



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
The Beeches Primary School

Peterborough Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 26-27 March 2003

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	The Beeches Primary School
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Mr T Smith
Address of school:	Beech Avenue Peterborough PE1 2EH
Telephone:	01733 703673
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mrs J Shaw
Local education authority area:	Peterborough
Unique reference number:	110756
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr K Gilbert HMI
Dates of inspection:	26-27 March 2003

Introduction

1. The Beeches Primary School is situated in the centre of Peterborough, in a residential area of predominantly owner occupied and rented accommodation. The school roll fluctuates during the year, due to the number of families who move in and out of the area at short notice. The school is much larger than most primary schools, with 442 pupils on roll. There is a high level of unemployment and the school serves an area of social and economic deprivation. Approximately half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is over twice the national average. The majority of the pupils live close to the school, but some families choose to send their children to the school from some distance away, because of the support given to those speaking Czech and Portuguese. The local community is ethnically diverse. A high proportion of the pupils come from families where the home language is Urdu or Punjabi. Many pupils for whom English is an additional language are at an early stage of learning English when they enter the school. A third of the pupils are on the school's special educational needs list; however, only ten pupils have a Statement of Educational Need.

2. The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in January 2001. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) in July and December 2001, and in February, July and December 2002 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of January 2001.

4. In March 2003, an HMI and an additional inspector returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

5. Twenty three lessons or parts of lessons, two assemblies and four registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunchtimes and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy and assistant headteachers and the co-ordinators for the core subjects. Informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

6. The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2001 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

Main findings

7. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- standards are rising throughout the school, but there is still much to do to address the shortcomings of the past;
- children enter the reception classes with attainment which is well below the average for their age, because many of them have limited knowledge of English. However, many are fluent speakers in their home languages and are reaching the Early Learning Goals in many aspects of communication in these languages. Many rapidly develop fluency in English and gain a sound grounding in mathematics. However, by the end of their time in reception, the pupils are well below the average for their age in early reading and writing skills;
- the school's results in the Key Stage 1 national tests for 2002 showed a significant improvement over the results of 2001. Although moving closer in mathematics, the results as a whole remain below national averages. At Key Stage 2, the school's test results in English and science were lower than those of 2001, whereas in mathematics they were similar to the previous year, but in all cases they were well below national averages and the results gained by similar schools;
- the school has made progress in improving the quality of teaching since the inspection of January 2001, when one in five of the lessons was unsatisfactory. Teaching is now almost always satisfactory or better; it was good or very good in 14 of the lessons. The lessons are carefully planned and, in most, work is appropriately matched to the pupils' needs. The detailed learning objectives for each lesson provide a clear focus for the teaching, and a measure against which progress can be evaluated, on occasions through thoughtfully planned concluding sessions;
- the school has a sound bank of data concerning the pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, and this is being used appropriately to track and measure the progress the pupils make in these subjects through the school and in each class. The school sets targets for each pupil for the year and their progress is monitored and reviewed frequently. The results of statutory and other tests are analysed in detail to identify gaps in the pupils' knowledge and skills, so that the curriculum may be adjusted to address these shortcomings;
- the learning support assistants are valuable members of the teaching team. Provision for the pupils who have English as an additional language and for those who have special educational needs is well organised and managed. The quality of support for these pupils is good;
- the curriculum is firmly based on national requirements and the school has successfully implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy,

thereby raising basic skills. Planning for all subjects is detailed, but the implementation of some plans is less successful than others;

- the pupils have a positive attitude to their learning. Several teachers encourage the pupils to discuss issues in pairs and small groups, and it is rare to see them lose concentration or behave inappropriately. On occasions, some teachers do have to remind a small minority of the pupils about the conventions of the classroom, but the pupils then quickly return to the tasks assigned to them;
- the behaviour of the pupils in classrooms, social areas, and on the playground is good. In the narrow corridors they move quietly and, when required to queue for assembly or for lunch, they do so sensibly. During the assemblies, the pupils sing enthusiastically, listen attentively and reflect on the theme in silence;
- the attendance of the pupils has improved and is now around 93 per cent. Although punctuality at the start of the day is improving, a small number of pupils arrive after the bell in the morning and after the start of afternoon school, which prevents a prompt start to the first sessions;
- the headteacher took up post in January 2002 and he has done much to move the school forward. Working with an assistant headteacher and a recently appointed deputy headteacher, all members of staff are eager to see the necessary improvements and are willing to be guided by the headteacher, the local education authority (LEA), and the consultants visiting the school. Governors are aware of their roles and the newly appointed chair of governors is ensuring that appropriate training is in place;
- the LEA has provided good support for the school. The attached adviser has visited regularly and has obtained the services of subject advisers and consultants as necessary.

Key issues

8. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- raise standards throughout the school in all subjects of the curriculum;
 - improve the quality of the teaching to ensure that all teachers emulate the standards of the best;
 - improve assessment: to inform the precision of lesson planning; to introduce mechanisms for assessing progress in practical activities; and by extending the use of target setting in areas of the curriculum where it is not established.
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Inspection findings

Standards of achievement

9. Standards are rising throughout the school, but there is still much to do to address the weaknesses and shortcomings of the past.

10. The pupils enter the school with attainment that is well below the average for their age, particularly in their knowledge and use of English, although many have greater fluency in their home language. They make a sound start to their education in the reception classes and make good progress in developing their language and social skills. Many make rapid strides in developing their fluency in English. For the most part, the pupils listen attentively and try hard to answer their teacher's questions. The more able speak fluently and at some length, using interesting ideas and explaining their activities, such as how they are pretending to make chapattis in the role-play area. However, many have a restricted English vocabulary and respond in single words and phrases. Many pupils know letter sounds, write their own first names accurately and are starting to write a few common words independently, while a few make attempts to write in their home language. Almost all the pupils count objects accurately to at least five and many to ten. The more able pupils count competently in twos and tens and are beginning to develop a sound understanding of subtraction. Most pupils recognise one penny coins and the more able identify coins of other values. The pupils play purposefully, with increasing concentration, and are developing their ability to play together, to co-operate and to take turns, although some still find it difficult to share and wait for others to finish.

11. The school's results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2002 were well below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this was an improvement from the test results in 2001 in English, which were very low. In mathematics there has been a steady rise in standards since 1999. Compared to the results in similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, the standards in reading and writing were well below average, and in mathematics they were below average. Few pupils reached the higher level in reading and none did so in writing, although the proportion doing so in mathematics was close to the national average. In all three subjects, a significant minority failed to reach the expected standard. Those who attained the standard in writing mainly did so at the lowest level. The teacher assessments in science demonstrated that standards were well below average and that no pupils were attaining at the higher level.

12. The National Curriculum test results at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2002 were among the lowest five per cent nationally in English and science, and they were well below the national average in mathematics. Compared to similar schools the results were very low in English and well below average in mathematics and science. The results in English and science fell considerably from the levels in 2001, after rising significantly from 1999. In mathematics the results were similar to those of 2001. Comparisons with the pupils' results when they were at the end of Key Stage 1 suggest that the pupils had made insufficient progress through Key Stage 2. In all three subjects, the proportion reaching the higher level was below average and a large proportion failed to reach the expected level. This was particularly the case in English. The trend of improvement overall was broadly comparable with the national trend.

13. Throughout the school, the pupils make sound, and sometimes good, progress in developing their facility in English, although standards remain well below average at the end of both key stages. The school has made considerable efforts recently to improve the pupils' spoken English, but the limited vocabulary and simple structure used by many are still having a significant impact on their standards in reading, and particularly in writing. Most pupils in Year 2 read at the expected level and have sound skills in recognising new words, but their understanding of what they have read is at a lower level. While some read with expression and are beginning to explore the deeper meaning of the text, most understand at a more superficial level. The majority write at least a few sentences, with spelling and simple punctuation that is mainly correct, but few pupils are on course to reach the higher level. A significant minority need support to express their thoughts in writing.

14. In Year 6, standards are higher than they were in 2002, although still well below average. The more able speak fluently and clearly, with a wide vocabulary, putting their point of view articulately, but the pupils' attainment overall in speaking English remains low. Most read reasonably accurately, but their ability to explore beneath the surface of a text for character and motive is developed less strongly. The pupils spell common words accurately and have a sound understanding of basic punctuation. The more able write at some length, in interesting ways and with a wide vocabulary. Many understand how to write for different purposes in a range of styles, using sentences of different lengths for effect. However, relatively few are approaching the higher level and there is a significant minority whose writing is well below the expected level. Throughout the school, there are some pupils who miss out words in their speech and writing, particularly the verb 'to be'.

15. Standards in mathematics are below average but, helped by the emphasis placed on mental and oral work, are improving. Pupils in Year 1 can count forward and back in multiples of ten and use this knowledge to solve simple problems. They are now made very much aware of mathematical terminology, and opportunities are taken to reinforce this. By the end of the key stage, many pupils readily count in multiples of five and ten, and know the combinations of coins to make given amounts of money. Most pupils identify simple shapes by name, and recognise and describe some of their properties. By Year 4, the pupils understand place value, but on occasions their accuracy in computation is hindered by careless presentation, for example by not aligning three-digit numbers vertically when needing to subtract. By Year 6, the pupils are working more independently on mathematical problems and recognise patterns previously practised to solve them. Although some pupils achieve well, others fail to remember number facts, which hinders their practical work in mathematics.

16. In science at Key Stage 1, the pupils undertake a range of appropriate investigations and record their findings, mainly using pictures and captions. However, the pupils' standards are impeded by their weaknesses in writing, and there is little evidence of the pupils using their mathematical skills in scientific recording, for example through bar charts. In Key Stage 2 standards in practical work are improving. The pupils understand what is meant by a fair test and the notion of control and experiment, but they are hesitant to use scientific terminology, although this is promoted regularly in science lessons.

17. The behaviour of the pupils in classrooms, social areas and on the playground is good. In the narrow corridors they move quietly and, when required to queue for assembly or for lunch, they do so sensibly. During the assemblies, the pupils sing enthusiastically, listen attentively and reflect on the theme in silence.

18. The school's procedures for monitoring the pupils' attendance are sound. Although attendance, now at 93 per cent, remains below the national figure, there have been improvements over the past two years. Measures are in place to promote attendance, through individual and class rewards. Absences are checked within 24 hours by the social inclusion officer. Efforts to reduce the impact of long-term absence through visits to Pakistan are working. The attendance of some young Czech and Portuguese pupils is a cause for concern. The punctuality of pupils at the start of the day is improving and few arrive outside the ten minutes agreed with the LEA for the closure of registers. However, several pupils arrive after the whistle in the morning and after the start of afternoon school, which prevents a prompt start to the first sessions.

Quality of education

19. The quality of education is sound. The curriculum is firmly based on national requirements, and the school is successfully implementing the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, thereby raising basic skills. Planning for English and mathematics is secure; the planning for other subjects of the curriculum is also detailed, but on occasions the implementation of these plans results in lessons that are barely satisfactory, or unsatisfactory.

20. The school has made progress in improving the quality of teaching since the inspection of January 2001, when one in five of the lessons was unsatisfactory. Teaching is now almost always satisfactory or better; in 14 of the 23 lessons the teaching was good or very good. The lessons are carefully planned and, in most, work is appropriately matched to the pupils' needs. The detailed learning objectives for each lesson provide a clear focus for the teaching, and a measure against which progress can be evaluated, on occasions through thoughtfully planned concluding sessions

21. Where the teaching was at its best: the tasks were appropriate to the needs of the varying abilities within the class; enthusiasm for the subjects was transmitted to the pupils; the pace was well judged and allowed time for consolidation; all incidents of minor misbehaviour were handled sensitively and made part of the learning; no opportunities were given for any of the pupils to lose concentration; and there was an awareness of what all pupils were doing, even if the teacher was working with a particular group.

22. The learning support assistants are valuable members of the teaching team. They work closely with the class teachers and provide effective support to their assigned pupils. Many are able to use the pupils' mother tongues - Urdu, Punjabi, Czech and Portuguese - to assist with the learning. The learning support assistants' questioning skills are good.

23. The newly appointed special educational needs co-ordinator and the learning support teacher have made a significant improvement in the organisation of support. The register of pupils is now accurate and training has been given to staff on the new Code of Practice for special educational needs. Records are well organised and all the pupils who require additional support have individual educational plans, while those who need particular support from the class teacher have group educational plans. These enable teachers to bear the pupils' needs in mind when they are planning lessons. Support staff can then ensure that they focus on the pupils' individual needs. The class teachers are fully involved in writing the individual educational plans so that they are taking responsibility for identifying the pupils' difficulties and the methods to be used for addressing them. The co-ordinator is now monitoring the teachers' lesson planning and their classroom practice to ensure that the actions identified in

the individual educational plans are being followed. Overall, the pupils receive good support in classrooms and this enables them to make at least sound progress towards their targets. However, the pupils sometimes receive too much adult help and supervision, limiting their ability to develop their independence in learning. The school has appropriate plans to involve parents more fully in the development and review of the individual educational plans, and informal open sessions have begun so that parents may consult the special educational needs co-ordinator about any concerns they may have.

24. The school regularly receives children from families who are fluent in their first language, but who have had little or no exposure to the English language, prior to starting school. Provision for these pupils is very good. On entry to the school the pupils' needs are assessed and a programme of support is planned. On occasion the LEA's support services work in partnership with the relevant staff in school.

25. The school has a sound bank of data concerning the pupils' attainment in English and mathematics and this is being used appropriately to track and measure the progress they make in these subjects through the school and in each class. Pupils whose progress is a concern are identified and support is given. The school sets targets for each pupil for the year and their progress is monitored and reviewed frequently. This enables the teachers to check whether their work is being effective in raising standards. The results of statutory and other tests are analysed in detail to identify gaps in the pupils' knowledge and skills, so that the curriculum may be adjusted to address these shortcomings. The pupils are involved well in the monitoring of their own progress towards their targets and many teachers make frequent reference to these targets in their lessons and marking. The implementation of the school's marking policy is furthering the pupils' knowledge of their own progress. The older pupils are able to explain in detail how well they are doing, making reference to the marking system, and they say that it helps them to understand the progress they are making.

26. Considerable efforts have been made to improve the accommodation. The playgroup is now situated within the main part of the school, and the temporary building previously occupied by them has been demolished. In its place has been erected a play area containing a series of climbing frames. This was well used and a focus for all-age activity. Elsewhere in the school, rooms have been decorated and partitions have been erected to close previously open-plan classrooms. A classroom has been converted into an information and communication technology (ICT) suite and each class is timetabled into this room. New arrangements will allow the Key Stage 1 dining room to be converted into a library and resource base.

27. All the teachers make effective use of their rooms as part of the learning environment. Displays in classrooms and around the school are good. Bright, attractive rooms make a positive impact on the pupils. Artefacts and interactive displays engage the pupils on investigative tasks.

28. Administration, financial and catering staff make a positive contribution to the effective and friendly atmosphere in the school. Parents and visitors are made to feel welcome. There is a good team spirit throughout the school.

Management and efficiency of the school

29. Soon after the inspection of January 2001, the headteacher left and the deputy acted as headteacher. A substantive appointment was made for January 2002. The school is now

effectively led and managed by the headteacher, who is well supported by the senior management team and other members of staff. The senior management team meets regularly to review the school's progress and determine what needs to be done next, and they have taken individual responsibility for key aspects of the school's work, including sections of the action plan. The senior managers provide a clear direction for staff and pupils in the raising of standards and improving the quality of provision. Their skills and expertise are complementary and they provide good role models for high standards and collaborative working.

30. Led by the headteacher, a comprehensive programme of monitoring and evaluation has been established. The quality of this evaluation is good. The strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision are identified accurately. Clear targets are set as a result of the information gathered to ensure the quality of educational provision continues to improve. Planning in all subjects is checked and samples of pupils' work are analysed. The senior staff have observed teaching regularly, giving valuable feedback. Test results have been analysed in detail. Some of this analysis has been used to set targets for staff in their teaching and in their roles as co-ordinators.

31. Subject co-ordinators are developing their roles effectively. They monitor the teachers' planning and examine the pupils' work. These tasks are made more difficult by the large number of teachers and classes in the school. At present the co-ordinators for English, mathematics and science teach in Key Stage 2 and find it hard to give the same degree of support across the school. Co-ordinators are starting to identify areas of improvement in their subjects, which form part of their development plans. Training for the co-ordinators to monitor the quality of provision within the classrooms is ongoing and this should extend their roles appropriately.

32. The governors have made good progress in developing a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in holding the school to account for its performance. The recently appointed chair of governors has ensured that appropriate training is taking place. Governors visit to see for themselves the work of the school. Groups of governors work on curriculum, premises, personnel and financial issues, and they report to the full governing body meetings.

33. Throughout the period of special measures the school has been supported effectively by the LEA. The attached adviser has visited regularly and obtained the services of subject specialists, both from within and from outside of the LEA, as necessary. Teachers have been observed, suggestions for improvement have been made, and opportunities for professional development have been made available.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

34. The school makes good provision for the pupils' personal development through a strong ethos of care, respect and support. The different cultures and faiths represented in the school and community are valued and celebrated and this makes a significant contribution to the pupils' self-confidence and their respect for each other. Acts of worship are provided in the majority faith, Islam, but also for pupils of other faiths. These support the pupils' spiritual development well, although there are times when they are not involved sufficiently in the experience. The pupils also develop a healthy understanding of, and respect for, different faiths through their work in religious education. For example, some pupils in Year 5

talked enthusiastically about the Buddha and the development of the faith he founded. They also made thoughtful comparisons between Buddhism and other religions they had studied.

35. The consistent application of the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural policy ensures that the pupils have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong, and they show respect for each other and for property. Staff ensure that the pupils have good relationships with adults and each other. Almost all pupils work well together, taking turns and sharing their equipment. Although some pupils in reception find sharing difficult, it is here that their understanding begins. The pupils behave well in the classroom and around school, and many of the older pupils care for the younger ones very sensibly. The use of personal and social education lessons is helping the pupils to improve their awareness and understanding of such issues as stereotyping and racism. Their cultural development is soundly nurtured through art, drama, dance, music and literature from a range of cultures, and through visits to places of interest and visitors to the school. The singing lessons for the oldest pupils are inspirational occasions that fire their enthusiasm.

Implementation of the action plan

36. **Key Issue 1: to improve the standards achieved by pupils in English, mathematics and science**

The English co-ordinator has provided a strong lead in identifying where improvement is needed and in developing the teachers' understanding of how this may be brought about. The school has, in particular, implemented a number of strategies to improve the weaknesses in the pupils' speech and to develop their fluency in spoken English. Consequently, many teachers are using drama across the curriculum in order to increase the opportunities the pupils have to express themselves in a variety of styles. Teachers are encouraged to use questioning to provide greater emphasis on the pupils explaining their ideas and understanding, to use newly taught vocabulary, and to speak at length in a structured way. Some teachers are now giving the pupils greater opportunities to speak and this is having a significant impact on their confidence and fluency. It is not yet, however, consistent and some learning assistants have not developed the skills necessary to support the pupils in improving their speech when they are working in small groups. As a result of training received by the assessment co-ordinator, the school is to adopt the 'talking partners' scheme in order to focus more specifically on improving the speaking skills of some individual pupils. The use of bilingual teaching, with the valuable support of teaching assistants, is giving appropriate value to the pupils' home languages and helping to develop their facility in English.

The pupils' performance in the 2002 end-of-key-stage mathematics tests has been carefully analysed and the main strengths and weaknesses identified. The mathematics co-ordinator has started to tackle these weaknesses effectively through modelling lessons and adjusting planning where necessary. The pupils' ability to calculate mentally is improving as they acquire a wider range of strategies to solve number problems. The whole-school focus on improving the pupils' use of mathematical language is evident in most lessons. The teachers give clear guidance about how to tackle word problems and this is helping to increase the pupils' confidence and competence, particularly when they are asked to solve 'the problem of the week', and to answer test questions at the end of the lesson. The school is beginning to put in place a number of support structures to target underachievement. A higher percentage

of pupils are predicted to reach the expected levels in next year's national tests.

In science, by the end of Key Stage 2, there are significant gaps in the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. The science co-ordinator, who has only recently returned to the school, has analysed the pupils' performance in end-of-key-stage tests; weaknesses have been identified and they are beginning to be addressed. A significant number of the older pupils require additional support to reinforce their understanding of scientific concepts and to improve the quality of their scientific explanations. Few pupils are able to organise their ideas into a logical sequence or to work independently, and the use of scientific terms is underdeveloped. Teachers too often allow copying from the board or textbook.

Reasonable progress has been made on this key issue.

37. Key Issue 2: to improve the pupils' achievements in geography, history, religious education and ICT

The teachers are increasingly using artefacts to support their lessons in geography, history and religious education. The pupils are also encouraged to describe the artefacts they are holding to the whole class. Visits to local places of worship, museums and rivers have given a practical emphasis to the subjects. Visitors have also brought experiences from the local community into the school.

National guidance has been used as a basis for schemes of work and some additions and amendments have taken place to ensure they are appropriate for the school. The computer suite is well used, but further thought should be given to research both in the classroom and in the resource centre.

Reasonable progress has been made on this key issue

38. Key Issue 3: to ensure the leadership of the school provides the educational direction necessary for improvement

Governors are aware of their roles and the newly appointed chair of governors is ensuring that appropriate training is taking place, and that all play their part in fulfilling their responsibilities. The senior management team has been strengthened by the appointment of an experienced deputy headteacher. Her work within the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, and her experience as a special educational needs co-ordinator have proved of great value.

The subject co-ordinators are line-managed by the headteacher. The co-ordinators are increasingly aware of their roles and are monitoring their subject areas through work scrutiny and reviews of planning. Time is to be allocated to each co-ordinator to enable them to undertake their responsibilities. All members of staff are eager to see the necessary improvements and are willing to be guided by the headteacher, LEA, and the consultants visiting the school. The headteacher is aware that emphasis on the core subjects, and those identified as key issues, has resulted in some areas of the curriculum not being given sufficient recognition. Physical education, music and design and technology are all to receive support over the coming months.

The special educational needs co-ordinator has undertaken an audit of the list of pupils and this has been revised. There are 31 per cent of the pupils with special education needs; ten pupils already have Statements of Special Educational Need or they are pending. Thirteen per

cent of the pupils are on the school action plus list. The school has appointed a part-time special needs teacher, and no longer uses the LEA facilities.

Good progress has been made on this key issue.

39. Key issue 4: to improve the checking of teaching and the curriculum

The headteacher, supported by the LEA's attached adviser, and members of the senior management team have observed lessons. The outcomes have been discussed with teachers and, where weaknesses have been identified, support has been given. There have been notable successes in the school and improvements are evident. Good practice is celebrated and disseminated to give guidance to those requiring it. Four members of the governing body have accompanied senior managers during these observations. Outcomes have been shared with the curriculum committee of governors.

Work scrutiny, the monitoring of marking and the review of subject planning are conducted by senior managers and the co-ordinators for the subjects. In this way there is an attempt to ensure that there is a consistency of approach. The co-ordinators have all received training in their role and are now contributing action plans and resource audits to bring about improvements in their subject areas.

Good progress has been made on this key issue.

40. Key Issue 5: to improve the quality of teaching

Considerable improvements have been made in the quality of teaching since January 2001. The tasks set for the pupils now build effectively on their prior learning and in most cases are well matched to their abilities. The three-part lesson, previously used mainly in literacy and numeracy sessions, is now adopted for other subjects of the curriculum. Although the exposition phase remains stronger than the conclusion, there are now more useful plenaries which prepare the pupils for future lessons and which evaluate the learning that has taken place.

The teachers have raised their expectations of the pupils' commitment to the lesson and the standards of work that they produce. Many more lessons are now conducted with pace and good humour, and role play, pair and group work and investigative tasks are more frequently used.

Good progress has been made on this key issue.

41. Key Issue 6: to use information from assessment to ensure work is matched to pupils' differing needs in the planning of the curriculum in individual lessons

The school has made a sound start in adopting the new Foundation Stage profile and this is being used appropriately to assess the skills and knowledge of the pupils when they first start school and to track their progress from this point. The pupils are tested at regular intervals as they move through the school. The analysis of this data is used to set targets in English and mathematics for the pupils and to make predictions for each class, against which success is monitored. Staff have received further training in assessment and they use the information to group the pupils in their classes by attainment and set different levels of work for them. Objectives are identified for each lesson and the teachers' marking is focused on whether the

pupils have met these. However, on occasions the teachers' objectives were too vague or were confused with the activity, so that they were not useful as a measure of progress. The practice of asking the pupils to write the objectives, sometimes lengthy, in their books, reduces the amount of work that some of the less able pupils can complete. The teachers' planning is scrutinised to ensure that the different levels of work are set for each group. The school has recently begun to extend the focus to the planning of work in other subjects, in order to ensure that the pupils build on their skills and knowledge consistently.

Reasonable progress has been made on this key issue.

42. Key Issue 7: to develop the role of the governing body in shaping the direction of the school and holding the school to account for the standards achieved; to work with community leaders to develop parents' and carers' awareness of the detrimental affect of long absences on pupils' learning and the standards they achieve; to encourage the involvement of parents in the work of the school and in supporting their children's learning

All governors attended a two-day training programme ensuring that they had a better understanding of the role of the governor and their monitoring functions. A skills audit of governors was undertaken and four committees have been formed, covering personnel, finance, the curriculum and premises.

Attendance at governors' meetings has improved. The newly appointed clerk to the governors ensures that minutes are detailed and questions raised are recorded. The minutes indicate that the quality of the debate at the meetings has improved and that issues of educational direction and strategic management are discussed.

Although the attendance of the pupils is below the national figure, there has been a steady improvement over the past two years. The school has appointed its own social inclusion officer to promote attendance and punctuality. She works closely with educational welfare officers and is challenging frequent lateness, and telephoning homes on the first day of absence.

The headteacher has met with other local schools, community governors and LEA officers to discuss long-term absences. It has been agreed to follow the common policy that only long-term absences around a school holiday will be authorised. All parents wishing to take pupils out of school are now interviewed by the headteacher, where the policy is explained. Several families have now changed their plans in the light of this information. Assessment data is being scrutinised to evaluate the impact of long-term absences. The number of terms a pupil has been present in school is being published alongside final attainment information in a bid to match underachievement to attendance. Information on the curriculum is published each term, with suggestions on how to support pupils at home.

Family literacy and ICT groups are operating within the school and are oversubscribed. The achievements of pupils in these groups are being monitored. Parents have attended enrichment sessions throughout the school, where pupils work with parents for mornings or afternoons on a special project, such as art, craft, design and technology or ICT. A very successful school fête took place to mark the Golden Jubilee with many parents attending. Reports are being evaluated, with a view to improving their value to parents.

Good progress has been made on this key issue.

Notes

FOR THE USE OF THE OFFICE AND INSPECTORATE ONLY

REPORT TITLE	The Beeches Primary
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PANEL OF INSPECTORS	Mr K Gilbert HMI Mrs P Cox AI

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The Beeches Primary School

Peterborough LEA

Dates of Inspection: 26-27 March 2003

By Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools from the Office for Standards in Education

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

The Beeches Primary School is situated in the centre of Peterborough, in a residential area of predominantly owner occupied and rented accommodation. The school roll fluctuates during the year, due to the number of families who move in and out of the area at short notice. The school is much larger than most primary schools, with 442 pupils on roll. There is a high level of unemployment and the school serves an area of social and economic deprivation. Approximately half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is over twice the national average. The majority of the pupils live close to the school, but some families choose to send their children to the school from some distance away, because of the support given to those speaking Czech and Portuguese. The local community is ethnically diverse. A high proportion of the pupils come from families where the home language is Urdu or Punjabi. Many pupils for whom English is an additional language are at an early stage of learning English when they enter the school. A third of the pupils are on the school's special educational needs list; however, only ten pupils have a Statement of Educational Need.

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in January 2001. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) in July and December 2001, and in February, July and December 2002 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of January 2001.

In March 2003, an HMI and an additional inspector returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2001 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

MAIN FINDINGS

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- standards are rising throughout the school, but there is still much to do to address the shortcomings of the past;
- children enter the reception classes with attainment which is well below the average for their age, because many of them have limited knowledge of English. However, many are fluent speakers in their home languages and are reaching the Early Learning Goals in many aspects of communication in these languages. Many rapidly develop fluency in English and gain a sound grounding in mathematics. However, by the end of their time in reception, the pupils are well below the average for their age in early reading and writing skills;
- the school's results in the Key Stage 1 national tests for 2002 showed a significant improvement over the results of 2001. Although moving closer in mathematics, the results as a whole remain below national averages. At Key Stage 2, the school's test results in English and science were lower than those of 2001, whereas in mathematics they were similar to the previous year, but in all cases they were well below national averages and the results gained by similar schools;
- the school has made progress in improving the quality of teaching since the inspection of January 2001, when one in five of the lessons was unsatisfactory. Teaching is now almost always satisfactory or better; it was good or very good in 14 of the lessons. The lessons are carefully planned and, in most, work is appropriately matched to the pupils' needs. The detailed learning objectives for each lesson provide a clear focus for the teaching, and a measure against which progress can be evaluated, on occasions through thoughtfully planned concluding sessions;
- the school has a sound bank of data concerning the pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, and this is being used appropriately to track and measure the progress the pupils make in these subjects through the school and in each class. The school sets targets for each pupil for the year and their progress is monitored and reviewed frequently. The results of statutory and other tests are analysed in detail to identify gaps in the pupils' knowledge and skills, so that the curriculum may be adjusted to address these shortcomings;
- the learning support assistants are valuable members of the teaching team. Provision for the pupils who have English as an additional language and for those who have special educational needs is well organised and managed. The quality of support for these pupils is good;
- the curriculum is firmly based on national requirements and the school has successfully implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy,

thereby raising basic skills. Planning for all subjects is detailed, but the implementation of some plans is less successful than others;

- the pupils have a positive attitude to their learning. Several teachers encourage the pupils to discuss issues in pairs and small groups, and it is rare to see them lose concentration or behave inappropriately. On occasions, some teachers do have to remind a small minority of the pupils about the conventions of the classroom, but the pupils then quickly return to the tasks assigned to them;
- the behaviour of the pupils in classrooms, social areas, and on the playground is good. In the narrow corridors they move quietly and, when required to queue for assembly or for lunch, they do so sensibly. During the assemblies, the pupils sing enthusiastically, listen attentively and reflect on the theme in silence;
- the attendance of the pupils has improved and is now around 93 per cent. Although punctuality at the start of the day is improving, a small number of pupils arrive after the bell in the morning and after the start of afternoon school, which prevents a prompt start to the first sessions;
- the headteacher took up post in January 2002 and he has done much to move the school forward. Working with an assistant headteacher and a recently appointed deputy headteacher, all members of staff are eager to see the necessary improvements and are willing to be guided by the headteacher, the local education authority (LEA), and the consultants visiting the school. Governors are aware of their roles and the newly appointed chair of governors is ensuring that appropriate training is in place;
- the LEA has provided good support for the school. The attached adviser has visited regularly and has obtained the services of subject advisers and consultants as necessary.

KEY ISSUES

In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- raise standards throughout the school in all subjects of the curriculum;
 - improve the quality of the teaching to ensure that all teachers emulate the standards of the best;
 - improve assessment: to inform the precision of lesson planning; to introduce mechanisms for assessing progress in practical activities; and by extending the use of target setting in areas of the curriculum where it is not established.
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