INSPECTION REPORT

BEXTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Knutsford

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111232

Headteacher: Mrs S Heard

Reporting inspector: Mr F P Ravey 11371

Dates of inspection: 8 - 9 May 2001

Inspection number: 195911

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Blackhill Lane

Knutsford

Cheshire

Postcode: WA16 9DB

Telephone number: 01565 632816

Fax number: 01565 634412

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J Mawby

Date of previous inspection: March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			
Mr F Ravey	Registered inspector		
Mr D Heath	Lay inspector		
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Mr D Roberts	Team inspector		

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
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	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	14
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	14
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	15

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This primary school is situated in the town of Knutsford, Cheshire. It has 462 pupils on roll, most of whom come from the local area. However, a significant minority of pupils come from other parts of Knutsford. Some of these pupils attend the school because they have particular special educational needs. The age range of pupils is from four to 11 years. Most are taught in classes with pupils of a similar age. The school contains two units for pupils with special educational needs, one for pupils with speech and language difficulties; the other for pupils with a range of learning difficulties. The two units provide for a total of 32 pupils. Many of these pupils are taught in much smaller classes. Their special educational needs include learning difficulties and speech and communication difficulties. The vast majority of pupils attending the school are white; two pupils are from the Pakistani ethnic group. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language and those who do are not at the early stages of learning English. Pupils' attainment on entry is largely above average although in writing this year attainment on entry was closer to average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with some excellent features. Standards are high and teaching is of very good quality. Pupils show excellent attitudes to their work. Leadership of very high quality ensures that the school provides a very good all round education for its pupils. It gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils attain high standards in English, mathematics and science, and very high standards in art, by the age of 11.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent.
- Relationships are excellent.
- Teaching is of very good quality.
- · Leadership is of very good quality.
- Pupils are provided with a rich and stimulating environment for learning.

What could be improved

Provision for developing pupils' skills of scientific enquiry in the seven to 11 age group.

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 March 1997. It has made good improvement since that time. National Curriculum test results at age 11 in English and mathematics have improved to high levels. Results in science have improved well. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. The key issues raised last time have all been addressed successfully. Schemes of work are fully in place as is a formal policy for monitoring and evaluating the curriculum (in fact, this significant area is now co-ordinated very effectively by the deputy headteacher); learning resources in science are now very good; and governors are actively involved in monitoring school development.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

	compared with				
Performance in:		similar schools			
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	С	Α	Α	Α	
mathematics	В	В	Α	Α	
science	С	С	В	С	

Key	
well above average above average	A B
average	С
below average	D
well below average	Е
well below average	E

Standards attained in the most recent National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds in English and mathematics were well above the national averages for these subjects and well above the average for similar schools. In science, standards were above the national average and were average when compared to similar schools. The school has improved standards consistently in recent years. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards amongst the present Year 6 pupils are high in all subjects, with particular strengths in writing, numeracy and scientific knowledge and understanding. Standards in art are very high by the age of 11. Standards in work seen at age seven are well above average in writing and mathematics and are above average in science. Pupils of all attainments achieve the levels they should. The school is successful in meeting its agreed targets for attainment.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school Excellent. Pupils are very positive about all aspects of school life.	
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils' behaviour is outstandingly good.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The quality of relationships forms the basis for pupils' excellent attitudes to work.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching has many strengths and no significant weaknesses. It has a very strong and positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning and to the high standards they attain. In English and mathematics, teaching enables pupils to make good progress throughout the school and to attain high standards. Literacy and numeracy are taught very effectively. Teaching in art results in work of very high quality, evident throughout the school. The quality of display around the school is an accurate reflection of the high expectations teachers have and of the very good work that results. Teachers are very successful in meeting the learning needs of all groups of pupils. During the inspection, 44 per cent of lessons observed were at least very good; 96 per cent were at least good; no unsatisfactory or weak teaching was seen.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment		
The quality and range of the curriculum	Pupils are given a good range of learning opportunities and in some subjects, such as writing and art, the range of opportunities is excellent.		
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school takes the utmost care to provide an environment for pupils with special educational needs that is supportive and that helps them to achieve well.		
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school makes especially strong provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development.		
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of its pupils.		

The school works well in partnership with parents to ensure that pupils are given the best possible chance to achieve well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment	
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very effective and inspirational leadership. She is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, senior management team and subject co-ordinators.	
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are well informed and very strongly committed to the school. They monitor its performance thoroughly.	
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school monitors its performance systematically and thoroughly. This helps it secure very good improvements.	
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its resources in order to promote high standards. Best value principles are applied effectively in making major spending decisions.	

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
 The progress their children make. The quality of teaching. The quality of school leadership. Standards of behaviour. The way in which their children are encouraged to become mature and responsible. Their children like school. 	 The amount of homework given. Information provided about their children's progress. The school's partnership with parents. The range of activities provided outside lessons.

The inspection team agrees strongly with the very positive views expressed by parents about standards, progress, teaching and school leadership. The team judges that the school provides a good range of activities outside lessons and that the partnership it forges with parents is an effective one. The information provided about pupils' progress is of good quality. The team found that the school has a well-organised system of homework provision that results in homework contributing well to pupils' learning. A small number of parents were concerned that physical education lessons sometimes get cancelled. Evidence available to the inspection team did not indicate that lessons were cancelled unduly.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils attain high standards in English, mathematics, science and art by the age of 11

- By the age of 11, standards are well above national expectations in English, mathematics, science and art. To achieve these standards, pupils make very good progress throughout the school in English, mathematics and science. In art, they make very good progress. A great strength of the school is the way in which pupils of all attainments are helped to learn well.
- In English, the quality of pupils' writing by the age of 11 is very good. Their work is often a joy to read. In Year 2, the quality of writing and the way in which pupils write for different purposes is very impressive. For example, writing about Tanzania flows very well but is structured in short sentences that are very appropriate for this descriptive type of writing. Spelling is very accurate. Handwriting is mostly very carefully formed joined script. High attaining pupils use words very well to set the right tone. For example, one wrote conversationally,

'Just then a monkey popped its head round the branch of a tree'.

In the seven to 11 age group, the quality of writing continues to develop very well. Pupils are taught to write in many different styles and they respond magnificently. Poetry writing is particularly good. One pupil in Year 6 fashioned the ending of a poem on captivity ('Don't Cage Me') in a way that completely turned round the mood of the work by using an almost ironic statement,

'Just cage me.
I'll die an attraction.'

Writing metaphors about grandmothers proved a rich source of inspiration. One pupil wrote, with obvious affection,

'She is a mug of hot Ribena On a cold day',

Whilst, in contrasting mood, another offered,

'She is a foggy day, mystical and unknown.'

Another Year 6 pupil, writing a poem about a candle maker, inspired by an educational visit ended, with great poignancy,

'Like his candle flame he will soon flicker and die.'

Such examples abound - in pupils' books, in lessons and in work on display.

In mathematics, pupils make very good progress in using number. Pupils in Year 1 have a very confident understanding of how totals can be made using different combinations of numbers. By the age of seven, pupils are very good at putting in order numbers up to 100. They have a good understanding of the relationships between numbers, knowing, for example, that multiplication is repeated addition. They measure with growing accuracy. Pupils in Year 5 show a good understanding of

angles, being able to recognise acute, obtuse and reflex angles. By the age of 11, many pupils select and use appropriate calculation skills to solve geometric problems. They use geometric notations and symbols correctly. Pupils achieve very high standards in using the extension of the number system, including negative numbers and the relationships between fractions, decimals and percentages.

- In science, pupils aged seven show good development of scientific knowledge and of the skills of scientific research. In one lesson this led to good sorting of living things into groups. They are beginning to develop the ability to describe the basis for their groupings. By the age of 11, most pupils show very good scientific knowledge and understanding of why foods need to be handled and stored with care. They understand micro-organisms can cause food to decay and make good inferences about the possible effects of this upon human health.
- In art, by the age of seven pupils create detailed, well proportioned charcoal drawings that correspond very closely to the style of L S Lowry. Boldly coloured paintings of flowers, grass and butterflies show pupils' good attention to line and form. Well-designed work in clay depicts pupils' own faces as they have changed over time.
- In the seven to 11 age group, pupils develop their skills very well to produce work by the age of 11 that is often of high quality. Some work in Year 6 in the style of Monet is of outstanding quality. Some high quality designs influenced by the work of David Hockney reveal pupils' increasing skills in using and combining visual and tactile qualities. Work in Years 5 and 6 reflects pupils' growing understanding of perspective. Other subjects are used well to enable pupils to demonstrate the high level of their skills. For example, Year 4 pupils made well-proportioned face masks, effectively combining papier mache and paper sculpture. Curling techniques were used very effectively to add a striking three-dimensional effect for hair and beards. The end product was exceptionally well proportioned and very striking masks.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent

- During the inspection, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning were of a very high standard. In lessons seen, these aspects were never less than good; in 78 per cent of lessons they were at least very good; and in 39 per cent of lessons inspectors judged attitudes and behaviour to be excellent. Pupils behave equally well at other times, for example at lunch time or when walking round the school. The high standards achieved are very much the result of highly effective teaching and a very strong and effective whole school 'ethos', that includes an expectation that politeness and very good behaviour are the way things are done in this school.
- It was a pleasure for inspectors to talk with pupils. Whatever their age, they were polite and respectful as well as being very sociable. It is very noticeable that these qualities get better and better as pupils progress through the school and experience the high quality of education it offers. Talking to Year 6 pupils was very instructive of their knowledge and level of maturity.

Relationships are excellent

One very important reason why pupils behave well and learn so effectively is that relationships in the school are excellent. Everybody shows respect for each other and everybody seems genuinely to get on well. All adults provide pupils with very good examples of how to behave. This is equally true of support staff, lunch time supervisors and adult helpers as it is of teachers. This quality of relationships seems to happen so naturally in lessons it is often hard to identify but it can be seen in so many small but significant ways, for example, the care and pride with which staff display pupils' work. Pupils' responses are greatly valued – they are made to feel that they matter as individuals. An example of this occurred in a Year 6 numeracy lesson with pupils of lower attainment. The teacher questioned skilfully to draw out from pupils their understanding of the significance of the decimal point but it was the very affirmative way in which she took their responses that established such a positive climate for learning.

Teaching is of very good quality

- 10 Teaching in this school has many strengths and no significant weaknesses. Teachers have high expectations of the standards pupils should achieve but equally these expectations are realistic. They are evident in the tasks set for pupils as well as in the sense of urgency often injected into lessons. Pupils are given work that interests and challenges them. As a result, they work enthusiastically and productively. Strong and effective attention is paid in teachers' planning to identifying tasks that will move pupils' learning forward. In a Year 4 information and communication technology lesson, for example, the high quality of planning meant that all pupils were engaged effectively in developing the skills of numeracy as well as those of technology in a lesson in the computer room. High attainers, in particular, were absorbed in grappling with the concept of prime numbers. The teacher kept pupils on their toes by reminding them just how long remained for them to achieve their lesson targets. Very good questioning in many lessons challenges pupils to think clearly. This was evident, for example, in a Year 3 literacy lesson when the teacher questioned probingly about the story 'Fantastic Mr Fox' to improve pupils' understanding of when to use speech marks.
- Teachers show a good understanding of the subjects they teach. This is evident from Reception to Year 6. Teachers of pupils in the Reception class, for example, build their teaching successfully around the recognised curriculum. This results in children gaining good quality practical learning experiences. At the other end of the age range a Year 6 teacher's very good understanding of the skills of poetry appreciation meant that she led a whole class session very confidently, resulting in pupils then working independently to produce good poetry of their own. Teachers also create many opportunities to develop the skills of literacy and numeracy in other subjects. Evidence of work seen in history, information and communication technology, geography and religious education bears witness to this.
- Teachers use resources very well to help stimulate pupils' imagination. In a lesson for pupils with special educational needs in the four to seven age group, the teacher made brilliant use of pictures she had taken at the town's May Day Parade to encourage pupils to talk about this experience. This resulted in a very successful speaking and listening session. In Reception, the good partnership evident between adult helpers during a literacy session on rhyming patterns resulted in all groups of pupils learning well. Teachers and support staff make very good use of the school's excellent new computer room. For example, a class of pupils with special educational

needs worked effectively in two groups, one helped by the teacher; the other by a support assistant. Both groups of pupils were clearly very well motivated by the high quality equipment they were using and were prompted very well by staff in order to ensure that they made good use of it. Very good one-to-one support during a Year 5 numeracy lesson for a pupil with special educational needs meant that he took full part in the lesson, retaining a positive attitude to learning.

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well throughout the school. This results in pupils being eager to learn and to them listening attentively. It also means that when asked to settle down to work independently, they do so promptly. In the Year 5 numeracy lesson mentioned above, the teacher's calm and friendly manner and the very effective way in which she had prepared resources for the lesson resulted in very good behaviour during a whole class session. When pupils were told to settle down to work independently, behaviour was equally good.

Leadership is of very good quality

- The headteacher sets the tone for this school. She combines great attention to continually improving and refining the detail of the school's learning environment with a clear view of its longer term development. Her leadership is inspirational and has enabled a committed team of teachers and support staff to flourish. She sets very high standards, for herself and for others, and is very successful in meeting them. That the school has gone from strength to strength since its last inspection is due in a large part to her work and example.
- Other staff also make very significant contributions to the school's leadership and management. The deputy headteacher plays a key role in co-ordinating and developing the school's successful curriculum. He takes a very productive part in the management of the school. Similarly, all teachers with management responsibilities who had discussions with inspectors showed good understanding of the needs and development of their subjects. They are very much involved in the process of evaluating and improving standards and quality of education in their subjects. Work seen during the inspection, together with National Curriculum test results, indicates that they are being successful in this.
- All staff play an important part in putting into practice the school's aims. The governing body is also closely and effectively involved in monitoring the work of the school. Its members bring various skills to this work as well as a strong sense of the school's central place in the local community. Resources are managed very well to help the school achieve this. An example is the very successful way in which new resources for information and communication technology are being managed and used.

Pupils are provided with a rich and stimulating environment for learning

From the moment of walking through the door of either school building, it is clear that the learning environment provided for pupils is of a high quality. Displays of work throughout the school are excellent. Great attention is paid to making the school a stimulating, comfortable and friendly place. However, it is the quality of relationships and the high expectations of pupils, combined with a rich variety of learning experiences, that makes this learning environment so special. Pupils of all attainments and with whatever educational needs are greatly valued in this school. It is much more than just a question of achieving high standards in literacy and numeracy. It is the breadth of experience provided, from the wonderful art curriculum to the magnificent steel pans band; from the quality of educational visits to the care

taken over the outdoor play facilities. And in addition, it is the very good provision made for pupils with special educational needs and the strong focus on including them as much as possible in mainstream lessons. It is the school's all round strength that makes it so successful.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Provision for developing pupils' skills of scientific enquiry in the seven to 11 age group

Science is taught well and pupils reach high standards. Throughout the school, they make good progress in developing their scientific knowledge by studying a wide range of topics. National Curriculum test results show how successful this process is. In the five to seven age group, pupils make good progress in developing the skills associated with scientific enquiry, learning to make predictions and beginning to appreciate the importance of conducting a fair test. In the seven to 11 age group, the emphasis placed upon the development of experimental and investigative skills is less evident. This is less a weakness than an area for improvement in relation to other strengths within the subject. The school itself, through the process of self-evaluation, has recognised this aspect of science as an area that requires attention.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

19 In order to build further upon its many strengths, the school should:

Improve provision for developing the skills of scientific enquiry in the seven to 11 age group by:

- placing greater emphasis in planning upon the provision of opportunities for pupils to observe systematically, undertake fair tests, record findings in a variety of appropriate ways, including graphs and to interpret their results;
- monitoring its success in doing this.

This has already been recognised by the school as an area for improvement.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

23 8

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	35	52	4	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 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	462
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	26
Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	49
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	107
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	42
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.8
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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total	
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	30	38	68	

National Curriculum T	est/Task Results	Reading	Writing	Mathematics
	Boys	25	24	26
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Girls	37	36	37
	Total	62	60	63
Percentage of pupils	School	91 (88)	88 (88)	93 (90)
at NC level 2 or above	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	24	26	26
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Girls	37	37	36
	Total	61	63	62
Percentage of pupils	School	90 (88)	93 (90)	91 (86)
at NC level 2 or above	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	27	27	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	25	26	26
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Girls	21	22	24
	Total	46	48	50
Percentage of pupils	School	85 (83)	89 (77)	93 (86)
at NC level 4 or above	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	25	26	26
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Girls	23	22	25
	Total	48	48	51
Percentage of pupils	School	89 (84)	89 (78)	94 (88)
at NC level 4 or above	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black - Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	416
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 - Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	21
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	24.3

Education support staff: YR - Y6

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	317

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
	£
Total income	897,344
Total expenditure	881,379
Expenditure per pupil	2,017
Balance brought forward from previous year	70,926
Balance carried forward to next year	86,891

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

Number of questionnaires returned

173

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	46	47	5	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	46	6	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	47	2	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	47	17	2	2
The teaching is good.	55	39	4	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	38	20	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	36	12	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	37	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	35	42	18	5	0
The school is well led and managed.	47	47	2	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	46	3	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	45	24	8	2

Other issues raised by parents

Physical education lessons sometimes get cancelled