

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BRICKHILL LOWER SCHOOL**

Bedford

LEA area: Bedford

Unique reference number: 109503

Headteacher: Mrs Judith Wood

Reporting inspector: Mr J White  
17242

Dates of inspection: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2001

Inspection number: 193545

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

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Lower School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Dove Road Brickhill Bedford
Postcode:	MK41 7AA
Telephone number:	01234 401404
Fax number:	01234 401405
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Christine Bell
Date of previous inspection:	14 <sup>th</sup> April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
17242	J White	Registered inspector
13526	R Barnard	Lay inspector
2766	R Spencer	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

SES  
132 Whitaker Road  
Derby  
DE23 6AP

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>14</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is located in the Brickhill area of Bedford. Pupils are drawn from wide socio-economic backgrounds and about 50 per cent live outside the school's catchment area. About ten per cent of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage and nine speak English as an additional language. The school is above average size for a Lower school and the roll has risen since the time of the last inspection and there is now an additional class. There are currently 281 pupils (156 boys and 125 girls). Admission into the reception class is at the beginning of the school year in which children become five. There are 55 children in the reception class. Fifty-eight pupils are on the register for special educational needs, a broadly average figure. Three have statements. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average but has fluctuated from year to year. The school has gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark and School Achievement Award, and has also recently achieved Beacon status.

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

Leadership and management are outstanding and have ensured that the school has improved since its last inspection. Pupils make very good progress in English and mathematics and by the age of seven standards are high; they are at least above average by the age of nine. The teaching is very good overall. The school is a harmonious community and pupils are very enthusiastic learners. Very good value for money is provided.

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

- Pupils reach high standards in English and mathematics because the teaching is very good overall.
- Leadership and management are outstanding and the commitment to improving standards is very strong.
- Relationships are excellent, pupils are very keen to learn and behave very well.

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

- There are no key issues for the school to address.

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

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

The school has continued to improve since its last inspection in April 1997 when it was judged to be a good school. Over time, standards in the national tests, in reading, writing and mathematics, have continued to rise. Pupils make very good rather than good progress in English and mathematics. The key issues in the last inspection report have been addressed very well. Good attention has been given to developing pupils' library skills and provision for information and communication technology is considerably better. Assessment procedures for the non-core subjects are more manageable. The accommodation has improved and includes an additional classroom to cater for the increase in the number of pupils. Resources have been steadily improved. Provision in the reception class is better. The school is well placed to maintain its high standards.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	A	A	A	A
Writing	A	A*	A*	A*
Mathematics	A	A	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The results show that standards have remained high over time and in 2000 the school's performance in writing was within the range of the top five percent of all and similar schools. The school exceeded its targets. According to teachers' assessments standards in science for seven-year-olds were also high in 2000. The current pupils aged seven and nine make very good progress in English and mathematics. Standards are high in Year 2 and at least above average in Year 4. The most able pupils and those with special educational needs achieve very well. There was not enough evidence during the inspection to judge standards in pupils' work in science. In the very small number of lessons observed in the reception year children were achieving well.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are very positive.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils respond very well to taking responsibility and relationships are excellent.
Attendance	The attendance rate is well above the national average.

Pupils work very hard and enjoy school. The oldest pupils take pride in running the recently introduced school's council. They also help to look after the youngest children during the lunch breaks.

## 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.*

The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is satisfactory or better in all lessons and very good or better in 50 per cent. Some excellent teaching was observed in infant and junior classes. The needs of all pupils are met well. Literacy and numeracy are taught thoroughly. Significant strengths in the

teaching include high expectations of pupils' performance, good subject knowledge, very clear focus on developing key skills and understanding, and brisk pace. All of the strengths in teaching contribute greatly to pupils' progress. Pupils have very good knowledge of their learning in English and mathematics because of their involvement in setting targets for their performance. Pupils are diligent and sustain their concentration very well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good and pupils make similar progress to their peers.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are only a few pupils whose first language is not English. They are achieving very well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of care is very high.

Assemblies contribute very well to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development and demonstrate very effectively the school's strong sense of community. The quality of pupils' work in art is good and enhances their cultural development. Singing also makes a strong contribution to cultural development. Pupils are very well known by the headteacher, teachers and non-teaching staff who work well together as a team to ensure the very high level of care.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are outstanding with a very strong commitment to achieving high standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The work of the school is evaluated extremely thoroughly.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used very efficiently and relate clearly to the school's priorities for development.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide excellent leadership and are very well supported by the governors. The development of target setting for pupils' performance has been a significant feature of the school's success. Rigorous evaluation of teaching ensures that it is continuously developed.



## 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, are making good progress and behave well.</li><li>• Teaching is good and children are expected to work hard.</li><li>• The school is well lead and managed and works closely with parents.</li><li>• The headteacher and staff are approachable.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some parents would like the school to provide a more interesting range of extra-curricular activities.</li></ul>

Parents are very positive about the school and the inspection team strongly endorses these views. The range of extra-curricular activities is similar to what is often found in schools of this size and type. In addition, what can be provided is restricted by the use of the school for an after-care club.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

**Pupils reach high standards in English and mathematics because the teaching is very good overall.**

- 1 In the 2000 national tests pupils aged seven reached high standards overall in reading, writing and mathematics. The unvalidated results in the 2001 tests and the work seen during the inspection show that these high standards are being maintained. Pupils in Year 4 also achieve at least above average standards in English and mathematics. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 have made very good progress over time and they invariably achieve well in lessons. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Excellent teaching was observed in infant and junior classes.
- 2 By the age of seven pupils have developed very good speaking and listening skills. They listen very attentively in lessons and in assemblies and speak confidently and clearly in class discussions. Listening and speaking skills are also very good at the age of nine. Pupils listen carefully to each other and they make particularly effective use of subject specific vocabulary. Seven-year-old pupils read very well. They tackle unfamiliar words confidently and are enthusiastic about books. In the work seen, they showed very good understanding of punctuation and predicted what might happen next in a story. The most able pupils showed good understanding of a thesaurus. Pupils aged nine are equally enthusiastic and confidently give their opinions of the events and characters in a story. They read fluently at levels appropriate to their capabilities. Pupils aged seven write very well in a good range of forms. Their writing is invariably well organised, often imaginative and sentences are logically sequenced. The most able pupils use punctuation very well and are beginning to use speech marks accurately. Much of the writing in Year 4 is very good and pupils are developing especially good knowledge and understanding of the forms and language of writing. For example, in an excellent literacy lesson pupils showed they understood well the meaning of haiku poetry, rhyme and alliteration. Teachers have worked hard to improve standards in writing throughout the school. A minor issue is the need to ensure that handwriting and presentation of work are consistently better than satisfactory.
- 3 Pupils aged seven and nine achieve high standards in mathematics. Work in number is especially thorough. In an excellent lesson, Year 2 pupils showed very good knowledge of multiplication facts and identified multiples accurately. Their mental recall of number facts was very quick. Pupils' work shows very good developing knowledge of place value and good evidence of opportunities to explain their calculations. Their work also includes very good attainment in shape, space and measures. Pupils in Year 4 have acquired a good range of written methods to solve number problems and their understanding of place value is very good. Pupils in an "average" ability "set" showed good knowledge of multiplication facts and associated division. This helped many of them to accurately calculate problems such as  $\frac{5}{6}$  of 24 and  $\frac{2}{3}$  of 12. The most able pupils in Year 4 attain very highly in their understanding of fractions and decimals. Their work also shows high standards in shape, space and measures.

- 4 The overall very good quality of teaching in English and mathematics contributes significantly to pupils' very good progress and high standards of attainment. Lessons have very clear objectives for pupils' learning and are well structured. A system of indicating the learning intentions ("we are learning to") and what the teacher expects ("what I am looking for") is very effective. Pupils not only know exactly what is expected of them but close discussion of how far the objectives have been reached also ensures they are developing very good knowledge of their progress. In an excellent numeracy lesson in Year 2 the teacher regularly reminded pupils of what were very challenging targets. This kept them on their toes and helped them to make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of multiplication. At the end of an equally effective literacy lesson in Year 4 the teacher encouraged pupils to share their work in meeting the objective of recognising different forms and language of poetry. The pupils' responses showed they had achieved very well. Target setting for individual pupils' performance has also helped them to be aware of their own learning needs. For example, in Year 2: "to learn all the number bonds to 10 so I can answer questions more quickly" and in Year 4: "round four digit numbers to the nearest 100". Also, they have helped teachers to meet the range of pupils' needs well. An important feature of the good or better teaching in English and mathematics is the high expectations of all pupils' performance. In the outstanding teaching, expectations are very high and lead to high standards of work. The most able pupils in Year 4 reached high standards as they worked very hard to improve their understanding of fractions and decimals. In an excellent mathematics lesson in Year 2 the teacher made sure that a pupil with special educational needs, but very capable in mathematics, was given sufficiently challenging work.
- 5 Teachers' knowledge and understanding of English and mathematics are at least good and they make careful use of appropriate subject terminology. Consequently, when pupils are asked to explain their reasoning or thinking they too invariably make good use of the appropriate language. In Year 4, when explaining multiplication facts and related division, pupils correctly used "multiple", "product" and "inverse" after hearing the teacher remind them of what these terms meant. In Year 1 the teacher made sure pupils understood "operation" and "number sentence". In the excellent teaching, teachers take every opportunity to extend pupils' knowledge of subject terminology. For example, in Year 2, after hearing a pupil talk about adding "...the same numbers together" the teacher said; "So you used repeated addition". Enthusiastic use of subject knowledge is a key feature of the teaching in English. For instance, when helping pupils to compare books by the same author or to recognise different forms of poetry. Because the quality of teachers' questioning is frequently very good and conducted at a lively pace all pupils are well involved and they listen very well. In the most effective questioning, especially at the beginning of lessons, teachers vary their questions to meet the range of pupils' abilities. This is achieved particularly successfully in the mental work in mathematics and as a result many pupils solve number problems very quickly.
- 6 Good lesson planning, an expectation that pupils will explain their thinking and frequent use of well focused questions ensure that pupils are well engaged in their learning. However, teachers judge when asking further questions would be unproductive and then teach key skills and new knowledge directly. The most able pupils in Year 4 were taught very clearly how to use a calculator appropriately to help their work in fractions and decimals. In guided reading in Year 2 and in poetry in Year 4 teachers made sure pupils understood particular vocabulary and use of

language without undervaluing their contributions. Teachers teach new skills and knowledge very effectively because their explanations are usually very clear. Pupils are invariably managed well and relationships are excellent.

**Leadership and management are outstanding and the commitment to improving standards is very strong.**

- 7 The headteacher, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides extremely effective and purposeful leadership. With the good support of governors she sets very high expectations for the school's work and has ensured improvements since its last inspection. Since that time there have been significant changes in the teaching staff but the quality of teaching has not suffered because of the continued drive to raise standards. The school's improvement plan, subject action plans, and strategic vision policy, are very useful tools for guiding the school's development. How standards will be maintained and improved is made explicitly clear. The progress of the plan is discussed regularly by the governors. Pupils' progress is "tracked" rigorously and their work is scrutinised regularly. A systematic programme of lesson observations ensures that strengths and weaknesses are identified in the teaching and learning. Staff are well involved in these procedures. Teachers and non-teaching staff have an annual interview with the headteacher to discuss their development. The headteacher's feedback to teachers, following lesson observations, is extremely helpful to them and not only identifies their strengths but also indicates how improvements could be made. "Setting" in mathematics, for all year groups except the reception class, has helped standards to rise. The headteacher's regular teaching of mathematics to the most able Year 4 pupils is a demonstration of her commitment to raising standards. The deployment of learning support assistants (LSAs) in all literacy lessons is also an example of the headteacher's and governors' commitment to supporting teachers and pupils. LSAs observed during the inspection supported pupils well. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They have good contact with subject co-ordinators and the co-ordinators' reports make reference to how expenditure has affected standards. Best value is also taken into account when governors compare the school's performance with other schools locally and nationally. The headteacher, teachers and non-teaching staff work well as a team and the school's administration runs very smoothly.
- 8 The headteacher and staff have worked hard to establish and refine a coherent system of setting targets for pupils' performance in English and mathematics. The targets are shared with pupils and parents and reviewed regularly. At the pre-inspection meeting with parents they commented how much they valued knowing what was expected of their children so that they could help them. Pupils' performance in statutory and non-statutory tests and teachers' assessments are used to help set whole school and individual targets but also more immediate "next steps" targets help pupils know how to improve quickly and ensure teachers are fully aware of their needs. The targets have helped teachers to identify more precise lesson objectives. When pupils work is marked they are also made aware of whether they have "well achieved", "achieved" or "nearly achieved" the learning intentions. Undoubtedly the identification of precise and challenging targets, rather than only forecasting what pupils might achieve, has contributed to raising teacher's expectations of pupils' performance. The headteacher has made effective use of grant funding to enable teachers to have time to devise pupils' targets and this is a further indication of her support for the teachers and pupils. In addition, time is allocated in each class for teachers and pupils to discuss the targets. In a very

good “conferencing” session seen during the inspection, pupils in Year 4 worked in pairs to review their achievements. They read each other’s work and the teacher’s very informative evaluative comments and discussed whether they had improved. Pupils showed they knew exactly what their targets were and how much their skills and knowledge had advanced. They talked confidently and made very good use of subject terminology.

**Relationships are excellent, pupils are very keen to learn and behave very well.**

- 9 A very strong ethos of care and valuing pupils’ contributions and achievements contributes strongly to developing the excellent relationships. Pupils know how they are expected to behave and respond accordingly. Their enthusiasm, relationships and behaviour have a significant impact on their attainment and progress. Pupils develop personal confidence and respect for others’ points of view. Working independently, in addition to co-operating with others, is developed well in the reception year. These youngest children have good opportunities to work in small groups but also have time to make their own choice of activities. They choose activities sensibly and co-operate well, for example, when playing as the passport officer and tourist in the “passport office”. As pupils become older their confidence grows. Invariably they are very positive about their learning and want to do well. They usually work very hard and contribute enthusiastically in whole class discussions. They enjoy being challenged especially when having to explain their thinking or give accounts of what they have learnt. On occasion, during the inspection, pupils audibly expressed their disappointment that a lesson had ended. They invariably listen well to adults and each other. In an excellent literacy lesson in Year 4 they were absorbed by the teacher’s skilful and lively teaching, behaved impeccably, and listened well to each other as they shared their ideas on writing a poem. In Year 3 pupils listened very attentively to music by Stravinsky as they were helped to create “atmosphere” in their writing. In a literacy lesson in a Year1/2 class pupils in pairs and small groups listened well to each other as they took turns to talk about their reading. Pupils in Year 1, working in the computer suite, co-operated well in using the keyboard and a word bank to write simple sentences about animals.
- 10 Harmonious relationships and very good behaviour are also evident outside lessons. Pupils play sensibly together during break times. They also respond very well to being able to enter their classrooms, if they wish, before the start of the morning session so that they can socialise with friends and prepare for the school day. At the beginning of each school year pupils help to establish the rules for their conduct and regularly in assemblies they are reminded of the appropriate ways to behave. During the inspection pupils spoke very confidently of their involvement in the school’s council and are particularly pleased that other pupils elect them. Several examples were observed of junior pupils helping the youngest infants, including encouraging them to join in games or share play equipment.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	16
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	5

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
25	25	31	19	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

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	269
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	31

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	58

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	3.9
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	23	33	56

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	23	23
	Girls	31	32	32
	Total	54	55	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (93)	98 (95)	98 (95)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	23	23
	Girls	31	32	32
	Total	54	55	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (93)	98 (95)	98 (93)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	2
Indian	7
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	192
Any other minority ethnic group	5

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

### Exclusions in the last school year

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

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)	10.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27.3
Average class size	31.2

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

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	155

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	546,010
Total expenditure	559,954
Expenditure per pupil	2,089
Balance brought forward from previous year	42,149
Balance carried forward to next year	28,205



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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	281
Number of questionnaires returned	144

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	40	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	38	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	47	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	51	7	3	1
The teaching is good.	71	28	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	36	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	26	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	22	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	51	45	3	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	69	29	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	45	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	47	24	4	6