

INSPECTION REPORT

BUCKLAND BREWER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Buckland Brewer, Bideford

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113141

Headteacher: Mrs B Joyce

Lead inspector: Mr M S Burghart

Dates of inspection: 17th – 18th January 2005

Inspection number: 272944

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 4 – 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 45

School address: Buckland Brewer
Bideford
Devon

Postcode: EX39 5LX

Telephone number: 01237 451315
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body
Name of chair of Mr L Davies
governors:

Date of previous April 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a very small primary school at the centre of the rural village of Buckland Brewer near Bideford in north Devon. The Victorian church school building has been considerably altered and, with a mobile temporary classroom, now provides space for two classes. Numbers have risen slightly since the last inspection and two classes have been maintained one for reception and Years 1 and 2, and the other for Years 3 to 6. Of the 45 pupils on roll eleven have special educational needs. This is above average. The proportion of pupils who qualify for free school meals is about average. However, the proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at times other than in reception or from Year 6 is above average. No pupil requires extra help for having English as an additional language. The attainment of children when first entering reception has been about average but there are signs of a decline in recent years. Currently attainment on entry is considered a low average. Both full time teachers including the head have been appointed since the last inspection. Two part time teachers share Class 2 teaching with the headteacher.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20865	Mr M S Burghart	Lead inspector	English, Information and communication technology, Creative, aesthetic, practical and physical subjects, Personal, social and health education.
9644	Mr M Whitaker	Lay inspector	
18489	Mrs D Morris	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage, Mathematics, Science, Special educational needs, Humanities.

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Buckland Brewer has built on the strengths identified in the last report and is now a good school. Pupils achieve well for their ability in a very happy, very caring environment. Good teaching, leadership and management result in sound, and improved, value for money. The school's ethos is very good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good.
- Pupils achieve well for their ability, although standards as measured by national tests in English and science for eleven year olds are well below average.
- Seven year olds have done very well in national tests over the past four years.
- Pupils respond very well with very positive attitudes, excellent behaviour and standards of reading are good.
- Support for special educational needs (SEN) is consistently good. The team's judgement on the school's inclusiveness is excellent. All pupils are fully included in all activities.
- Links with parents are very good, although communication regarding homework is not clear enough.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in 1999 with very good features in the most recent two years when it has improved from being on the local education authority's list as giving cause for concern to being considered a good school. Planning for the curriculum, a key issue in the last report, is now secure, and governors' reports and the school prospectus meet statutory requirements. Accommodation has been significantly improved, as have resources, most notably for information and communication technology (ICT). Provision for reception children has been developed and is now good. Better assessment procedures mean that staff have a much improved awareness of what pupils know, understand and can do.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	D	E	E	E*
Mathematics	E	E*	B	B
Science	E	E	D	D

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Results shown above must be treated with caution. Year groups have been very small over the last three years and this can distort statistics. It should be appreciated that: a high proportion of pupils leave or join the school each year; in 2004 there were only seven pupils in Year 6 and one of those was absent for the tests; and that the proportion of pupils with SEN was above average. Inspectors find that, although standards are still likely to appear below average based on average point scores, most pupils reach or nearly reach nationally expected levels. In terms of their ability most pupils achieve well. The same caution is needed when considering results for seven year olds which, although on the face of it were very good, were generated by only five pupils. Standards in reading are above average, but aspects of writing including handwriting are below expectations. So far as can be judged in such a short inspection standards in all other subjects are likely to be in line with national expectations when pupils leave Year 6. There are strengths in some aspects of art, music

and physical education. Some elements of ICT and religious education need further attention. Except for some children with special needs most of those in reception usually reach the expected early learning goals. The school can prove that it adds value to pupils' performance. Pupils' personal development is very good. This complements excellent relationships, and results in very good attitudes and excellent behaviour. Attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a secure and improved standard of education by virtue of better planning. Although some aspects of ICT and religious education need further development there is a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum well matched to pupils' abilities due to good teaching. Strengths in teaching are in relationships, management of pupils, questioning and good levels of challenge based on a good understanding of pupils' needs. Mixed age and ability teaching is good. However, some aspects of marking need attention. Special needs provision is consistently good. All pupils are fully included in all activities. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning and form an obvious part of the good teamwork that exists throughout. However, there is a need to increase support time for the Foundation Stage. Links with parents are very good and, with the community, good. The school's reputation for being a very caring, small school is justified. Parents give very good support and there is a strong Friends Association that raises considerable funds for books and resources. Links with other schools are good. The school is effectively resourced and, for a small school, provides good accommodation. The building is clean and well cared for and raises no health and safety issues.

The school is well led and managed by the head working closely with other staff and governors. Teachers and teaching assistants make a sound contribution to management of subjects and resources, with strengths in reception, geography and music. However, the small size of the staff means that the head remains responsible for most curriculum areas. There is an effective development plan which gives the school educational direction and sets targets for improvement based on the views of all concerned. Good use is made of finance with governors doing well to protect provision with numbers on roll fluctuating. Governors support the school well. Their governance is good. Leadership and management of pupils' personal development are excellent with very positive effects on the ethos of the school, which is judged as very good.

PARENTS AND PUPILS VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views especially about expectations, the quality of teaching, and how the school is able to help pupils whatever their ability. They are confused by the school's homework policy and arrangements. Inspectors find that the school's intentions, although representing a very minimal amount of homework, do feature in a policy, but that this has not been fully communicated to parents. Pupils clearly like the school and appreciate that staff care about them and are prepared to listen. They enjoy the small school, family atmosphere. Most children like school dinners and a high proportion stay each day.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are to:

- Continue to raise standards, particularly as measured by national tests for eleven year olds.
- Further improve arrangements and communications regarding homework.
- Ensure that all elements of the ICT curriculum are covered in sufficient depth.
- Raise the profile of religious education.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that there are policies for collective worship and in respect of child protection issues.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Although results appear well below average from test scores in English and science this presents an unfair picture generated by only seven pupils aged eleven. Inspectors find that standards are satisfactory overall with most pupils reaching (or nearly reaching) nationally expected levels for this age group across the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils aged seven have done very well against all and similar schools over a four year period.
- The school can prove that it adds value to pupils' achievement regardless of when pupils join.
- Standards of reading are above average throughout the school.
- Because not all elements of the required curriculum are covered in sufficient depth, there are weaknesses in ICT and religious education by the time pupils leave the school.
- Results of eleven year olds have been consistently well below average when judged against the average point scores of other schools over a four year period, notably in English and science.
- English and science standards are below what is expected nationally.

Commentary

1. Because there were only five pupils in Year 2 and seven in Year 6 in 2004 detailed results are not reported here in tabular form. The school's test results are suspect because of the small size of year groups. It is unwise to read any significance into the outcomes of national testing. However, the trend over four years suggests that seven year olds do very well at the school.

2. Trends in Year 6 show that mathematics standards have been improved. However, there were signs that pupils might have underachieved in English and science and these were investigated by the inspection team. Inspectors find levels of special educational needs are high and that the higher than average movement of pupils in to and out of the school other than in reception or Year 6 have unfair effects on test comparisons. To the school's credit the majority of pupils, whatever their ability, reach (or nearly reach) levels expected for their ages. Inspection evidence points to most pupils achieving well. Records show that the school does add value to pupils' achievement during pupils' time at the school.

3. Inspectors find that work in hand for those currently at the school meets national expectations in most subjects, especially in English, maths and science. From this standpoint standards are satisfactory. There are exceptions in ICT where some lack of opportunity means that, despite work actually covered being in line with expectations, there have been gaps in what has been taught. These result in eleven year olds lacking in knowledge and understanding in how to produce multimedia presentations and the use of sensors to measure and record. Religious education is underemphasised in the school and is too often subsumed into personal, social, health and citizenship education. Because of this it is difficult for pupils to meet all the standards identified in the locally agreed syllabus. Discussions with pupils show weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

4. Too little evidence was available to make firm judgements in all aspects of art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education. However, there is enough to confirm that the satisfactory profile reported in the last inspection has been sustained with strengths: for example in singing, some aspects of topic work, landscape and observational drawing, and in the use of ICT and art to support other subjects.

5. It is clear that opportunities are missed to extend research and develop the depth of study through homework. Parents and pupils are unclear about school policy. Inspectors agree with those parents who feel that the minimal amount of homework which is set does not sufficiently prepare pupils for secondary schooling.

6. Strengths in pupils' attainment include above average standards of reading, with all pupils achieving well, and for most pupils good speaking and listening. These skills are used well and make a strong contribution to other subjects as well as supporting pupils' very good personal development.

7. A particular area for improvement throughout the school is in handwriting. Pupils' writing is not well formed or cursive and this leads to weaknesses in presentation. Standards are below average not only at the end of Years 2 and 6 where formal judgements have to be made, but throughout the school.

8. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in lessons and make good progress on their individual targets. This is because of the sound curriculum plan which ensures that activities are well linked to ability.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal qualities are a significant strength of the school. Behaviour is excellent, as is pupils' personal, social and moral development. Pupils have very good attitudes to school, and their attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' behaviour is excellent in lessons, at play and about the school at all times.
- Pupils' relationships with each other and with all adults in school are excellent.
- Pupils demonstrate very good attitudes to learning and to opportunities the school has to offer.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good overall. Pupils' moral and social development are excellent.
- Attendance is good.

Commentary

9. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent. Pupils respond very positively to their teachers' high expectations. Pupils who join the school from other schools (who form a significant proportion of the school's small roll) rapidly learn to conform to the school's prevailing ethos of co-operation, consideration and good manners. At no time during the inspection was any unacceptable behaviour observed, nor was there any need for staff to use any disciplinary sanctions - not even a raised voice. The standard of behaviour is truly impressive. There has been one exclusion over the preceding year.

10. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Staff treat pupils with respect and value all contributions. There are very positive relationships between pupils and all staff, including the administration officer, the school cook, the lunchtime supervisor and the two

caretakers. Possibly because of the small size of the school there is a genuine family atmosphere which itself contributes to pupils' excellent personal development. During a wet lunch break, for example, older pupils from Years 5 and 6 were seen happily playing with the young children from Class 1, with no hint of embarrassment. All pupils are fully included in all activities, regardless of ability or origin. Pupils report that bullying is not a problem and parents concur, their view being that any instances of minor unpleasantness are swiftly and effectively handled.

11. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning. In lessons they are enthusiastic, responding well to lively and challenging teaching. They are respectful in assemblies and confident about volunteering to take part in the vicar's dramatic expositions of Bible stories. The youngest children in the reception year (three of whom were only in their third week of formal school attendance) are secure in the class daily routines and confident about leaving parents or carers. Pupils of all ages are keen to take advantage of the opportunities the school has to offer; there is a well supported after school activity every day of the week. For example there are eleven children (or nearly a quarter of the school) in the recorder group.

12. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Moral development is excellent. Pupils have a very clear set of values and are made aware of right and wrong from the outset. The school's inclusiveness promotes a sense of caring for others - pupils have, for example, decided to put on a talent show so as to raise funds for the tsunami victims.

13. Social development is excellent. Pupils' social skills are very well developed. Pupils relate well to adults and children of all ages. They are confident in talking about school and their independence is encouraged from the start. They take part in village activities such as carol singing and entering artwork in the village show.

14. Pupils' spiritual development is good; a well planned programme of assemblies (notwithstanding the lack of a statutory policy) contributes well to the appreciation of concepts such as the uniqueness of individuals. Links with the parish church and nonconformist chapel keep pupils in touch with their own faith heritage.

15. Cultural development is good, especially with regard to British and local culture. Pupils see drama performances either from companies visiting the school or by visiting the theatre in a nearby town, and they put on their own performances. In the art curriculum pupils address the art of Australian Aborigines and of ancient Greece. Pupils have looked at the work of Van Gogh and Jackson Pollock. There is a French club. The school is conscious that pupils are less aware of contemporary Britain as a multicultural society.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.6	School data	0
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

16. Attendance is good. Authorised absence, at 4.6 per cent is below the national average for primary schools and unauthorised absence is nil. The school works hard to promote good attendance; the school's administrator telephones parents any morning when a child is absent without explanation. Pupils with 100 per cent attendance get a certificate.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Black African
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
43	1	0
1	0	0
1	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a secure, satisfactory and improving, standard of education.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good. It promotes good learning and helps pupils of all abilities to achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent.
- Special needs teaching and support are consistently good.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to teaching and learning.
- Teachers' use of questioning is a strength.
- Mixed age and ability classes are well managed and effectively taught.
- Teaching for those in reception successfully promotes learning through structured play.
- Some aspects of marking need attention, although overall assessment is good and used well.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 14 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	4	10	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

17. All teachers were seen to teach well on a variety of occasions by a variety of inspectors. All teaching was at least good and the very good teaching seen was shared equally between the two classes. This constitutes improvement from the last inspection and this is very much the result of considerably better planning, assessment and monitoring developed particularly since the head teacher was appointed.

18. Strengths in teaching include:

- Questioning which draws all pupils regardless of age and ability into discussions and activities, and prompts pupils to review their own and others' performances in order to

make improvements: for example in a very good reception and Years 1 and 2 session, and a very successful Years 3 to 6 physical education lesson;

- Pupils are effectively challenged at levels appropriate to their needs as the result of thorough assessment: for example in a good Years 3 to 6 English lesson where work on flashbacks had a common starting point but was skilfully developed in different ability groups;
- Teaching assistants take a full part in supporting pupils and teachers. This results in special needs provision which effectively enables pupils to reach their potential and aspire to nationally age related expectations;
- There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils which give rise to an atmosphere of trust where pupils can make, and learn from, their mistakes without fear
- Time, space and resources are well used;
- ICT is well used to support the curriculum as a whole.

19. All the above factors have positive effects on pupils' attitudes, behaviour, learning and achievement. In all lessons pupils were seen to make improvements as a direct result of the intervention of staff. Highlights in subject teaching evident during the inspection, and confirmed by a scrutiny of pupils' work, are in literacy, numeracy, some aspects of art and topic work, as well as in reception.

20. Standards of Year 6 pupils as measured by national tests in English and science were still well below average in 2004. This can be attributed to: new initiatives not having had time to have full effect, as well as the impact of above average levels of SEN and the high levels of pupils joining and leaving the school at times other than in reception and Year 6. Low average point score comparisons are not judged to represent weaknesses in teaching. Indeed that most pupils regardless of their ability and time in the school reach nationally expected levels for their age is a credit to staff.

21. Teachers plan well for pupils with special educational needs. Tasks are clearly linked to abilities and teaching assistants monitor their work carefully. The good support that pupils receive helps them to achieve well.

22. Areas for further development even in this good profile are in improving marking to identify how pupils can make improvements: for example in handwriting and presentation; making more obvious use of homework to extend the curriculum; and raising the emphasis put on religious education as opposed to personal, social, health and citizenship education.

23. Teamwork in terms of planning, evaluating and sharing expertise is central to the current success of teaching at this school. There is a shared commitment to raising standards whilst building upon the strengths noted in support for pupils' personal development.

The curriculum

There is a sound curriculum in place which appropriately meets the needs and abilities of all pupils. Opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum are good. The accommodation is good, and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for all pupils, including those in the Foundation Stage, is well planned and has been improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The profile of religious education (RE) is too low. Some aspects of ICT need further development.

- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs, and all pupils have equal access to the opportunities at the school.
- Enrichment through additional activities is good.
- There is a good staff team that is committed to pupils' learning, but the amount of teaching assistance time for the Foundation Stage is too low.
- The accommodation is good for such a small school and has a positive impact on learning.
- The lack of homework impacts on standards in many areas and particularly on preparation for the next stage of education.

Commentary

24. A secure curriculum is on offer at the school and it has been improved significantly since the last inspection. It is now well planned to meet the wide ranging needs and abilities of all pupils. Staff have worked very hard to develop new schemes of work on a two year cycle for Years 1 and 2 and a four year cycle for Years 3 to 6. The whole cycle has not yet been taught or reviewed so that its success can be fully measured. The curriculum for the younger children in the Foundation Stage has been improved and is now good. It enables a seamless transition for children when they become Year 1.

25. The curriculum for religious education does not have a high enough profile in the school. It is appropriately based on the locally agreed syllabus but not enough evidence of thorough learning about the main world religions is available. This has a restricting impact on pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures that are different from their own. Too often RE is subsumed into personal, social, health and citizenship education. Another area for development is in ensuring that all aspects of ICT are covered in sufficient depth for older pupils.

26. Provision for special educational needs is good. It is well organised and efficiently managed. There is a high proportion of pupils at the school with special educational needs but they are well supported by the new curriculum. They often work closely with teaching assistants who work hard to ensure their success. Procedures are fully developed and individual targets are effectively monitored. These pupils have equal access with all other pupils to the wide range of activities on offer. Consequently inclusion is excellent. All pupils at the school have equal access to the available activities.

27. Enrichment of the curriculum is good. Many educational visits are arranged as part of the planned school day. Younger pupils have recently been on a visit to Rosemoor Gardens to study plant growth as part of their science topic. Older pupils recently thoroughly enjoyed a day at the Skern Lodge activity centre. During the inspection they were full of excitement about the opportunities they had experienced. Alongside these planned visits there is a good range of extracurricular clubs. For example one evening there was a recorder club with eleven players, including four boys. The activity club after school is very popular and well attended, and there are several sporting activities such as netball and football. Sports links with the local secondary school and with other primary schools in the area are good.

28. A major strength of the curriculum is the good staff team that work hard to promote pupils' achievements. Staff provide very good role models for all pupils and have created a very good quality ethos within the school in which pupils thrive. Teaching assistants support teachers and pupils well, but there is a lack of time for them to work with children in the Foundation Stage. This impacts negatively on children's learning in some curriculum areas, particularly the use of outdoor space.

29. The accommodation has been improved since the last inspection and is now good for such a small school. It is very clean and tidy and used well to promote all aspects of learning.

30. The lack of provision for homework is a major weakness. It has a negative impact on standards in many subjects, and on pupils' ability to undertake independent research. Pupils are concerned that they will be ill prepared for life in secondary school because they are not used to doing sufficient work in the evenings.

Care, guidance and support

The school offers pupils a very high standard of physical and emotional care. Pupils are fully involved in the life of the school and staff good knowledge of pupils' academic development ensures good support.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In this very small, rural school, there is a very strong ethos of care; relationships are excellent and every child is well known to all adults.
- Academic support, based on a thorough knowledge of each child, is good.
- Pupils are fully involved in the life of the school and the management of their own learning.
- Although very good attention is paid to safety and welfare matters, the school has no child protection policy.

Commentary

31. The standard of pupil care is very good. It is a very small school and every child is well known personally to every adult. The administration officer knows every child, as does the school cook. Consequently, pupils feel very secure; many of them, when asked what they especially like about school, replied, "The teachers," and, "School dinners!"

32. There is a surprisingly high rate of pupil mobility - of the eleven pupils in the current Year 6, only two started in the reception class. Nonetheless, the school rapidly embraces new pupils, some of whom have come from markedly different urban environments. Induction procedures, therefore, are very good. Induction into the reception class is equally very good. There are close links between the school and the village pre-school group and the atmosphere in the classroom is supportive, warm and friendly whilst, at the same time, encouraging independence.

33. Academic support is good, resulting from a combination of good assessment procedures, excellent staff-pupil relationships and a thorough knowledge of each individual child. Pupils are involved in assessing their own performance through the use of progress books - each child has two exercise books that contain monthly samples of writing and other work. These build up to present a picture of the pupil's progress from year to year. Marking, however, lacks diagnostic comment and does not suggest ways in which pupils' work might be improved. Pupils are fully involved in the day-to-day running of the school and, although there is no school council, the small size of the school ensures that pupils' views are known and taken into account.

34. The headteacher is the designated person for child protection purposes. She has been booked into the next available training course (in March 2005). However, there is no child protection policy. Nonetheless, the headteacher is aware of the implications of child protection matters and is confident that staff know what to do in cases of concern. A

committee of the governing body oversees health and safety and the premises are regularly inspected. Hazards noted in the previous inspection report have been addressed. All staff are trained in basic first aid and there are competent arrangements for dealing with medical matters. Safety inspections are carried out on electrical and fire equipment and fire drills are held regularly. Pupils' wellbeing is well addressed through attention to healthy eating (school meals, cooked on the premises by the school's own cook are both popular and nutritious with several fresh vegetables every day), and personal safety - Year 6 pupils attend a life skills day at a nearby fire station.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school values its partnerships with parents and the community and works hard to secure their commitment. Parents respond positively and hold the school in very high regard.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links between home and school are easy and relaxed; parents feel at home in the school environment and have confidence in the staff.
- The school provides a wide range of accessible information about school events and the curriculum. The school's policy on homework, however, is insufficiently clear to parents.
- The school has an outward-looking approach towards its community, whose involvement enriches pupils' learning.

Commentary

35. Links with parents are very good which represents an improvement on the satisfactory position noted in the previous report. The school has an open, parent-friendly atmosphere. In Class 1 (the class for children in reception and Years 1 and 2), parents come into the classroom in the morning to help settle the youngest children. The headteacher is known to be in the playground every morning before school starts. Parents comment on the easy, informal approachability of all school staff including the administration officer. There is a close relationship between school and parents; parents are welcome to attend school events and the Friends Association, The Friends of Buckland Brewer School, is very effective as a fund-raising body and a social bridge between school, home and community. Parents support the school by helping to ferry children to sporting events; and a parent runs the after school club. Overall the school has very strong support from its parents; there was a very high response to the Ofsted pre-inspection questionnaire (76 per cent) and the responses were overwhelmingly positive.

36. The quality of information for parents is very good. Weekly newsletters keep parents informed of all matters relating to the school such as staff training and official visitors, as well as children's activities. Class teachers have half-termly curriculum meetings at which they outline their planning to parents. Parents have three formal consultation opportunities each year, although few take up the offer to discuss their children's annual reports. A useful leaflet on starting school is provided for parents of reception year children. Parents appreciate their children's reports which comply with statutory requirements. The school produces a combined prospectus and governors' annual report which is easy to read and very largely informative. Parents, however, are unclear as to the policy on homework - most believe that the school does not set homework. The prospectus does not effectively spell out the homework policy.

37. There are good links with the community and partner institutions. The headteacher has successfully raised the profile of the school in the community and, with various other

bodies, is involved in planning for a new village hall adjacent to the school. The school is very well regarded in the community; reports of its activities appear in the village newsletter and the Friends Association is supported by the village pub and post office. Members of the community come into school to talk to pupils. There are close links with the vicar and the Methodist minister, both of whom take regular assemblies. Good use is made of the locality to enrich pupils' experiences, for example pupils visit local gardens and attend performances at the theatre in a nearby town. There are good links with the secondary school to which pupils transfer. Parents and children make preliminary visits to the secondary school and pupils undertake transitional units of work; Year 7 staff visit to talk about tutor groups and special needs. Primary school pupils use the secondary school's sports and ICT facilities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led and managed by the head effectively supported by the staff and governors.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good development plan which sets priorities for improvement and itemises how they will be funded and achieved.
- The head leads the staff as a good team.
- Governors are well informed and ensure that the school is effectively governed.
- Finances are very well managed and used to support educational initiatives.

Commentary

38. Using contributions from staff, governors and parents the head has constructed a development plan which takes the school forward based on the needs of pupils. This is well prioritised and costed and sets timescales for improvements to be carried out, whilst identifying who will be responsible. This plan has been the basis by which the school has made good progress since it was last inspected and is at the centre of the school's good management.

39. The head leads the school well. She encourages effectively and sets a good example to staff who as a result work well together as a team. This has been instrumental in achieving the improvements reported elsewhere in this document regarding planning and the quality of assessment. It is clear that the head is a good enabler presenting staff with opportunities to fulfil their roles effectively. This is no mean feat considering that she has a three and a half day teaching commitment as well as being directly responsible for staff development and co-ordinating most subjects of the curriculum.

40. The school's good leadership and management support pupils' very good personal development and the school's very good ethos. These ensure that special educational needs provision is good and that the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant. The good management of the curriculum has underpinned pupils' good achievement, notwithstanding the fact that despite most pupils reaching or nearly reaching nationally expected levels at the end of Year 6 average point scores are low in English and science. Leadership of special educational needs is good. Procedures are secure and documentation is of good quality. Pupils' achievements are well monitored and there are good links with parents, and with the local authority support services.

41. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and make sure they are well informed. They are frequent visitors to, and helpers in, school. They are developing monitoring

techniques to help identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have a good understanding of what the priorities are, and play a good part in providing for them. The governance of the school is good. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning and a very positive impact on the health and safety of all concerned. Governors are proud of the school especially its friendly atmosphere and its contribution to the community.

42. The last report identified several omissions to statutory information in the governors' annual report and the school prospectus. These have been overcome. However, auditors found there to be no formal policy regarding collective worship and none to guarantee child protection procedures. Both omissions need to be addressed, the latter as a matter of urgency.

43. As noted elsewhere some parents appear confused about school policy regarding homework. Inspectors find that although there is a policy it has not been well communicated and the management of this requires attention. The substance of the policy is that homework will be minimal. This is in need of review to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next phase of education.

Financial information for the year April 2003 – March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	173385	Balance from previous year	12939
Total expenditure	165281	Balance carried forward to the next	8104
Expenditure per pupil	3935		

44. Finances are very well managed with the effect that this small school is well staffed and satisfactorily resourced. Governors receive very good support and advice from the head and administrative staff and are able to control and maintain provision despite the uncertainty of small numbers and fluctuations of the school roll year on year. A recent audit by the local education authority was complimentary about procedures and the use of funds to provide best value. The table above shows that expenditure is very much above the average for all primary schools and even above average for similar schools. However, expenditure is set against the school's designated budget and as such the school is judged as giving sound value for money. This constitutes improvement over the last report.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in all areas of learning, and they achieve very well in personal, social and emotional development, and in physical development.
- Teaching is good, with some very good teaching seen in some areas.
- Planning is good, and links very well to the early learning goals for children of this age.
- The accommodation and resources have been improved and are now good.
- There is a weakness in the amount of time allocated to teaching assistants, and this has a negative impact on children's development.

Commentary

45. The small number of children in the Foundation Stage of learning is based in the early years class with pupils from Years 1 and 2. There has been significant improvement in provision for these children since the last inspection. The curriculum is now good and focuses carefully on activities to meet children's needs, taken from the early learning goals for children of this age. The teacher is well qualified to teach this age group and improvements have quickly been established. The accommodation and resources have been improved so that they are now good and enable children to play actively as they learn.

46. On entry to reception most children show standards that are just below, or just in line with those expected. Children achieve at least well in all areas of learning because of good, and often very good, teaching. Consequently by the time they enter Year 1 children are expected to achieve the goals in most areas and exceed them in personal, social and emotional development and in physical development.

47. **Personal, social and emotional development** is very good and children attain high standards in this area of learning because of very good teaching. The teacher has established clear guidelines for behaviour and a very positive ethos in which children thrive. Children are polite and caring towards each other and respect the views of adults very well.

48. In **communication, language and literacy** children achieve the early learning goals because of the good emphasis on building confidence. Good teaching enables them to develop high self esteem so that they quickly join in with older children, sharing books, reading their sounds out loud, and practising their writing. Children showed that they could identify different parts of a book and recognise several sounds. They have a mature attitude to learning which promotes success. The lack of teaching assistant time, particularly in literacy lessons, is a weakness of the provision. At these times there is often no adult to talk to children and extend their language skills further.

49. In **mathematical development** children are beginning to count to 10 and beyond. Many can write some numerals and recognise mathematical symbols and basic two-dimensional shapes. Children enjoy playing a wide range of number games including role play in the class shop. Good teaching ensures that they achieve the expected goals by the end of their reception year.

50. Children's **knowledge and understanding of the world** is fostered through many whole class activities as well as small group work. During the inspection children joined their older peers to investigate the new building plans for the school. They showed good understanding of perceived changes and many were confident enough to voice an opinion. Although teaching in this area is good and children achieve well, they sometimes miss out because of the lack of teaching assistant time to extend their thinking skills further.

51. **Creative development** is good and children achieve well as they play with the good range of resources. They paint and draw recognisable pictures, and sing simple songs in tune. Good teaching ensures that a wide range of creative resources are available on a daily basis.

52. Children's achievement in **physical development** is a strength. Children are confident movers in physical education lessons and try very hard to succeed. The very good range of resources for this area of learning has a positive impact on children's achievements. Very good teaching was seen in this area of learning leading to very good gains in skills, and high standards. Once again the lack of teaching assistant time is a limiting factor in terms of children using the outside area.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reading standards are above average.
- Pupils with SEN and those who frequently join the school in years other than reception are well provided for.
- Teaching is good.
- The subject is well planned and assessment is used effectively to set targets.
- Standards of handwriting require attention.
- Standards as measured by tests for eleven year olds could be improved.

Commentary

53. Results of national tests for eleven year olds have been low for several years. There are plausible reasons for this situation which does not give a true picture. On the face of it results for Year 6 do not compare favourably with the very obvious success of seven year olds. Results for Year 2 reading over a four year period put the school in the top 5 per cent of all primaries nationally. In writing standards are above average. Reasons for this difference feature:

- High levels of mobility with few of those in Year 6 having been in Year 2: for example of the current eleven pupils in Year 6, seven of them joined the school in the interim period and only two were in reception.
- Above average levels of SEN accounting for nearly 50 per cent of some year groups.
- Unreliability of statistics where small year groups are concerned: for example in 2004 there were seven pupils in Year 6 and only five in Year 2.

54. Inspectors find that most pupils in both Years 2 and 6 reach (or very nearly reach) national average levels. Standards of reading are good, being above average, and pupils

achieve well in speaking and listening. Although the school itself is committed to making improvements, standards of work seen are satisfactory. In terms of pupils' achievement against their experience and ability the school's performance is good. The inspection team agree with the school's own evaluation that it adds value to pupils' achievements during pupils' time at the school and helps pupils make good progress.

55. Standards of writing are currently satisfactory at both Years 2 and 6 in terms of content, spelling and sentence construction. However, handwriting is not well formed nor cursive and leads to some weaknesses in presentation.

56. Teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection because planning and assessment are now good. There is good attention to the National Literacy Strategy and good records are kept of progress. ICT is well used to extend writing opportunities and develop communication skills. Spelling skills are well taught and standards are satisfactory.

57. Two aspects of teaching which need attention are:

- Marking which does not sufficiently indicate what pupils should do to improve;
- Homework: where policy is not well communicated and fails to challenge older pupils enough in preparation for the next phase of education.

58. Big improvements to the management of English are the result of much hard work by the head and staff in a very detailed analysis of plans, pupils' performance, and the quality of teaching. Some new initiatives have not yet had time to work through into raised standards, but the future looks secure.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Good use is made of literacy skills in all subjects: for example in discussions, appreciation and evaluation in music and physical education; in writing accounts in science, geography and history; and in reading for research in most curriculum areas.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in all aspects of mathematics resulting in good standards.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and willingness to try hard help pupils to achieve well.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good.
- Planning to meet the different needs of pupils is good.
- The marking of pupils' work is not rigorous enough.
- Lack of homework is a weakness particularly for Years 3 to 6.

Commentary

60. In the most recent standardised tests pupils in Years 2 and 6 attained standards that were above the national average in mathematics. Pupils have done well over a period of several years. Due to a recent change in mobility which is now particularly high in Year 6, and to the high levels of special educational needs in both classes, inspection evidence shows that pupils now attain broadly in line with national standards. However, taking these factors into account inspectors are secure in the knowledge that pupils are achieving well in

both classes, and across the school. Provision in mathematics has been improved since the previous inspection.

61. Pupils in Year 2 are confident when working with numbers to 100. They can count in 2s to 10, and in 10s to 100 accurately. Many can name two-dimensional shapes and undertake simple measuring tasks. In one lesson pupils showed good understanding of number concepts to 10 and achieved well as they worked together to complete their tasks. Pupils in Year 6 work confidently with numbers to 1000. They use simple fractions, work with negative numbers and solve problems. During the inspection pupils were quick to notice patterns as they played a game of doubling numbers, finding quick ways of achieving answers.

62. Pupils behave very well in most lessons and their positive approach to mathematics helps them to succeed. They are willing to have a go at each challenge, working very well together to solve problems. Relationships in lessons are very good and pupils are secure in the knowledge that they can ask for help when required. Their positive approach helps them to achieve well.

63. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and extend pupils' skills through very good demonstrations and questioning. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of each individual pupil. Because of this all pupils achieve well. The carefully planned extension tasks are available to all so that higher attaining pupils always have something to do when they finish their activity. Specific support for pupils with special educational needs enables them to be fully included in lessons. Teaching assistants are used very well to support pupils' learning in Years 3 to 6, but are not always available in the younger class. Consequently the learning of the younger pupils is not always extended as well as it might be.

64. Marking of pupils' work is unsatisfactory. There is limited marking evident in past work, and few strategies identified to help pupils achieve higher standards. This has a negative impact on presentation of work which is not always as good as it should be. The lack of homework in mathematics is a major weakness. Pupils in Year 6 identified this as something they felt needed improving to prepare them for life in secondary school.

65. Leadership and management of mathematics are good. There is clear evidence of data analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses in standards. The major improvement in curriculum provision for the subject has resulted in a good range of progressive activities to promote learning as pupils move through the school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. Numeracy skills are used well in many other areas of the curriculum. During the inspection younger pupils were observed undertaking a survey of their playground and were looking at the size of the various parts as they made decisions about future planning. There is evidence of data collections in geography and science. Pupils have collated their data as tally charts which they then construct as block graphs. There is good evidence in pupils' past work that data is regularly collected and interpreted in this way, often through using computers to present it. Older pupils use numeracy skills on a regular basis as part of science, design and technology, and geography. They were observed using timers in science for example, to monitor the speed of evaporation during a practical experiment.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in science lessons are good.
- Planning is good, leading to well managed activities.
- There is a good emphasis on scientific investigations.
- Marking of pupils' work is not always good enough to improve learning further.
- Sometimes there is too little emphasis on girls answering questions in science lessons.

Commentary

67. Standards in the 2004 tests were well below average for pupils in Year 6. During the inspection standards in lessons seen were better than this. They were in line with expected levels in Year 2, and with the national average in Year 6. This was because of good teaching which enabled pupils to achieve well in the tasks set. Scrutiny of past work suggests that achievement over time is satisfactory. This is a similar situation to that at the time of the last inspection.

68. Pupils in Year 2 received good teaching as they attempted to create an electrical circuit. They identified the electrical equipment accurately, showing good understanding of the difference between a battery and the mains. Because of good questioning they were able to understand how to set up a circuit, but boys did most of the answering. Not enough effort was made to ensure that girls as well as boys understood the task. A major feature of the lesson was the good planning for different abilities that enabled all pupils to be included at some level. Attention to health and safety was good. The practical approach to learning helped pupils to have fun and they showed high levels of excitement in their responses.

69. The good practical activities continued in Years 3 to 6. Pupils were undertaking an experiment into evaporation. Some very good teaching was observed in this class, as each year group undertook different tasks according to their ability. Pupils showed very sensitive and sensible attitudes to the health and safety aspects of the lesson. They were co-operative and helpful to each other, trying out different hypotheses as they tried to find answers to the questions set. Pupils made very good gains in learning about evaporation because of the investigative style that the teacher used.

70. Teaching during lessons was always at least good, with even better teaching in some activities. Lessons are always well planned to meet individual needs and abilities, and tasks are practical. This encourages scientific thinking and an investigative approach to learning. However, the marking of pupils' work is not always thorough enough. It does not help pupils to improve further or tell them how to present their work better. Opportunities are missed to develop ICT skills in science for older pupils: for example in the use of sensors and the use of a microscope linked to the computer.

71. Leadership of science is satisfactory. A secure framework for the subject has been developed since the last inspection and this is helping teachers to plan progressively for the pupils in their care. Data is being analysed and there is a clear awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. However, there has not been enough monitoring of written work to ensure presentation and marking improves.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory** overall with some aspects needing further development for Years 3 to 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use of ICT is made to support other subjects.
- There is a good system to record what pupils know, understand and can do.
- Resources have been improved and are now satisfactory.
- Overall standards are satisfactory but older pupils have had too little opportunity to devise multimedia presentations.

Commentary

72. The last inspection reported that standards were in line with expectations at ages seven and eleven. This is still the case, but represents improvement considering that requirements are much more rigorous given dramatic developments in ICT since that time.

73. Resources have been improved and are now satisfactory. Computers are sited in each classroom and this makes them available for work to support other subjects: for example maths programs reinforce learning in reception, Years 1 and 2; and word processing, editing and enhancing text in Years 3 to 6 to make the home/school agreement more user friendly, and extend literacy skills. Good evidence is available of pupils' use of the Internet for research in geography and history and there are satisfactory examples of ICT used for data handling in maths.

74. A new skills checklist is used well to record what pupils are capable of. This helps teachers to gauge progress and develop planning to make improvements. As a result pupils are achieving at least satisfactorily and progressing appropriately. New initiatives have yet to work through the school's complete learning cycle. This means that although all required elements are planned for in Year 6 pupils will not necessarily have covered all aspects in sufficient detail before they leave. For example because of lack of opportunity pupils lack knowledge and understanding of multimedia presentations, and of using sensors to record changes in science work. This negatively affects pupils' attainment, but standards are satisfactory overall.

75. No direct teaching of ICT was observed so no judgements have been made on the quality of teaching or learning in lessons. However, improvements to planning and assessment (criticised in 1999) have been substantial. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are secure and there is good support from teaching assistants especially for Years 3 to 6.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. As detailed above ICT is used well in other curriculum areas. This has been systematically improved as the result of much better planning under both topic and subject headings, better resourcing, and developing staff expertise.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The environment is used well to teach geographical skills and extend pupils' knowledge.

- Lack of homework for Years 3 to 6 particularly reduces the quality of some extended studies.

Commentary

77. Pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected in geography in both Year 2 and Year 6. They benefit from a secure programme of work that enables them to improve their skills as they move through the school. Provision has been improved since the last inspection. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 were undertaking a survey during the inspection. Future building plans were scrutinised and many pupils had very definite ideas about what should happen next. Boys particularly were very concerned about the possible loss of their football pitch. Girls were more concerned with the environmental aspects of the works and felt that a questionnaire should be circulated to find out other people's views. They showed good awareness of geographical issues during their discussions. Older pupils talked appropriately about geography, although their memory of past work was limited. For example, although there are examples of some extended studies of places such as St Lucia, pupils could not recall many things about the place. Similarly with work undertaken on coastlines, pupils found it hard to remember what they had learned. The lack of opportunity to undertake study at home and after school means that pupils do not do enough research for themselves, and consequently learning dips.

78. There is a secure scheme of work for the subject and planning indicates that the environment around the school is used well to extend pupils' awareness of geographical issues and promote skills. Leadership is satisfactory overall.

HISTORY

79. No judgement is made about the quality of provision in history as no lessons were seen during the inspection. Evidence from the scrutiny of past work and from discussions with staff and pupils suggest that there is an appropriate scheme of work in place that effectively teaches pupils about the past. In discussion pupils in Years 4 and 6 were able to talk animatedly about their different history projects. They have enjoyed particular activities such as a 'Tudor day' very much, but they cannot remember many details about the period. Their recollection of dates is weak, and some are confused about the different periods that they study. Lack of opportunity for homework is impacting negatively on standards in the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

80. No judgement is made about provision overall in religious education as no lessons were observed. A good scheme of work is in place in line with the locally agreed syllabus. Past work suggests that pupils across the school have satisfactory opportunities to learn about the major world religions. Discussions with older pupils showed that their knowledge and understanding of the religions that they study is weak, and is below expected levels for their age. Pupils could not identify for example any special books or artefacts from the three religions they have covered. Neither could they talk knowledgeably about the similarities and differences between religions. They knew about festivals in the Christian calendar and described how they had celebrated Divali. However, pupils could not describe the meaning of this festival. Achievement in the subject is therefore not high enough and there has not been sufficient improvement since the last inspection.

81. Evidence suggests that too little emphasis is placed on religious education. Pupils report that they "don't seem to do much." This is probably because religious education is

taught as part of personal, social, health and citizenship education and not often enough as a subject in its own right. The profile of religious education is too low.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

82. No lessons were observed in art and design and technology (DT) and only one in music. Two indoor physical education (PE) lessons one dance and one gymnastics were observed. Consequently no firm judgements can be made about provision, standards, teaching or learning. However, aspects of these subjects were sampled and there are indications of improvement since the last inspection especially in the quality of planning.

83. **Art** is used well to support other subjects: for example to illustrate work in geography and history. Years 3 to 6 designs and models of Greek vases, and Years 1 and 2 portraits of owls are very good examples. There is evidence of progress across the school in observational drawings and landscapes (particularly good in connection with Years 3 to 6 day at Skern Lodge) and of pupils appreciating and working in the style of famous artists such as Van Gogh.

84. Information and communication technology is used effectively to help pupils express themselves in art: for example in abstract designs and using paint and draw programs.

85. Photographic evidence, teachers' planning and school records show the full range of **design and technology** expected by the National Curriculum is taught, often as part of topic work. A key feature of this work is the application of the design, make and evaluate process. Pupils make good use of their literacy skills and ability to work together to develop and improve their work.

86. A part time teacher leads **music** well. She teaches the older class and supports the class teacher in Class 1 with planning and advice. There is evidence of all aspects being covered:

- Good planning drawn from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's guidance, local and commercial schemes;
- A recording system which notes class and individual pupil performance;
- Good singing as seen in assemblies and in DVD recordings of school performances;
- An active recorder group of a quarter of the school learning to play as part of an after school club;
- Resources which are good with the exception of already planned for multicultural instruments.

87. In the one music lesson seen teaching was good and pupils showed positive attitudes. Learning was good and pupils achieved well to reach nationally expected levels. The class was well managed and good use was made of instruments with all pupils actively involved. Good progress was made with pupils refining their performances having listened to each other.

88. In the two **physical education** lessons seen (one in each class) teaching was very good. Pupils listened and learnt well because of the very skilled input from the teachers. Their excellent control and constant reference to the objectives for the lessons focused pupils very effectively. As a result pupils achieved standards better than expected for their ages and the way they worked together made a significant contribution to personal development. Pupils made very good progress in self control, awareness and use of space, and began to explore different ways of travelling. Both gymnastics and dance skills were

honed by watching others and listening to the teachers. Pupils were challenged mentally as well as physically.

89. No games, swimming or adventurous activities could be observed, but satisfactory planning devised from national guidance allows for all required elements. Since the last inspection the learners' swimming pool has been removed on health and safety grounds but overall space and resources for PE are good especially considering the size of the school. Links with other schools and the support of parents and volunteers make a good contribution to PE provision in clubs and activities.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

90. Provision is much improved and is now satisfactory as a result of there now being a scheme of work for personal, social, health and citizenship education and time devoted to circle time, support for consideration of drugs and alcohol awareness, and health and safety. The school has opted not to teach sex education, although maturation issues are dealt with by the school nurse.

91. The outcome of provision contributes to excellent relationships and personal development, and is very positive throughout.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).