, taking an animal away and recording the results. The work in the more able reception pupils' books shows they are asked to do addition sums to 20 and think about 'tens and units' but some are clearly having difficulty understanding the work and are not given enough practical activities to help them do so. Overall, the vast majority of reception pupils will have met the targets set by the end of the reception year and a good proportion will be working beyond them.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

59. In nursery, children learn about the life-cycles of different animals that lay eggs, such as frogs, butterflies and birds. They enjoy investigating the shape and texture of pebbles in a tray. They are encouraged to work out the best way of joining two yoghurt pots, with a variety of equipment available to choose from. Parents help in the nursery, supporting children's growing skill in using a computer program to draw pictures. Children learn to draw simple maps of the nursery and to think about the differences between school now and 'a long time ago'. At times, the work is more directed by adults than is normally seen in nursery situations. This is partly because many nursery children already have considerable knowledge and understanding of the world, which the staff are building on appropriately, though it is also due to staff still needing to adjust their teaching to the younger age range of children in the nursery.

60. The mixed reception and Year 1 classes, and the Year 2 class, follow the school's planning for science, design and technology, history and geography, based on a two-year cycle of topics. It is clear from reception pupils past work that they are often given the same worksheets as Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. Whilst reception pupils come into school with good knowledge and understanding of the world, they make satisfactory rather than good progress in these subjects. The teaching is satisfactory overall, though pupils are not always given appropriate work. This was seen in one lesson, where an investigation into which materials changed shape and remained changed and which reverted to their original shape, could have really challenged the reception pupils and helped them learn, if the materials had been more carefully chosen. The teaching in that lesson was unsatisfactory, as the teacher was not clear enough about the concepts to be learnt, and the materials given to the reception children did not allow them to find out about different materials. Teachers are aware of the curriculum guidance for this area of learning, but do not always plan carefully enough for the different learning needs of reception pupils. At the end of the reception year, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the world that is above expected levels for their age.

Physical development

61. Nursery staff provide a wide variety of activities in order to develop children's physical skills, both inside and outdoors. Children show good levels of skills in pedalling the wheeled toys and manoeuvring them up and down the slopes outside. They show good control of their movements when dancing to different music in the hall. Most children handle paint-brushes well to create desired patterns and lines while painting. Staff provide dolls' clothes with a variety of different fastenings and, in one session, a child sat for a considerable time persevering with attempts to dress the doll.

62. Teachers in the mixed reception and Year 1 classes satisfactorily extend reception pupils' physical skills. The school has recently built a covered area outdoors for reception pupils to use, though in the lessons seen this area was being used well for imaginative play rather than to develop pupils' physical skills. In one physical education lesson seen, the teacher had chosen interesting panpipe music, which reflected different moods. This resulted in all of the pupils, including the reception pupils, moving rhythmically to express happy and sad feelings. They curled and stretched, rolled and skipped, showing expected levels of skill in using the space around them and moving imaginatively. In the classrooms, reception pupils are given appropriate opportunities to use equipment such as scissors and pencils carefully to increase their control and manipulative skills and do so with expected levels of skill.

Creative development

63. In nursery, many opportunities are provided to support children's creative development and they make good progress. Children experiment with the different colours and shades they can make when mixing paints. They become absorbed in imaginative play, organising the way to pack up their belongings and deciding what colours to decorate their new house. Adults generally intervene sensitively in order to extend the play, though at times there is too much adult direction and children's ideas are not built on carefully enough. Children enjoy listening to and moving imaginatively to music. They join in songs and rhymes well.

64. In the mixed reception and Year 1 classes, reception pupils are given appropriate opportunities to develop their creativity and make satisfactory progress in extending their creative skills. They learn how light and dark effects can be created using the side of the points of pencils and crayons. In the art lesson seen, reception pupils became very interested in the different textures to be found in the school grounds and enjoyed making rubbings of them. When given the opportunity to do so, reception pupils become involved in imaginative play, discussing excitedly how to dig for buried treasure in the sand and what to do if someone comes to try and take the treasure. Teachers do not always value and extend the learning that pupils do in these activities sufficiently well, in order for pupils to make good progress. By the end of the reception year, pupils' attainment is at expected levels in their creative development.

ENGLISH

65. Results in English have improved steadily since the previous inspection. In 2002, although slightly down on the previous year, they were still well above average and broadly in line with what might be expected given the school's context. Standards seen in the inspection are better than in most schools. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress and their achievement is sound. They continue to make satisfactory progress through Years 3 and 4 but, because of good teaching, progress accelerates in Years 5 and 6 so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.

66. Weaknesses reported last time in the curriculum for reading and writing and in the overuse of worksheets have been addressed, largely through the adoption of the National Literacy Strategy. These developments have helped raise standards. More recently, efforts to improve writing have successfully lifted the attainment of all pupils. This has already boosted results in Year 2 and is now having an equally positive impact in the junior classes. Improvements in writing demonstrate the school's capacity to raise standards further.

67. Test results indicate that over time almost all pupils have achieved the expected levels at the ages of seven and eleven. An increasingly large proportion of pupils are reaching the higher levels. Last year well over a third gained the higher levels by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is better than in most schools. Average scores show girls doing better than boys. Results in English are a little stronger than those in mathematics and science, so that the school is doing slightly better than schools with a similar level of free school meals, reflecting the emphasis placed on the subject.

68. Standards in speaking and listening are above average and similar to those reported last time. Pupils make satisfactory progress during their time at Bracken Lane because teachers create opportunities in many subjects for them to talk about things and listen carefully. A notable feature in all classes is the respectful and patient way that pupils listen to each other even when a speaker may be hesitant. By the age of seven, virtually all pupils are confident speakers to a range of audiences. They enjoy using new words, a strength that continues through the junior classes when most pupils latch on to specialist vocabulary in an

impressive way. For example, in a poetry lesson in Year 5, many of the higher attaining pupils included words such as 'alliteration' and 'stanza' when describing extracts from classical poetry. Some pupils show very high levels of confidence and skill so that by the age of eleven they can construct a discussion, showing awareness of the audience and the need to adopt appropriate language whilst at the same time paying close attention to what others are saying. Good support for pupils with special educational needs ensures that they make good progress, as in a Year 6 lesson when the unobtrusive help of a teaching assistant successfully encouraged a pupil with complex special educational needs to take part in a challenging classroom discussion.

69. In reading by the age of seven almost all pupils have been taught secure skills to sound out words and most can use the punctuation and the meaning of the text to read with expression. Pupils who have made a slower start are given a lot of extra support and it is unusual for a pupil to move into the juniors without reaching the expected level.

70. A good proportion can read fluently and accurately, answering simple questions about the text. By the age of eleven pupils can respond to a range of texts, although the school's approach continues to emphasise personal reading of fiction at the expense of non-fiction in some classes. Pupils have favourite authors and book styles and a good proportion can understand what lies behind characters and plots to predict what might happen next. They have a satisfactory understanding of how to use non-fiction texts and the Internet to gather information. In most classes girls are more enthusiastic about books than boys.

71. Standards in writing are higher than in most schools and pupils of all abilities achieve well by the end of Year 6 because the school has worked hard to improve teaching and to adapt the literacy hour. The most notable feature is the good range of genres and styles that most pupils can use, reflecting a strong and appropriate emphasis on this in the teaching. For example, recent evidence was seen of pupils writing play scripts, reports and parodies whilst younger pupils can record instructions and send invitations as well as writing stories. Spelling and handwriting develop well so that virtually all can write neatly and accurately in pen by Year 6. Some pupils' writing is constricted by awkward ways of holding the pencil and forming letters because this is not taught consistently enough. Computers are used regularly. In the final two years in the school, pupils' writing skills and the pride they take in their work progress well as they use more adventurous vocabulary and more complex sentence structures. This was typified in one book with mature phrases such as "...so as you can imagine it was very challenging and tricky...."

72. The school is having some success in promoting the use of literacy skills across the curriculum. In subjects such as science and geography, writing skills are often applied well, but in other subjects such as history and religious education many pupils, including the higher attainers, do not show their real abilities when too many worksheets are used that are the same for all. Writing targets are pasted inside the cover of pupils' exercise books. In literacy these include very good provision for pupils and parents to evaluate progress as well as the teacher. Unusually writing targets are also identified for subjects such as science. This is an imaginative initiative, although the targets are not yet sufficiently reflected in the work or in teachers' marking. Overall, opportunities for pupils to apply reading and writing skills in other subjects are missed and the expectations of what some pupils might achieve are too low.

73. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the infants and good in the juniors because of the very good, and sometimes inspiring, provision in Years 5 and 6. This reverses the picture described in the previous inspection. Strong features throughout the school include the very detailed marking of work, the support given to specific groups of pupils who may need a boost, the involvement of parents and homework in the learning process and the much improved target-setting for individuals and groups of pupils. In most classes the

National Literacy Strategy is utilised well to provide varied, lively and well-focused teaching. The opening part of these lessons is usually the most successful, especially where teachers combine different learning strategies, making relevant links between different parts of the syllabus. For example, in a Year 5 lesson the poem *The Highwayman* was used not only to explore how the poem was constructed but to give pupils experience in reading to an audience and appreciation of the text as a whole. Teaching in the younger classes demonstrates a good subject understanding, for example in the way lessons in Years 1 and 2 regularly help pupils to improve their knowledge of letter sounds.

74. Some imaginative teaching outside the daily literacy lessons adds real value to the learning. The 'Better Reading Partnership' involves parents and is extremely well organised to measurably improve pupils' skills. In class, separate 'guided reading' sessions are usually effective, although more could be done to focus the silent reading undertaken by the rest of the class. A reading link between Year 2 and Year 5 pupils is also well organised to contribute to pupils' social as well as reading skills. Homework is regularly completed, most effectively when it is linked with ongoing class lessons, and reading diaries provide a valuable communication between home and school.

75. Lesson objectives, sometimes expressed more as what pupils will *do* rather than what they will *learn*, are set out in the planning. The ways in which these are then shared and used in teaching are too variable. In the best cases they give real focus to the lesson and are used to set and assess different and challenging tasks according to pupils' abilities. In a Year 6 lesson for instance, the pupils were able to show the teacher what they had learned and what they were still unsure of. In other lessons the planning is not clear about the learning needs of different groups and objectives are copied out more as a ritual than as a shared basis for the learning. In these cases it is typically the most able pupils who mark time. This is compounded in the marking of one or two teachers who consistently praise the work of higher attaining pupils, but give them very little guidance about how they could move on further.

76. Some teaching lacks a clear understanding of the principles within the National Literacy Strategy. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, as is the additional teaching that helps identified groups make good progress, often reaching the nationally expected level by the ages of seven and eleven.

77. The school's programme to check standards and teaching in English has been extensive, resulting in the identification of relevant priorities in the school's improvement plan and for individual teachers. Assessment is comprehensive and increasingly focused on National Curriculum levels. This has improved since the previous inspection. The experienced subject co-ordinator has only recently been appointed, but as a member of the senior management team has begun to identify areas for development. The teaching of speaking and listening is less systematic than the curriculum for reading and writing. Some steps have been taken to raise boys' achievement, but not all staff are sufficiently aware of the issues. Although the subject is generally well resourced, the library area suffers from having to double up for other uses, including serving lunches, limiting its availability for pupils to study independently.

78. Improvement in the subject since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Curriculum, resources and assessment have developed well but more now needs to be done to raise expectations and the quality of teaching in all classes to those of the best.

MATHEMATICS

79. Current standards are above average in both the infants and juniors. Although subject to variations from one year to the next, results in mathematics in the juniors have risen at rates better than seen nationally over the last five years. However, results in the infants have fallen steadily over this time. The targets that the school has set itself for 2003 provide a significant but appropriate level of challenge for both pupils and teachers. The standards achieved are currently higher than those reported at the time of the last inspection.

80. By the end of the junior phase most pupils can provide detailed explanations of a variety of strategies they use when solving problems. Most pupils record their work accurately and neatly. The use of mathematical skills and knowledge to solve everyday problems is a positive feature of the mathematics lessons in Years 5 and 6. A very good example of this was seen in a lesson in a Year 6 class where pupils were attempting to calculate the area of the school playground which contained both rectangular and circular shapes. The teacher's very good questioning helped pupils to use and extend their understanding of area and to develop strategies to complete the calculation. In this they demonstrated a wide and accurate range of mathematical vocabulary. Pupils are able to interpret data from graphs that they use to create line graphs of pulse rates and use co-ordinates to locate points along positive and negative axes. They understand the importance of approximating their answers before completing their calculations. Pupils have a good understanding of decimal fractions and link this well to place value. A good understanding of angles is also evident, with pupils able to draw and calculate the number of degrees in a variety of shapes. Progress is good for the majority of pupils in the Year 5 and Year 6 classes. The teachers take care to ensure that pupils of this age receive an appropriate level of challenge, especially for the more able, and this enables the school to achieve above average numbers of pupils attaining the more difficult Level 5. Information and communication technology is also beginning to be used to help pupils to gain a greater understanding of numbers. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 make satisfactory progress. This is because they do not always receive a suitable challenge for either their age or ability, for example pupils of similar ability in Years 3 and 4 receiving the same work. This is unsatisfactory. By the end of Year 4 pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of metric measurement, and are able to complete problems linked to time and to calculate the areas of rectangular shapes.

81. By the end of the infants, pupils have a secure understanding of the value of numbers up to 100 and are able to count forwards and back in threes, fours, and fives. They understand odd and even numbers and can explain why a number like 19763 is odd rather than even. Pupils know the names of two-dimensional shapes and can describe them by the number of sides, faces and corners. They draw accurate graphs using the data they have collected, for example on eye colour. Most pupils use numbers confidently and apply their mathematical knowledge to solving problems. Many are developing a good mathematical vocabulary, understanding words and phrases such as double and halve, more than and less than, and are becoming more confident with mental calculations.

82. In both infants and juniors, pupils have opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to other subjects. Knowledge of time is used in history and pupils are developing a good understanding of periods in our history. Their study of co-ordinates is put to good use in geography. In science, older pupils use negative numbers when studying temperature and measuring skills are used in design and technology.

83. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but with many good and sometimes very good lessons. For most pupils, the pace and quality of learning are satisfactory but with more rapid progress being made in Years 5 and 6. The work is appropriately planned and enables pupils to receive work at levels most suited to their needs. Where teaching is very good, pupils clearly know what they will learn and the teacher returns to this to check on progress

during the lesson. Clear teaching ensures that pupils understand what they have to do and expectations of the quality and quantity of work to be completed are high. Many teachers have good questioning techniques that help to challenge pupils' thinking and pupils are able to demonstrate their understanding through the answers they give. However, in some lessons there is too much dependence on worksheets that do not provide an appropriate challenge. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported both by teachers and teaching assistants and this enables them to make good progress. Most pupils work hard and try to do their best. Levels of concentration are good, especially where the tasks given are of sufficient interest and challenge, for example in a good Year 2 lesson in which pupils added numbers of increasing difficulty.

84. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has been effective. Teachers follow the guidance provided and gaps in planning and in pupils' knowledge are carefully checked by the mathematics co-ordinator. The use of homework is consistent and adds appropriately to the work in the classrooms. The quality of marking is consistently good, often with comments to improve the quality of pupils' work. The assessment of pupils' work is regularly completed and progress is recorded but this information is not always used satisfactorily to plan what pupils should learn next. The information gained from tests is carefully analysed and used to strengthen areas of the curriculum where relative weaknesses are identified. The quality of teaching is regularly checked and this is leading to improvements in overall standards. Overall the subject leadership is good.

SCIENCE

85. By the end of Year 6, standards are above those seen in most schools. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall and their achievement is satisfactory, given that their attainment on entry to school is above that expected for their age. This is confirmed both by standards of work seen during the inspection and by test results over several years, though the test results dipped in 2002. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

86. By the end of Year 6, pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and good levels of skill when carrying out investigations. Pupils use these skills well when examining electrical circuits and constructing their own experiments to find out how the brightness of a bulb can be changed. They are able to make hypotheses, predict accurately what will happen, for example when bulbs are added to a circuit, and recognise when they have changed more than one variable during the experiment, making it an unfair test and so invalid. They carefully record, in their own words and diagrams, what they think will happen to the brightness of the bulb, and what they are going to do to test this. Pupils' past work shows that they make detailed observations, record the results and evaluate them well. For example, they investigated how long an ice cube keeps a drink cold, recorded the results on a graph showing the time and the temperature of the water in degrees centigrade and drew logical conclusions from the results of the investigation.

87. The quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 is good. Teachers give clear explanations, organise a lot of interesting practical work and carefully check that all pupils understand the tasks, so that pupils know exactly what they are trying to find out and work at a good pace. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to discuss and refine their ideas, giving good support to their speaking and listening skills and well as their social development. Teachers' skilful questioning of pupils while they work really extends pupils' understanding. Pupils with special educational needs are generally supported effectively and helped to participate fully in lessons. This was seen in one lesson in Year 6, for example, where a pupil with special educational needs was asked to be the bulb and light up with a smile when the electrical

circuit was complete and to show a glum face when the circuit was broken. This helped him to gain an understanding of circuits and the rest of the pupils were respectful of his efforts.

88. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain average standards. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not always make the progress that they should, given their starting point. This is partly because of the way the work is planned. Teachers use national guidance but the same work is planned for pupils in Years 1 and 2, and, often, also for children in reception. Teachers do not sufficiently use the careful assessments made of pupils' progress in knowledge and understanding in order to ensure all pupils are given tasks that make them think hard, and much of the work is recorded on worksheets. This means that the more able pupils in Year 2 are not consistently given work that helps them achieve all that they are capable of. The formal assessments of attainment by the end of Year 2 show higher standards than were seen during the inspection. This is partly because teachers mainly base their assessments on discussion with pupils, without sufficiently taking into account the level of the work they actually do as well as what they know.

89. By the end of Year 2, pupils identify several things that use electricity including devices that use batteries, know about some of the dangers of electricity and make a circuit to light up a bulb. Pupils learn about the properties of different materials and describe ways in which some materials change when heated. In both the mixed reception and Year 1 lesson and the Year 2 lesson seen, pupils investigated different materials to see if they changed when bent, twisted, squashed or stretched. Only the more able Year 2 pupils were asked to make predictions first; most pupils started straight away to test the different objects.

90. The quality of teaching of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is judged satisfactory overall, based on pupils' past work, though of the two lessons seen, one was unsatisfactory and one had several weaknesses. The problem with both lessons was that, whilst the planning was taken from national guidance, the teachers had not organised tasks that built on what pupils already knew about the properties of materials, enabling them to extend their understanding. Neither teachers nor pupils knew if the task was to see whether materials sprang back to their original shape or not (building the concept of elasticity) or to see if materials could be changed then put back into the original shape (pliability), or merely whether materials could be changed. The resources used confused the issue, as, for example, pupils did not know what materials a pipe cleaner was made from and there were no examples of materials that could not be bent, twisted, squashed or stretched. Teachers gave misleading information, such as "metal and wood are strong materials that cannot be bent", which did not follow from testing metal paper clips and cloth-covered pipe-cleaner wire.

91. There has been a good level of improvement in provision since the last inspection, though many areas need further improvement. There has been good management and development of the subject, to make the improvements seen. The co-ordinator monitors planning carefully to ensure all aspects required are covered, and analyses the assessment information collected to set targets for year groups. Teachers now use national guidance to help them plan, though the resulting two-year cycles of topics covering two year groups are more successful in the older classes and need rethinking for reception and Years 1 and 2. There is now a good amount of practical, investigative work for pupils to experience, though teachers in Years 1 and 2 need to be clearer about what is to be learnt from such work. Teachers make detailed assessments of the progress pupils make. These now need to be used more effectively throughout the school to plan what pupils are to learn next, to ensure that all pupils, including the more able pupils, have work that makes them think hard and helps them achieve well.

ART AND DESIGN

92. Standards achieved by seven year olds are in line with those expected and are above average by the age of eleven. This is an improvement on the standards seen in the previous inspection in the juniors when standards were in line with expectations. Because of timetable arrangements it was possible to observe only one art and design lesson but evidence has been gathered through a detailed scrutiny of work throughout the school and interviews with pupils. This reveals that pupils receive a suitably wide range of artistic experiences and that there is a strong focus on the teaching of specific skills to improve the quality of pupils' work. Art and design work receives an appropriate percentage of teaching time over the year but shares the available time with design and technology, enabling pupils' creative talents to develop satisfactorily. The pupils' work is displayed sensitively and adds well to the environment of the school.

93. Younger pupils have plenty of opportunities to observe, to draw and to paint. They produce bright, imaginative pictures and portraits of their friends and their favourite toys, using their skills gained from information and communication technology. They explore how to make prints and produce good quality work based on the natural objects they find around the school. Three-dimensional work is also covered with pupils producing collage pictures of the seaside which are of satisfactory quality. Pupils experience the use of clay, and produce good quality tiles, showing that care has been taken with modelling techniques.

94. Artwork develops well in the juniors. Observation skills are an obvious focus for the teaching with many examples of pupils developing good skills as seen in their studies of bicycles, carefully drawn in pencil. Information and communication technology skills are developed well when pupils create pictures in the style of Georges Seurat. The design aspect of the subject is well covered with pupils in Years 3 and 4 creating thoughtful designs for chairs, some of which they carefully draw. Writing skills are also developed to describe the construction and the materials used. By Years 5 and 6 the quality of work is above that expected for their age. Watercolour techniques have been developed well with pupils taking considerable care in the painting of still life pictures of fruit and plants. These show that drawing and painting skills have been taught well with sensitive use of colour, shade and perspective. Pupils have also made and decorated papier-mâché bowls in the style of Australian aboriginals which are of very good quality, demonstrating a high degree of care and attention to design and the quality of finish and decoration.

95. It is not possible to make a judgement on the quality of teaching based on the one lesson seen. Evidence does suggest that pupils do receive an appropriate range of artistic experiences that includes work with clay, printing and collage work. There is limited evidence of pupils experiencing aspects such as weaving and constructing larger scale models. Interviews with pupils indicate that they have examined the work of some famous artists, but their knowledge is not extensive. There is an appropriate policy and scheme of work to guide teachers in their planning. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory and standards improve as pupils progress through the school. There are no arrangements for the subject co-ordinator to check on the quality of teaching although planning and the work on display are regularly monitored.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

96. Standards are in line with those expected nationally by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils make satisfactory progress through the school. This is the same as the judgement reported by the last inspection.

97. By the end of Year 2, pupils investigate how winding mechanisms work, thinking about the well in the nursery rhyme 'Jack and Jill' and the clock in 'Hickory Dickory Dock'. They design simple winding mechanisms, labelling the different parts, such as pencils used for axles and cotton reels for the pulleys, then make them. Pupils list the different rooms in their own houses, describing the function of each room. They draw their houses, labelling the different parts and some of the materials used. They use boxes, paper, glue and tape to make model houses, though choosing whether to follow their drawings or not. In the lesson seen in Year 2, pupils decided on and made improvements to these model houses. The vast majority knew exactly what improvements they wanted to make and selected appropriate resources to do so. They added straw drainpipes, folded card stairs, clear plastic windows and many other refinements.

98. This was the only lesson seen in Years 1 and 2, so firm judgements about the quality of teaching for this age group cannot be made. In this lesson, the teacher gave pupils a suitable challenge, to make a window that opened, and the more able pupils successfully worked out different ways to do so. There was a good range of resources available for pupils to choose from. The teacher extended pupils' thinking well by skilfully questioning pupils as they worked on their models. The teacher and two parent helpers gave good support, helping when there was difficulty with practical tasks, such as cutting through very thick fabric that a pupil had chosen in order to make curtains. All pupils were absorbed in their work and persevered even when they encountered difficulties. During whole-class discussion of the work, however, a significant number were inattentive. This was partly due to the cramped space available, so that pupils could not easily sit comfortably and look at each other's achievements.

99. By the end of Year 6, pupils have appropriate skills and understanding. This term's topic is on slippers. Pupils have looked at a variety of slippers and thought about their appearance, purpose, cost, what materials they were made from, who would use them and appropriate safety aspects. Pupils have made very brief notes and simple sketches to design their own slippers. They are following a series of instructions, partly from a printed sheet, partly the teachers' oral instructions, in order to make moccasins. In the Year 6 lesson seen, pupils were learning and using the specific skills needed to stitch the different bits of the moccasins together, having cut them out in a previous lesson.

100. The quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory. This judgement is made on the basis of lessons seen in a Years 3 and 4 class, in Year 5 and in Year 6, and by looking at pupils' past work and the rate of progress they make. Teachers ensure that pupils know and carry out the processes involved in designing and making things. They teach specific skills well and give good support to those pupils who have difficulty. At times, not enough attention is given to ensuring pupils check their own designs and reflect on them whilst they make a product, rather than just evaluating the finished product. For example, in one Year 6 class, pupils had cut out their moccasin pieces without reference to what size their own slipper needed to be. None of the pupils questioned during the lesson could explain this, or how they thought the slippers would fit them. It was clear that they are used to just following the teacher's instructions rather than reflecting on their designs while they work. Looking at pupils' past work, teachers rely heavily on giving pupils worksheets to fill in. Whilst at times this appropriately focuses pupils' thinking, it often limits what pupils can do, particularly the more able pupils, since all are given the same worksheet.

101. Good improvements to the planning and organisation of the curriculum have been made since the last inspection. National guidance is used as the basis for teachers to plan the topics and there is now a clear understanding of which skills need to be taught and learnt for pupils to build on previous work and make appropriate progress. Teachers carefully assess pupils' levels of skills and understanding at the end of each term's work. These

assessments, however, are not used sufficiently well; they are not referred to when teachers are planning the next term's topic, in order to make sure pupils are given work that matches their level of ability, so that all pupils make the best possible progress.

GEOGRAPHY

102. Attainment at the end of both the infants and juniors was described as good in the previous inspection report and these standards have been maintained. The two lessons observed were both Year 6 lessons but from the work seen and discussions with seven year olds both key stages reach standards that are above those expected nationally.

103. The infant pupils are given good opportunities to begin to learn about geography through looking at their nearby environment. They know that maps help us to find our way around places that are new to us and have drawn a plan of their classroom with a key and a map of their route to school. Pupils talked with enthusiasm about the way they use a computer to draw their plan. They are beginning to acquire a geographic vocabulary in their study of the differences between their own locality and one in Scotland. Year 2 pupils have produced some pieces of extended writing in response to a visitor on the schools African Day. These opportunities, although appropriate, have not been sufficiently extended to provide a greater challenge for the more able pupils. An album of photographs has been built up by the co-ordinator of the travels of the school bear, giving the pupils a good awareness of different geographical locations such as America.

104. By the age of eleven pupils have good knowledge and understanding of geography. Work covers the required range of topics and pupils know the main oceans, seas, rivers, and cities of the world. They know the global distribution of the major mountain areas and can make comparisons. They use appropriate geographical terms when explaining annual rainfall and the water cycle. Pupils use the Internet for their own research and in one of the lessons observed, were preparing a presentation, on the computer, to be delivered to the rest of the class entitled 'World Mountain Areas'. Pupils understand the positive and negative effects tourism have on an area and can debate the issues sensibly with a partner.

105. Teachers have good subject knowledge, are well organised, ask challenging questions and support pupils of differing ability. Marking of work is consistently encouraging and pupils are invited to enter into a written dialogue. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who is a geography specialist. Resources are good.

HISTORY

106. During the inspection no lessons were seen in history. However, a range of other evidence was available, including pupils' work, displays, planning, assessments, and discussions with pupils and the co-ordinator. This evidence shows that appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to develop a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of history and that attainment at the end of both key stages is in line with national expectation. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

107. Whilst no teaching was observed, it is clear that pupils enjoy the subject. Pupils in the infants spoke enthusiastically about their work on the Gunpowder Plot although they had difficulty in describing how things have changed over time. Pupils in Year 6 were able to recollect work from a wide range of topics experienced throughout the juniors and could talk at length about the Second World War, particularly a visit which required the children to dress in the costume of the period. Pupils in Year 5 had interviewed grandparents for their

recollections of childhood. This opportunity was in contrast with much of the work set, which relies too heavily on worksheets. An appropriate system of planning is in place, which ensures satisfactory coverage of the National Curriculum over a two-year cycle. However, there are times when more able Year 6 pupils are completing the same work as pupils in Year 5 and consequently opportunities for challenge for these pupils are missed.

108. Seven year olds learn how times have changed by studying what life was like before electricity. They compare toys and houses of the past with the present and learn about famous people such as Edison and Guy Fawkes. They learn how to develop a sense of the passage of time through sequencing objects. When pupils are given the opportunity to express their views in their own words their work shows a good level of writing skills.

109. By the age of eleven pupils have a satisfactory awareness of a range of topics, including Britain since 1930. Pupils have a clear sense of chronology and can compare and contrast previous times with today. They produce a variety of pieces of work including notes, answers to questions, drawings with labels, maps and tables. However, much of the work is completed on worksheets produced by the teacher and this inhibits the depth of study of the more able pupils and reduces opportunities to write at length using their writing skills. The co-ordinator monitors planning and assessment regularly and keeps a photographic record of visits and visitors to school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

110. Since the last inspection standards have been maintained in the infants and have been improved by the end of the juniors and are now good. Planning is systematic and follows the guidance provided, ensuring that all areas of the curriculum are covered. A new computer suite has been installed and this has contributed to the rise in standards in the juniors, because pupils have greater access to computers.

111. The progress made by infant pupils is satisfactory. Computers are available for pupils during the day and on several occasions pupils went independently to use the computer when they had finished their work, for example at the end of a mathematics lesson. Many of the youngest pupils show good mouse control. Pupils are able to use programs such as *Colour Magic* and combine this with a word-processed sentence. Pupils in Year 2 create pictures for their estate agents' window using appropriate skills. They locate the icons needed and understand the need to move from one program to another to create text. Pupils discuss their work sensibly, persevere with their drawings and make improvements to their work where necessary. Less able pupils are supported well by a teaching assistant who encourage discussion and extend vocabulary well. Pupils are able to save their work independently at the end of the lesson.

112. The junior pupils make good progress and this results in standards that are above those expected for their age. They are enthusiastic and confident and many use computers at home to carry out research for homework projects. In a good link with art and design, Year 3 and 4 pupils create images in the style of Georges Seurat and are able to design and print posters for their adventure park using a variety of fonts, labels and colours. Using a *Logo* package, pupils design and write a program of instructions to create letters of the alphabet. Control technology skills are further developed when pupils create programs for a robot to follow instructions and are able to demonstrate their work to the rest of the class. By Year 6 pupils have created their own files of work and can quickly access it. They talk confidently about a wide variety of their work which includes e-mailing, the creation of graphs, art work in the style of famous artists, desk-top publishing in the form of a newspaper with columns and sub-titles and information from the Internet. The Year 6 secretary of the school council stores

and reproduces the minutes of meetings on a computer, which helps to illustrate the everyday uses of computer technology. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and assistants and make good progress; for example, a pupil in Year 2 was able to record his ideas when his hand-writing skills were not sufficiently well developed.

113. Teachers have received appropriate training to improve their knowledge and skills and this has increased their confidence in the use of information and communication technology. This has enabled them to use and develop pupils' skills in many areas of the curriculum. These include pupils in Year 2 producing a detailed map of their route to school using their computer skills and pupils in Year 5 recording their visit to Southwell Minster through the use of pictures and words using a good level of understanding of computer technology. Pupils have opportunities to compose musical pieces inspired by space. By Year 6 pupils are able to produce good quality presentations using information collected from the Internet, incorporating sound and pictures. Good use is made of learning resources to ensure that pupils are very clear about what they have to do in lessons. In a very good example of this the teacher in Year 6 demonstrated what pupils should know and learn about the areas of triangles before pupils used spreadsheets to record and calculate answers.

114. The subject is well led by a co-ordinator who has good subject knowledge. Teachers' planning and the use of information and communication technology in other subjects in the curriculum are monitored carefully. Currently there is little opportunity to check on the quality of teaching in other classes. Funds spent on the computer suite have helped to raise standards, especially in the juniors.

MUSIC

115. Standards have been maintained at expected levels since the last inspection in the infants but have risen in the juniors so that overall standards are now in line with national expectations. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy music and join in with enthusiasm. The tuition provided by the visiting specialist violin teacher is of good quality and helps to raise standards of performance. The pupils who play violins achieve particularly good standards in reading and playing music, and the keyboard lessons, recorder group and choir further enhance the provision for pupils. This gives more able pupils the opportunity to achieve well.

116. At the end of the infants pupils can listen carefully and recognise differences in rhythm and can clap them. They can sing tunefully controlling pitch and volume as when Year 2 sang *Hot Crossed Buns*. They can play simple un-tuned instruments in small groups and can perform with the class as a whole. They recognise simple notation and can follow it. Pupils cannot remember the names of any major composers but can talk about their favourite pop singers.

117. Pupils in the juniors can listen in silence for some minutes to a piece of music from another culture and can describe what they imagine. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 could tell whether the instruments were plucked or blown and knew what the terms 'tempo' and 'pitch' meant. They recognised the melody and the repeated rhythm behind it and were able to compose and perform a tune using the same repeating pattern of notes that they recorded in simple notation after discussion. Pupils can play a range of tuned and un-tuned instruments on their own, in pairs or groups. Year 5 pupils use keyboards to compose music, incorporating voice, and can record their performance as a score. Pupils know the names of composers heard in assembly and connected Gustav Holst and *The Planets* to their own compositions.

118. The music co-ordinator is a music specialist and has good subject knowledge. She confidently taught a hymn to the whole school in hymn singing. She demonstrated how to smoothly sing through phrases and where to breathe, and prompted pupils to listen for the repeated melody. The youngest pupils in school had difficulty reading the words of the hymn and so could not join in for much of it. The time would be more productive if the session was divided into infant and junior singing. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and this enables them to contribute fully in the sessions. Teachers follow a nationally agreed scheme and the teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and better in parts. The co-ordinator has built up a good collection of resources.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

119. Standards are satisfactory for pupils by the age of seven. Because of timetable arrangements it was not possible to see sufficient of the activities undertaken by pupils up to the age of eleven except for swimming, where standards were well above average. Interviews with pupils reveal that all the required elements of the physical education curriculum are undertaken and that a variety of out-of-school clubs add well to pupils' experiences. Activities in lessons and after school are available for both boys and girls and there are no significant differences in the standards achieved. Pupils of all abilities join in well with all activities, although, as in most primary schools, many of the after-school activities are limited to older pupils.

120. By the age of seven many pupils are able to throw and catch consistently well although several still find the activity difficult. The necessary skills are appropriately taught and pupils understand the need to watch the object to be caught carefully to ensure consistent catching. Ample time is provided for pupils to practise and this helps improve their skills although not all succeeded in catching with two hands before moving on to practise one-handed catching. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 demonstrate satisfactory skills in controlling their gymnastic movements. They practise a range of balances using different parts of their bodies, holding their positions well. In swimming the quality of pupils' work is very good. Good teaching ensures that pupils' stroke techniques are improved, enabling pupils to develop confidence and quality in the water. By Year 5 most pupils swim well using a variety of strokes.

121. The quality of teaching seen is satisfactory. In swimming, where specialist instructors are employed, it is good. The planning of lessons is appropriate and enables pupils to develop the necessary skills building on those learned previously. Most pupils are enthusiastic and respond positively to the teachers' instructions although some younger pupils find it difficult to control their enthusiasm and do not always listen sufficiently carefully to what they have to do. Opportunities to take part in inter-school competition help to develop pupils' social skills. The annual residential visit provides pupils in Years 5 and 6 with opportunities to experience sports such as orienteering, rock climbing and abseiling. Although the school benefits from an extensive playing field, helping pupils experience major team games and athletics, the space in the hall is limited and results in some less effective lessons where space for movement is needed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

122. Provision for religious education has improved since the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be unsatisfactory in the junior classes. Standards now are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the ages of seven and eleven. The curriculum for religious education is better organised and resourced to support teachers who are unfamiliar with the different faiths that are covered. The subject co-ordinator has worked

hard to develop the scheme of work and has valuable experience herself, of teaching the content to different age groups. However, some problems reported last time remain. Some teachers still lack confidence in aspects of the subject and the balance between learning *about* and learning *from* religion is not always appropriate. Consequently, whilst most pupils reach the expected levels of knowledge and understanding, they do not always achieve as well as they could.

123. By the age of seven, almost all pupils can talk about the significance of Christmas. They know that it is a special time because it commemorates the birth of Jesus and can recall main events in the Christmas story. They have some understanding of other Christian festivals and why people attend church, although this is weaker. Some pupils recognise that there are different faiths, for example Islam. By the age of eleven, pupils have studied several religions including Christianity, Judaism and Sikhism. Most can draw some parallels or differences between them showing a sound knowledge of the main traditions and rituals. A well-planned visit to Southwell Minster is followed up not only by studying the building and its importance, but also by exploring traditions of pilgrimage. The school is situated in a predominantly white Christian area and whilst some provision is made for pupils to learn at first hand about different faiths, teaching is mostly through the use of secondary sources such as photographs, books and video tapes. More could be done to put pupils in touch with the range of faiths present in British society.

124. Insufficient teaching was seen to judge its quality overall, although evidence suggests that it is generally sound, with some lessons of a high quality. The issue of teachers' subject knowledge identified last time, especially in covering the range of religions, continues to be a weakness. Pupils at Bracken Lane can show a high level of interest in the subject and their questions often demand greater knowledge than some staff currently possess. However, most teaching now includes opportunity for pupils to relate the work to their own experience. This is helping pupils to gain an understanding of how religion affects people's lives and a respect for different views. For example in one very well taught lesson in Year 5, the teacher established a quiet, reverential, atmosphere. This enabled pupils to consider special places that they might want to visit on a personal 'pilgrimage'. Responses were thoughtful, indicating that almost all pupils had understood the concept. For instance, in addition to visiting distant relatives or places where family members were buried, other pupils showed empathy for the poor or those caught up in the war in Iraq.

125. Lessons often take place without the benefit of additional staffing. Where the planning expects all pupils to cover the same work, for example by using the same worksheet, this can result in work that is too hard or easy for some. The subject is allocated sufficient time to cover the agreed syllabus and there are sound links with personal, social and health education and assembly themes that extend the learning further.