

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MALVIN'S CLOSE COUNTY FIRST SCHOOL**

Blyth

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122262

Headteacher: Ms Julie Bowman

Reporting inspector: Mrs Margaret Hulme  
RgI's OIN 3609

Dates of inspection: 22-23 May 2000

Inspection number: 189846

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Albion Way Blyth Northumberland
Postcode:	NE24 5BL
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Mellon
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is situated in the urban area of Blyth in Northumberland. Numbers on roll are rising steadily and now total 293 pupils. This includes 55 pupils in the reception classes who are under five and there are 52 part-time places for nursery children. Almost all pupils are white and none has English as an additional language. The area is recognised as one of long-term unemployment and low incomes, often resulting in family breakdowns. At present 77 pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. There are 19 per cent of pupils on the special educational needs register. When pupils enter the school many have fewer skills in literacy and numeracy than is expected for their age and often children have poor social skills and problems with communication.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very good school that works hard to give pupils an appreciation of what they can achieve within a caring, stimulating and good quality learning environment. Standards are now higher, the quality of education is very good, costs are mainly low and all resources are used very effectively. The value for money provided by the school is very good.

#### **What the school does well**

- A marked improvement has been made to standards in literacy, particularly reading;
- Overall, teaching is good: in over a third of lessons seen it was very good;
- The headteacher provides very strong leadership and , with the very effective support of staff and governors, is raising the status of the school;
- The pupils enjoy school, have very good attitudes to their work and behave well;
- Parents support the school very well and are satisfied with the education it provides.

#### **What could be improved**

- The quality of provision in the nursery is not as good as that of the other classes for children under five;
- Handwriting standards. Greater emphasis is needed on joined writing and the presentation of work.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in October 1996. The school has undertaken an extensive programme of work in line with the further development judged necessary in the last report. It has succeeded very well in overcoming the previous weaknesses and has found ways to ensure that any weakness is quickly identified and then remedied. At the same time it maintains and often improves the quality it has achieved. However, it is still working to improve the quality of provision in the nursery. The strong leadership of the headteacher combined with a very effective governing body achieves a high quality of education. The school is very well placed for yet further improvements and its newly awarded status as a training school for future teachers has been well earned.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
reading	E	E	C	A	well above average A
writing	D	D	C	B	above average B
mathematics	C	B	C	B	average C
					below average D
					well below average E

When pupils enter the school many have fewer skills than is expected for their age and often children have poor social skills and problems with communication. By Year 2, the majority of children are reaching national average levels and some are doing better. When compared to similar schools standards are above average in writing and mathematics and well above average in reading. Reading is taught well and standards have improved dramatically. Although children are achieving an acceptable standard in writing, more time is needed to improve handwriting and the presentation of written work could be better. Trends in results over time show that reading and writing have improved over the last four years to meet national averages and mathematics has always been better and sustained its position. Improvements have been at a better rate than other schools nationally. Standards in information technology that were judged unsatisfactory in the previous inspection report are now satisfactory and there are plans to extend the skills acquired to other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in the nursery and at least good progress in all other classes.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. In all classes there are enthusiastic pupils who are keen to succeed and work diligently.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall good. No exclusions in the last year. Particularly good behaviour in assemblies when parents are present.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good resulting in pupils who are eager to please their teachers and do their best. Personal development is good. Children co-operate well, take care of equipment and enjoy responsibility.
Attendance	Satisfactory

For the last three years the rate of attendance has been good but there was a drop last year owing to sickness and more holiday absence than usual.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	good	good	very good

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

Overall, teaching is good and in over one third of lessons seen it was very good. At the under five stage, teaching is satisfactory in the nursery and very good in the reception classes. At Years 1 and 2, teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good, with 57 per cent of lessons being good and 29 per cent that were very good. At Years 3 and 4, teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good with half the lessons being very good and 38 per cent being good.

There is very good teaching of literacy. The National Literacy Strategy has led to teachers making more time for the direct teaching of essential skills. This is resulting in improved reading, punctuation and grammar. The National Numeracy Strategy has been well implemented and numeracy is well taught. Children show interest as teachers share with them what they are to learn during the lesson and use plenary sessions, at the end of lessons, to help children know where they have done well and what needs more practice or greater effort. The very good planning of lessons shows that teachers understand the needs of all pupils and plan tasks that provide appropriate challenge whatever their stage of learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Sound in the nursery. Very good range of learning opportunities in all other classes.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Children are well supported and fully integrated into the life of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall good. This has improved since the last inspection and there is now more focus and emphasis on spiritual and cultural development. The good staff role models and very clear codes of behaviour ensure that pupils develop an understanding of their moral and social responsibilities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Staff promote a caring attitude towards children and their welfare is of paramount importance to the school.

Curricular and other opportunities offered to children include a good range of visits to places of interest and visitors to the school who contribute effectively to subjects. An appropriate statutory curriculum is in place that meets the requirements of all subjects of the National Curriculum, the locally agreed syllabus for religious education and the recommended areas of learning for children under five.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The very good ethos created by the headteacher and supported by the school community effectively supports learning. Very good teamwork. Very clear educational direction for the school and total commitment to overcoming weaknesses and raising the status of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good understanding of strengths and weaknesses results in very effective fulfilment. Good level of expertise and well organised
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has a very good view of its work and uses the analysis of test results successfully in helping staff understand what works well and why.
The strategic use of resources	Very good use of resources, particularly specific grants and other funding.

The headteacher is a very effective and strong leader and exceedingly well supported by the staff and governing body. There is very good delegation and contribution of staff with responsibilities. The headteacher, staff and governors are totally committed to enabling all children to understand that they can achieve success at the highest possible level. Governors take a keen interest in the school's performance, show interest in how this is perceived locally, make good use of assessment analysis and target spending to improve standards.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like school;</li> <li>• The teaching is good;</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems;</li> <li>• Children are expected to work hard and do their best;</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed;</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents and keeps them well informed about how the children are getting on;</li> <li>• Children are becoming mature and responsible</li> <li>• Children's behaviour is good</li> <li>• Children have the right amount of homework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although the majority of parents thought that there was an interesting range of activities outside lessons, there were some who disagreed.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school. Inspectors' judgements do not support parental concerns about the range of activities outside lessons. Such activities are similar to those in other first schools and include visits and visitors to the school. The school has won an award for the range of extra-curricular activities it provides.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **A marked improvement has been made to standards in literacy, particularly reading**

1. When children start school, many have fewer skills than are usually expected. Often they are very immature for their age and lack the vocabulary they need. Speech problems are escalating. The nursery has highlighted the concerns about poor social skills for some children and problems with communication. Priority is given to personal and social development. The school is now looking at improving children's skills in speaking and listening by having better organisation of nursery activities that will ensure that adults spend more time talking to children.
2. By the time they enter reception classes they are more independent and ready for a more structured day. Their progress increases rapidly, particularly in literacy and numeracy. A love of books and how to care for them are now well established but, generally, children are more numerate than literate at this stage. When planning lessons the teachers take into account the requirements of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Sessions where children are taught the essential skills they need to become literate and numerate are well established by the end of the year. The foundation for the National Curriculum has been laid well and several children have begun the early work of English and mathematics that is usually expected in the next class. All this is achieved without denying children access to the areas of learning that are normally expected for children under five. However, as children acquire more skills and learn how to use them, teachers extend literacy and numeracy time to come closer to that of the next stage, and children confidently tackle the tasks they are given.
3. Teachers have the technical skills to teach reading well. The whole-class sessions where children read together from a large print book work well because teachers choose very appropriate material. For example, the choice of *Mrs Wishy Washy* enabled children to learn the sound made when *s* and *h* are joined together and they were then able to read other unfamiliar words. The very detailed planning clearly set out what children need to learn and these objectives were shared with even the younger children so they understood what they were attempting to learn. The very good relationships with the children made them eager to take part and make good efforts with their reading. On this occasion enjoyment of the story was very evident. They wanted to join in the reading and loved the repetitive phrases. The teacher provided very clear instructions about what different groups were required to do and, by the end of the lesson, most children could read '*sh*' words and make their own while some used dictionaries to find '*sh*' words. Opportunities to emphasise the correct letter formations in writing were not lost and there was some handwriting practice. The few children still at the stage of learning letter sounds were well supported by an additional adult and the use of a computer activity was making the task more interesting.
4. In all classes teachers make very good efforts to create print-rich learning areas. Captions and labels provide a good standard of print. Book areas and the library have attractive displays and questions that tempt children to look at books and want to read. By Year 2, children are well able to talk about characters in a story and say what they like about a book or write a review of it. They understand the format of a poem and write some of their own, identify an author and understand what this means, know the difference between fiction and non-fiction and retrieve appropriate books for information. The improvements to reading results in National Curriculum tests have been dramatic, with performance in reading moving from well below average in 1997 and 1998 to average levels last year when 31 per cent gained the higher level in reading. When

these results are compared with similar schools rather than to all schools the reading results show performance to be well above average.

5. Results in writing were below average before 1999 but improved last year to reach average levels when compared with all other schools, and above average when compared with similar schools. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher level is close to average but at five per cent is not as good as that in reading. A higher percentage of children showed more difficulties in writing than in reading in the tests. The school's analysis shows that boys particularly had difficulties and both boys and girls did less well in story-writing. They performed better if given more structured writing, such as a letter, than fictional writing.
6. The school's analyses of performance in literacy and teachers' monitoring of the subject have identified that improvements are the result of more structured teaching promoted by the National Literacy Strategy. School initiatives such as tracking pupils, the introduction of an information technology system to record and analyse performance data, the targeting of weaknesses in boys and the use of the additional literacy support have contributed to improving standards in literacy. Although reading, punctuation and grammar are better, the handwriting and extended writing have suffered as teachers are unable to cover these aspects well in literacy sessions. Plans are now being made to improve this situation.

**Overall, teaching is good: in over a third of lessons seen it was very good**

7. The teaching has improved since the previous inspection. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching and a higher proportion of very good teaching.
8. In most classes teachers prepare their lessons thoroughly by identifying precise learning objectives, grouping children carefully, varying the activities, producing some challenging ones and deciding how to assess what pupils learn. However, in the nursery, learning objectives were not precise enough – for example, a literacy objective of understanding the green cross code was too wide to measure where any success might be or where to put the future focus for the next session. Unlike other classes, where assessments are used to plan future lessons, the nursery observations are used to record which activities have been visited but not what new knowledge or skills a child has gained. This makes it difficult to know what progress is being made.
9. All teachers have established very good relationships with pupils and this makes the children want to work hard to please them. Teachers have very positive attitudes to discipline and, by managing the pupils well, enable them to get on with their tasks and complete their work by the end of the lesson. In most classes lessons proceed at a good pace and teachers have structured them to keep children interested. These features, together with teachers' enthusiasm, contribute effectively to the improved standards and good progress.
10. In those lessons with some shortcomings where progress is less good the organisation is not well planned. Sometimes there are too many choices for children, who can wander from activity to activity with limited adult input. In such circumstances children get bored, have no opportunity to extend their concentration and they make only limited progress in the acquisition of new knowledge, understanding and skills.
11. One teacher's good subject knowledge and extensive preparation were used very effectively in a numeracy lesson. The learning objective was shared with the children, who understood that they were going to learn to add together by counting on, and reinforce the use of language and symbols for addition. The mental session produced a good warm up activity and children were

eager to respond. The relationship they had with their teacher gave them confidence in using such teacher-made resources as the number ladder. Their faces echoed the enjoyment they experienced as they successfully added on two, then three more to a given number. The teacher had devised a game at an appropriate level for these reception children where they all took part in using three very large dice made by the teacher. They longed for it to be their turn to count on using dice with numerals or quantity to add up to 20. They found this exciting, picked up the idea quickly and had the skills to make an accurate addition. The pace was very good and children were soon finding ways of recording what they had learned. Group activities were challenging but at the right level for each stage of learning and additional adult support for pupils with special needs, using the computer, meant that they progressed at the same rate as others.

12. In another numeracy lesson for Year 3 pupils, which involved them using the skills of doubling and halving numbers, the learning objectives were again shared with them so that they knew what was expected. If pupils thought they could meet the objectives they were challenged to prove it, resulting in a brisk mental session where the teacher's good knowledge of the pupils allowed her to make the questions harder as they progressed. The brisk pace maintained pupils' interests as they constantly had to explain how answers were obtained. The teacher's good technical knowledge was used very well in the clarity of questioning that resulted in pupils making effective responses. Particularly good use was made of the plenary session to focus on those aspects with which some pupils had struggled. Probing questions built on what they had learnt and they found it challenging to be constantly asked if the answer would be the same if the method was changed. Good concentration had to be maintained throughout the lesson if pupils were to stay on their toes. They were very keen and said they enjoyed doing hard sums.
13. Teachers have implemented the National Literacy Strategy very well and, whenever possible, plan to link the work undertaken in literacy to other subjects. A class of Year 3 and 4 pupils were finding out what it was like to be a coalminer 100 years ago. The teacher's good local knowledge and command of the subject enlivened the lesson. The skills used in discussion were extended as pupils were challenged to compare the life of a miner with their own. The use of story as a prompt for questions was effective and responses highlighted pupils' concerns for the potential dangers facing miners. A geography lesson with Year 2 children was used effectively to extend their ability to express their views about the school environment. The teacher had again used her planning well to link both geography and literacy. In addition, there were particularly good links to the personal and social education module on environment. Effective questioning by the teacher helped pupils to focus on what they needed to look for outside. As in other lessons, the clarity of lesson objectives shared with children meant they knew exactly what to do. They were able to produce good lists of improvements as well as things that do harm. Pupils found it challenging to set out outcomes under three headings of '*must do*', '*should do*' and '*could do*'. The effective use of discussion enabled children to explain their ideas clearly and by the end of the lesson they had new knowledge of their school environment, extended their understanding of environmental issues and reinforced skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing.
14. Some teachers are very skilled at teaching classes in which a significant number of children have limited spans of concentration and who would find it easy to become distracted if the work was not both stimulating and at the right interest level. In one class, where the teacher had known the pupils for just a few weeks, she established very good management of the group and used her skills and knowledge well to plan challenging work, appropriately modified for slower learners.
15. In this class the text of *The Iron Man* was being used as a stimulus for creating a newspaper report using powerful words. The learning objectives were shared with the class and they understood that they were to record a stupendous event, using powerful words to make the report

exciting. The lesson planning was very good and firmly based on the National Literacy Strategy. The teacher used firm tactics to keep everyone involved, which meant that those eager to respond were able to do so, and others were in no doubt as to what was unacceptable behaviour. Her extremely good knowledge was used well and the good direct teaching of suffixes to improve writing succeeded in creating some excitement in pupils as they developed a growing awareness of the correct use and wanted to understand meanings. This was no mean achievement given that she had to spend more time with slower learners as there was no additional adult support at this time. The faster learners were at the stage of producing some exciting writing to hold the attention of the listener. By the end of the lesson pupils were learning to write for the purpose of conveying information that makes the reader want to know more.

16. Support staff are used well by teachers, who make sure that they understand what children need to learn and that they have guidance on working with small groups. The additional training undertaken by some staff has extended their expertise and made them effective in assisting teachers. The additional literacy support is helping some children overcome weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding of how to use letter sounds in their reading. Good support is provided through information technology: the adults use their good understanding of the task to encourage children and provide explanations but resist doing it for them. Support staff understand the targets identified in individual education plans for children with special educational needs and encourage them to extend their concentration and complete their work so that they progress at the same rate as others in the class.

**The headteacher provides very strong leadership and, with the very effective support of staff and governors, is raising the status of the school**

17. The headteacher has a clear vision about what the school is about and wants it to be very successful and a Beacon school. Although she sees academic results as important, both she and the governing body are intent on producing pupils who will be good members of the society of the future. They will need to be well-rounded individuals who are capable of relating to others, whatever their background, showing tolerance and understanding, together with concern for those less fortunate than themselves. She hopes that with these qualities they may contribute fully to their own community. The headteacher and staff have a determination to show children that they can overcome weaknesses and improve their academic standards and that their school life is vitally important.
18. The headteacher has a positive view of the governors who are active, questioning and supportive. She recognises the importance of consultation with parents and the community. Parents are seen as effective partners with the staff and governors in the education of their children. The headteacher's monitoring is probing how effectively subjects are taught and when a weakness has been identified targets are set for improvement. There are improvements in the quality of teaching and much has been done to improve the results for seven year olds in reading, writing and mathematics. She has taken action on the low standards in information technology by providing appropriate hardware, software and training for staff. There is now an information technology suite where whole classes can be taught the skills they need and a teacher has been identified to provide the support and advice required. However, one area remains a concern to the headteacher and senior management team. Although reasonably sound, the nursery does not provide the same level of quality as that of the other two classes for children under five and this has been identified for further improvement.
19. The headteacher knows how to delegate effectively. Help is provided for colleagues but she lets them get on with the tasks for which they are responsible. There are managers for both Key

Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. A new post of standards manager has been introduced to give a high priority to raising standards at all stages. The senior management team members have management targets related to the curriculum and their key stage. The key stage managers meet weekly to develop aspects of their targets and then with the headteacher every fortnight. All staff have job descriptions linked to curricular and personal targets towards raising standards. The headteacher is able to direct expertise, focus direction, delegate responsibility and assess training needs. Staff development is a high priority for the headteacher, as she sees teachers as the school's most effective resource. This has resulted in the school receiving an 'Investors in People' award. Although the headteacher provides some time for staff to carry out their responsibilities, she expects high quality input in return. The deputy and co-ordinators use considerable initiative to bring new ideas to their work and these are shared with staff, which brings improvements to classroom practice.

20. Governors make substantial contributions to the effectiveness of the school. They have good levels of expertise and are very well organised and thorough in their approach. They are open to new ideas and adapt quickly. They grasp opportunities to bid for additional funds and some have been very proactive in finding sponsors for initiatives to raise standards. They are always seeking ways of using new initiatives to cut costs without losing quality. The governors were quick to see the advantages in the school's bid for training school status. This has been successful and the new standards manager will take a leading part in this initiative from which the whole school will benefit. The governing body works very closely with the headteacher and has trust in her but expects accountability. They work hard to do their best for parents and try to respond quickly to suggestions or concerns. Most are able to make regular visits to the school and some are very industrious and make time to take part in a range of activities. The very effective chairman is skilled at promoting equal discussion and decision making in meetings and makes the headteacher feel valued.

**The pupils enjoy school, have very good attitudes to their work and behave well.**

21. The school's aims provide a foundation for an ethos that encourages all staff to provide a happy and stimulating place for children to learn. The staff and governors are keen to promote attitudes and values that result in a harmonious school community. The nursery teacher begins the work of establishing positive attitudes to learning and gives priority to improving children's personal and social development. This sound work escalates when pupils move to the reception classes, where good organisation, very good relationships and challenging activities make children eager to learn and do their best work. The consistent approaches by all staff mean that by the time children leave the school, at age nine, they are responsible, independent learners growing in maturity. In the responses to the questionnaires, 98 per cent of parents said that they believe the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.
22. There were 96 per cent of parents who considered that behaviour in the school is good and inspection findings confirm that most pupils enjoy school and behave well in class and around the school. Parents realise that there is occasional bullying but children confirmed that it was dealt with immediately and very effectively and was not a factor affecting their work. In most classes there were examples of pupils taking care of equipment, keeping classes tidy and providing help for teachers. Children enjoy coming to school because it is an orderly community where most children behave in a polite and courteous way. There are a few children who do not show good attitudes to school and whose behaviour is not as good as the majority, but teachers deal with them in acceptable ways and do not allow them to impinge on the work of others. Parents say that the good discipline policy is carried out effectively by all staff and children were consulted before the school rules were redrafted when the present headteacher took up her post. This has

resulted in children who understand the reasons behind the rules that exist and make good efforts to work in a socially acceptable community.

23. The school uses the example of others to help children develop positive relationships. This works well in practice. The relationships formed between teachers and children are very good. Teachers listen carefully to what children say. They are interested in them and any problems they may have. This is a strength that provides a very good foundation for pupils' learning. All staff are very good role models and show the courtesy to children that they expect them to show to others. Children learn from this good example and it reflects the way they relate to one another.

### **Parents support the school very well and are satisfied with the education it provides**

24. The school has very good links with parents. They are interested in the school and support their children very effectively. They successfully help in lessons and other activities as well as raising large sums of money to support the school with learning resources and other projects. There is a thriving parents and community group who understand that there is a need to identify priorities in educational developments and appreciates that there are insufficient funds to do all the school would wish. The group, known as TEAM, (Together Everyone Achieves at Malvins) have good systems of communication and put a high priority on consulting both parents and the community about planned events and the ways they may all contribute to making their school very effective.
25. Most parents support their children with work at home and 96 per cent considered that their children had the right amount of work to do at home. During lessons a range of homework was seen, depending on the age of the children. Parents liked the spelling cards that children take home and were pleased that test results are recorded in reading diaries so that they can see them. Parents expressed satisfaction with the standards the school achieves and 98 per cent were pleased about the progress their children make. All those who responded to the Parents' Questionnaire considered that the school expects children to work hard and do their best. A family literacy programme, lasting ten weeks and involving them in reading with their children, had been very helpful and parents were able to give better support at home and have a better understanding of how reading was taught.
26. Few parents expressed any dissatisfaction with the school and had clear views about how easy it is to talk with staff, use opportunities to be heard and know that their concerns receive attention. All those who responded to the questionnaires feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem and considered that the school would always act in the best interests of the children.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

#### **The quality of provision in the nursery is not as good as that of other classes for children under five**

27. The original nursery provision was seen as separate from that of the other classes for children under five. However, this had to change when the Department for Education and Employment recommended a curriculum for children under five that was based on six areas of learning where children worked towards the desired learning needed to begin the National Curriculum in Year 1.

28. The early years' co-ordinator has begun work on reviewing the school's policy in consultation with other staff working with this age group and that for the reception year has been done well, with appropriate guidance given. However, the section relevant to nursery provision has not been completed, the current guidance is out of date and is not in line with the new early learning goals which schools are required to teach from next term. Although staff know about the requirements, this document now needs completion and since three-year olds start the foundation curriculum the guidance for staff needs to include the nursery.
29. Inspection findings confirm the school's own monitoring and show that the quality of provision in the nursery, although sound, is not at the same high level as that of the other two classes for children under five. Areas that need attention are the organisation, planning of activities and use of assessments. Improvements in these areas would lead to a better quality of teaching.
30. It is impossible to organise the nursery well without a clear understanding of what is to be achieved for the children and must be based on the requirements of the new curriculum. The current organisation offers children a range of activities that provide first-hand experiences to explore and experiment with materials. They involve themselves in practical activities and play. However, insufficient consideration is given to the need to make appropriate interventions, extend and develop play and emphasise talk or other means of communication.
31. Good practice was seen when the nursery nurse was working with a group at sand play when she extended their vocabulary, improved their social skills and used their first hand experience to develop numeracy skills. While engaged in this activity she quickly noticed that the dough activity was deteriorating. She correctly judged it appropriate to leave her own group and provide appropriate intervention to extend the physical development of children using the play-dough. By doing this she encouraged their use of speaking and listening skills, extended their dexterity with tools and introduced a counting activity to reinforce their numeracy skills. Play needs to be purposeful and opportunities were lost to make the best use of a role play activity using a garage, a music table with a cassette player and an office activity to promote writing skills. A construction play area was too small and frustrated children's efforts to build large models. The lack of adult intervention was a contributory factor to the limited progress made. Fewer activities should be offered in order to allow more time for adults to be involved with children
32. Organisation was satisfactory for whole-class activities when children used the book corner or took part in snack time. At these times both the nursery nurse and teacher were engaged in extending communication skills and seized opportunities to reinforce such numeracy skills as counting and extending knowledge of colours. However, there was a tendency to miss opportunities to encourage children's independence and social skills, such as allowing children to take responsibility for giving out milk and fruit.
33. The planning of nursery sessions requires the teacher to know which precise learning objectives will enable children to gain the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to begin their National Curriculum work. When the first assessments are made on entry to nursery, the teacher has information to plan what they need to learn next and this must be based on the requirements of the under-fives curriculum. Learning objectives that require children to say and use number names are appropriate, for this age and this is done well, but weighing accurately to make jam tarts is not appropriate as most children have not had the range of experiences required to attempt this task. The planning of lessons using precise objectives that break down the stages of learning into small steps is done particularly well in the reception classes and this good practice needs to be shared with the nursery so that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of children under five.

34. Apart from the assessments undertaken when children start nursery, staff do observe children at play and keep lists of the activities they have experienced. However, this does not give staff the assessment details they need when planning further sessions. Some activities take considerable time if the teacher is to note what every child can do. For example, in a literacy session, children were required to say which item was missing when playing 'Kim's Game'. A selection of objects was provided on a tray, with the teacher involving the group in naming and describing them. When the items were covered up they had to remember the objects and when uncovered name the missing item. This activity was carried out with every child and each was removed from any other activity to take part. Assessments using observation are a valuable part of the nursery organisation but need to be planned so that they do not dominate a session and cause the teacher to lose valuable time involving herself in play activity or intervening in play to extend it. Assessments are used well when they relate to the learning objective and the desired outcomes for the areas of learning.

### **Handwriting standards and the presentation of work**

35. The scrutiny of written work shows that more time is needed to improve handwriting if children are to have a legible joined style by the end of Year 2.
36. Letter formation is taught from the reception stage. The policy on teaching handwriting has been changed and teachers now encourage the use of 'flicks' on letters from the outset as a step towards making joined writing easier. However, there are still children having problems in forming letters easily at Year 2 and, consequently, their ability to produce joined writing is made more difficult. Some children have problems in joining two or more letters and are unsure which letters do not join. Children say that although they know how to join letters they do not always use this skill in lessons other than those on handwriting. This was seen in several lessons at both key stages. Greater emphasis needs to be given to using this skill across the curriculum.
37. The presentation of work is not as good as it might be and more attention needs to be given to this across the school. Although the skills that children need to present their work well are taught, children do not apply them regularly and they need to be more aware that this is required for writing in any subject.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

38. The school should now

#### **improve the quality of provision in the nursery by bringing it to the same high level as that of the other two classes for children under five by:**

- ? improving the organisation;
- ? improving the weekly planning by having more precise learning objectives for activities;
- ? using assessments made during activities to inform future planning about what needs to be taught next;
- ? completing the early years policy in line with the recommendations for the foundation curriculum.

#### **Improve the quality of handwriting by ensuring that:**

- ? emphasis is given to the teaching of correct letter formation at an early stage;
- ? the use of joined writing at Year 2 is encouraged in all subjects;
- ? sufficient prominence is given throughout the school to good presentation.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	21
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	38	38	24	0	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	YR- Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	266
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	77

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery	YR- Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	56

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### *Attendance*

<b>Authorised absence</b>	%
School data	8.8
National comparative data	5.4

<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1*

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	27	31	58

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	19	21
	Girls	29	29	31
	Total	49	48	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84	83	90
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	23	24
	Girls	29	31	30
	Total	52	54	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90	93	93
	National	82	86	87

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	211
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

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

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

## ***Teachers and classes***

### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	29.7
Average class size	29.7

### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	87.5

### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	369516
Total expenditure	361423
Expenditure per pupil	1364
Balance brought forward from previous year	12731
Balance carried forward to next year	20824

***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	312
Number of questionnaires returned	44

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	35	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	55	43	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	41	5	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	49	47	2	0	0
The teaching is good.	68	32	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	61	34	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	23	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	25	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	59	39	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	61	39	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	41	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	34	20	2	7