

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MILLBROOK INFANT SCHOOL**

Kettering

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122108

Headteacher: Mrs Maureen Allum

Reporting inspector: John Messer  
15477

Dates of inspection: 25 - 26 February 2003

Inspection number: 248322

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Churchill Way Kettering Northamptonshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Ian Wilson
Date of previous inspection:	12 May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This foundation infant school has 354 boys and girls, aged between four and seven years old, on roll and is larger than most other infants schools. Most pupils are from white English speaking backgrounds although a small minority are from ethnic minority backgrounds and of these most speak English as an additional language; a few are at an early stage of learning English. Fewer than one per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This proportion is well below the national average and suggests an area of relative socio-economic advantage but school meals are not provided in this school and census data indicates that children come from average socio-economic backgrounds. Children's attainment on entry to the school is broadly average although the speaking and listening skills demonstrated by a significant proportion of children are below average. Four per cent of pupils are entered on the school's register of special educational needs and this is lower than the national average. There is a special unit to support up to eight pupils in the area who have significant learning difficulties but only half the places are occupied. Most of the pupils on the school's register of special educational needs have moderate learning difficulties or problems with speech and language development. The school was first designated as a 'Beacon of Excellence' in September 1999 and its status as a Beacon school was renewed in September 2002.

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

This is an excellent school that is well deserving of its Beacon status. The school is a happy place where pupils flourish. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are likely to attain standards that are very high in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics and science. The quality of teaching across the school is very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and the curriculum is very well managed by subject leaders. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- Strong foundations for further learning are laid in the reception classes where children's achievement is very good and they attain high standards.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 attain standards that are very high in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics and science.
- The quality and consistency of teaching across the school is very good and support staff make a strong contribution to the high quality of education provided.
- Pupils are enthusiastic, keen to learn and enjoy their work.
- The leadership and management of the school are excellent.
- The school provides a rich and stimulating curriculum and encourages pupils to produce work of a high standard in all subjects.
- The school has established very strong links with parents who support their children's learning well.

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

- Planning in the reception classes for the use of the outside area so that it includes details of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are to be taught in each area of learning.

*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 May 1997 when the quality of education provided was judged to be very good. Since then the results of national tests and assessments in reading, writing, mathematics and science show that the school has, year after year, maintained consistently high standards. In 2002 it received a School Achievement Award from the Department of Education and Skills in recognition of the high standards it has maintained. The two key issues for action identified in 1997, developing multi-cultural education and providing more equipment for reception children to use in the outside activity area, have been resolved successfully. The quality of teaching has improved significantly; there is no unsatisfactory teaching and a much higher proportion of very good teaching. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
reading	A*	A*	A*	A
writing	A*	A*	A*	A
mathematics	A	A	A	A

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The quality of the work that pupils produce shows that, by the end of Year 2, most pupils are likely to attain standards that are very high in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics and science. The high standards that pupils attain are confirmed by the results of national tests which are consistently very high in reading and writing; the \* symbol indicates that the school's performance ranks among the highest five per cent of schools nationally. The school's results in mathematics are also consistently well above average. The statutory teacher assessments show that pupils also attain standards that are above average in science. Nearly all pupils attain the national target of Level 2 in the annual tests and assessments and, even more significantly, the proportion who attain the higher Level 3 standard is very high in reading, writing and science and well above average in mathematics. Examples of exceptionally good work were seen in all the other areas of the curriculum.

Pupils achieve very well in the reception classes and children exceed the early learning goals, specified in national guidance, well before the end of the reception year. Boys and girls, pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, including those who attend the special unit, all continue to achieve very well in Years 1 and 2. The pupils who attend the special unit are attached to classes and visit the unit for extra specialist help. The very good teaching, the high expectations of pupils' performance that have been established, the enthusiasm for learning that has been generated, coupled with strong support from parents, result in pupils' particularly good performance.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are full of enthusiasm and are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are polite, sensible and behave very well in classrooms and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships between pupils from different ethnic groups are excellent. Pupils exercise self-control and are sensitive to the feelings of others.
Attendance	Very good. Well above the national average.

Pupils are courteous and caring of one another. They are confident and display a maturity beyond their years.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2
Quality of teaching	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.*

Across the school teaching is very good. The teaching of English and mathematics, as well as the teaching of skills in literacy and numeracy, is very good. Teachers plan and prepare lessons thoroughly and a key feature of the good planning is the emphasis on providing for pupils' differing learning needs. Teachers maintain high expectations of pupils' performance and of their behaviour. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and pupils enjoy their lessons. Teachers ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, those who attend the special unit and those with English as an additional language, are able to experience high levels of success each day.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is rich and stimulating. It is supplemented by a good range of visits to places of interest. Planning for outdoor education in Reception is not as good as that for other areas of work.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils who visit the special unit receive high quality support and across the school learning support assistants make a good contribution to the good progress that these pupils make.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Each pupil is provided with the support required and all achieve as well as their classmates.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Provision for social, moral and cultural development is excellent and for spiritual development it is very good. Art and design, dance and music make a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development and good provision is made for multi-cultural education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent. The levels of care are exceptional with great attention to detail. Meticulous records of pupils' achievement are kept.

A very productive partnership with parents has been established and this has a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Parents are closely associated with the school and receive very good information about how they can support their children's learning and about how their children are getting on. Relationships between teachers and parents are very good. Good learning opportunities are provided in each area of the curriculum and provision for personal, social and health education is particularly good. High levels of care are provided with good attention to the particular needs of individuals.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher's leadership is strong and has a profound effect on the high quality of education provided. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators.
How well the governors fulfil	Very good. Governors are closely associated with the school and fulfil



their responsibilities	their legal responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school analyses its performance in great detail and teachers are also researchers who constantly explore how to enhance pupils' learning.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources, including staff, equipment, computers, indoor space and the grounds, are used well to support learning.

The headteacher plays a strong part in setting high standards. Good levels of staffing are maintained and classroom assistants make a good contribution to the quality of provision. All ancillary staff make a valuable contribution. The principles of best value are displayed prominently in the bursar's office; they are referred to often and applied well. Finances are managed well. The school accrued a significant underspend last year which was earmarked to pay for the expensive job of replacing the school boiler.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school, are well behaved and make good progress.</li> <li>• The right amount of homework is given.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed and the teaching is good.</li> <li>• Children are expected to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• The school is helping children to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agree with parents' positive views. The school provides a good range of activities outside lessons, including visits to places of interest, recorder clubs, a dance club, choir and a science club. This is much more than is found in most infant schools.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **Strong foundations for further learning are laid in the reception classes where children's achievement is very good and they attain high standards.**

1. One key strength of the school is children's very good achievement in the reception classes. The six areas of learning, specified in national guidance, are taught rigorously from day one. Children enter the school with standards of attainment that are broadly average but almost all are likely to exceed the early learning goals in each of the six areas of learning well before the end of the reception year. Children's achievement in communication, language and literacy is exceptionally rapid. This is because the school has developed a very effective system for teaching reading and writing.
2. The system involves parents even before their children start school. Teachers make visits to the children's homes to introduce themselves and to explain their expectations of parents' involvement in supporting children's learning. This is followed up with a parents' meeting soon after children start school where the system is explained in more detail. The school fully recognises parents' prime role in the education of their children and states this explicitly in many of its documents, 'Parents are children's first and most enduring educators'. The system is also explained very carefully to the children. It involves regular daily teaching of the sound that each letter of the alphabet makes as well as learning to recognise the most commonly used words in a systematic step-by-step way. The words to be learned are written on magnetic strips and each afternoon children take a small pot of words home to learn. As well as appropriate reading books, they also take home their 'sentence book' in which the teacher has written out the sentence that they have made with their words. This sentence might contain just one or two new words for lower attaining children, whilst the faster learners might have four or five new words. They read their sentence to their parents at home. The teaching of reading is organised so that children achieve success from the very beginning.
3. Children also have individual short-term targets that they themselves have discussed and agreed with the teachers. The targets are appropriate for each individual child and children's confidence develops rapidly as they succeed in reaching their targets and new ones are agreed. Each week they concentrate on learning a letter sound. They make a collection of objects that start with this letter and learn the shape of the letter by painting it, forming it with play dough and writing it in their books. When the letter of the week was 'k' the children ate 'Kit-Kat' biscuits at snack time. They soon develop a good knowledge of the sounds that letters make and understand how to 'sound out' unfamiliar words. The children have folders that contain a bank of the words they can identify and they use this bank of words to form the sentences on a specially designed frame. The bank of words is organised in a way that leads children to recognise similarities and differences in the words they use to construct their sentences. Higher attaining pupils have moved beyond this stage and several are able to write simple sentences with very little support, such as, 'This is a set of animals with spots'.
4. The teaching in the reception classes is very good and it is consistent. The same systems are used in the same way in each of the four classes. Relationships between teachers, children and the parents are exceptionally good. Children develop a great enthusiasm for learning. They are proud of their successes and receive appropriate praise and encouragement. Teachers all have high expectations of the rate at which children will learn and they work hard to provide challenging learning opportunities that are tailored to individual needs. They listen to the children. When writing about 'Jack and the Beanstalk', for example, one child suggested that, rather than draw a picture with the writing underneath, it would be more effective to draw the giant at the top of the page with Jack at the bottom, his writing in the middle and a beanstalk curling up the side of the page. This was welcomed by the teacher as a really good idea.
5. Children's drawings and paintings are bold. They have plenty of opportunity to paint and draw and the assured way in which they tackle illustrative work indicates high levels of self-confidence and self-belief. This is largely because teachers are good at convincing the children that they can

succeed and equally good at showing them that their work is highly valued. Praise

is not given indiscriminately but is offered alongside suggestions for improvement, for example 'I like the way you have used different shades of green for the fields but have you thought about how you could use the same technique for painting the sea?'

6. The children are bursting with enthusiasm. In one class they begged the teacher to let them count in unison as far as they could go. They revelled in being able to count accurately up to 101 before accepting that they could, if they wanted, go on counting all day but it would just take too long. They reflect on their work as, for example, when one child pondered on methods of counting objects, 'Sometimes if you count really carefully you get more, don't you?' Towards the end of the afternoon, teachers encourage the children to discuss what they have learned during the course of the day and what else they would like to find out about. This deliberation helps them to develop a mature, reflective approach to their learning. Teachers create a colourful, stimulating learning environment and humour is used well.

### **Pupils in Years 1 and 2 attain standards that are very high in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics and science.**

7. Across the school pupils, including those who have special educational needs, those who attend the special unit and those with English as an additional language, achieve very well. Pupils develop a thorough knowledge of traditional stories, such as 'Cinderella' and 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. These are used as a vehicle for developing pupils' understanding of language and literature and for extending their writing skills. In Year 2, for example, they studied the elements that can be used to describe a character, such as personality, appearance, relationships and actions. They explained that personality is what somebody's like inside, appearance is what they look like, relationships is who they know and actions is what they do. They enjoyed playing a game in which they wrote certain features of a character and invited others to guess who it was. 'Who had relationships with Mr Wolf?' and 'She peered into the magic mirror and hissed at it. Who was she?' In this way they developed a good understanding of how to write a detailed description of a character. In another class they used this depth of understanding to write a detailed description of 'Red Riding Hood'. They explored the colloquialisms in stories, such as 'The wolf had his eye on Mr Pig.' In this way they learned to distinguish between the literal and figurative modes of speech. The traditional stories are used well to illustrate the structure of stories as pupils consider headings such as, 'Who', 'When' and 'Where' and think about the sequence, 'First', 'Next' and 'Later'. They use these headings to create a framework for the story before fleshing out the detail. The traditional stories are used well to identify heroes and villains. Pupils write good story beginnings designed to captivate the reader, 'One chilly, frosty day everybody in Turnip Cottage was grumpy', for example. They describe the setting well, 'Shadows lurk in the water and across the frosty ground'. Pupils learn poems by heart and recite them with appropriate inflexion and emphasis. In Year 2, almost all pupils read a wide range of poetry, fiction and non-fiction fluently and with good expression. The quality of pupils' reading and writing is very high.
8. Pupils have a good understanding of the need for grammatical agreement in writing and refer to the need for the subject and verb to agree. One child explained "You have to change 'He were sat on the fence' to 'He was sitting on the fence' or 'They were sitting on the fence' to make it sound right." Pupils have a good understanding of spelling rules. They enjoy looking for patterns of letters in groups of words, such as 'telephone', 'television', 'telescope' and 'microscope' and identify suffixes and prefixes accurately. Pupils' writing is carefully and painstakingly formed. Regular handwriting practice and good attention to detail helps to ensure that pupils' work is neat and very well presented.
9. By the end of Year 2, pupils are likely to attain standards in mathematics that are well above average. Pupils are good at numerical calculations. They use addition, subtraction multiplication and division to find as many ways as possible of making ten. They make number sentences such as, 'Six divided by two, multiplied by four and subtract two makes ten'. They have a good understanding of pattern and shape. They study packaging and look at the shapes of different

containers. They identify their containers and describe them well, using accurate mathematical vocabulary, 'My container is a triangular prism that has nine edges, three rectangular faces and two triangular faces.' In this school, however, they go a step further than is normally found in most other schools, 'My container will pack neatly into rectangular boxes without wasting space because it will tessellate' or 'My container is a cylinder and cannot be packed without wasting space because the circular faces will not tessellate.' Instances of this extra step in learning are often found throughout the school and illustrate the high expectations of pupils' performance that are steadfastly maintained. Teachers grasp every opportunity to extend pupils' vocabulary. Pupils' well developed language skills make a particularly strong contribution to their effective learning in mathematics, as well as the other areas of the curriculum, because their well developed vocabulary assists their understanding.

10. In science, pupils develop a good understanding of how magnets work and sort materials into sets of things that are attracted to magnets and those that are not. They make hypotheses as a result of their investigations, 'Magnets pick up all metallic objects but will not pick up things that are not made of metal'. They test their hypotheses and find that there are some objects that appear to be made of metal but are not attracted to the magnet. They consider, thoughtfully, different possibilities and offer possible solutions to this apparent conundrum, 'The iron pipe has been painted with lots of thick paint and the magnet is not powerful enough to work through all the paint', or, 'It looks like metal and feels like metal but perhaps its got plastic inside.' The series of lessons on magnetism was carefully structured so that pupils were led towards making a series of discoveries for themselves. The eventual goal was for pupils to discover which metals were attracted to magnets and which were not, to sort them into two different sets and, as a result of their classification, to discover an emerging pattern. Pupils are good at predicting, for example, what substances will dissolve in warm water. In experiments on forces and friction, they used their measuring skills well when working out how far a car travelled down a ramp and over different surfaces. They have a good understanding of controlling variables to ensure a fair test, 'The ramp must be the same each time and the car must start from the same place'. They consider why white carnations that have been placed in a vase of blue ink slowly turn blue. Pupils' attainment in science is well above average.

**The quality and consistency of teaching across the school is very good and support staff make a strong contribution to the high quality of education provided.**

11. Teachers are conscientious, highly skilled and work very hard to ensure that all pupils learn effectively. Support staff share a strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils achieve success. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers plan together with colleagues in the same year group and this promotes good consistency between each of the four classes in each year. Pupils who attend the special unit are attached to classes, where they receive very good teaching, and when they visit the special classroom they receive very good specialist support. The school's well developed policies and procedures help to maintain consistency of approach across the school. Teachers' performance and classroom practice are monitored and evaluated regularly to maintain consistently high standards and to ensure that all pupils are learning as effectively as they can. One common theme is the attention that is paid to detail. Each pupil, for example, knows how to use paper clips to hold their 'guidelines' in place. These are positioned under each blank, unlined page. The guidelines show through the paper and help the pupils write neatly with ascenders touching the top line and descenders touching the lower line.
12. One key feature of the high quality teaching is the great respect for each individual pupil that teachers and support staff demonstrate. This is shown in the way that teachers listen carefully to what their pupils have to say and in the way that they participate in sensible discussions with pupils. They talk a great deal with pupils about how they can be increasingly responsible for their own learning. They engender confidence so that pupils have no fear of failure, but are prepared to tackle challenging tasks with determination and a belief that they will succeed. As a result, pupils are highly motivated and are keen to do well.
13. Teachers' lesson planning is detailed and indicates that they expect a great deal of learning to be accomplished each week. Lessons are carefully structured so that pupils learn rapidly, yet in a

systematic step-by-step approach. Time is used well and pupils are told how long they have got to complete tasks. Lessons start promptly and the pace is brisk. At the beginnings of lessons, there is a clear explanation of what it is intended that pupils will learn during the course of the session. Towards the end of a lesson, they gather together to discuss what they have achieved and to evaluate how well they have met the learning intentions. Teachers consult with pupils before writing short-term learning targets on the front of exercise books. These are geared to individual learning needs. A lower attaining pupil might, for example, have as his targets, "Write 'd' and 'a' correctly. Make your writing have tall and long letters", whilst a faster learner in the same class might have, 'Try to use paragraphs in your writing. Use describing words to make your sentences more colourful.' Pupils are keen to demonstrate that they have achieved their targets and are eager for more. Teachers discuss pupils' work on an individual basis and also mark work carefully with constructive comments about how improvements could be made.

14. Teachers are very willing to evaluate and accommodate new ideas and practices if they have the potential to improve pupils' learning opportunities. They have assimilated the 'Accelerated Learning in Primary Schools' initiative. This involves recognition of pupils' different styles of learning and accommodation for the different styles in lesson planning and practice. The new computerised white board was in use soon after it was unpacked and is already proving a valuable addition to the resources for supporting teaching and learning across the curriculum. It was seen in use by pupils as they explored number patterns in mathematics and when used by the teacher to show a video about farming in the past, as part of a history lesson.
15. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good and lessons include a good deal of gentle humour. As a result, pupils feel confident about asking questions or comfortable about explaining any worries they may have. Although pupils are learning rapidly in lessons and are attaining very high standards, there is no sense of any undue pressure being placed on them.

### **Pupils are enthusiastic, keen to learn and enjoy their work.**

16. From their very first days in school, children demonstrate that they are bursting with curiosity about the world around them. The school fosters this curiosity well. There is an excitement about learning that is generated partly by the teachers' enthusiasm and partly by the pupils' eagerness to find out more. They are keen to discuss their work and are proud of their achievements. Many bring in work that they have completed voluntarily at home. In the reception classes, several regularly bring in pictures that they have drawn at home. Pupils in Year 2 bring in the results of their exploration of the Internet. One discussed his fascination with collecting minerals and fossils and was able to explain that the proper name for 'fool's gold' is iron pyrites. The school does nothing to dampen such enthusiasms but actively grasps opportunities to foster them by listening and engaging in sensible discussions. As a result, pupils feel that they are highly valued and that their work is genuinely appreciated. The school is highly successful in meeting its aim which states, 'We acknowledge that every child and adult has the right to their dignity and we aim to show courtesy, tolerance, respect and goodwill to everyone at all times.' This great respect for all pupils is an essential element in the high levels of care that are maintained. All pupils are encouraged to understand that they are all equally included in the school family. The teachers engender a love of learning and pupils are keen to develop new skills, to extend their understanding and to increase their knowledge. This enthusiasm is a major factor in helping to achieve high standards. Their enjoyment of school supports their good attendance, which in turn supports their learning.

### **The leadership and management of the school are excellent.**

17. The headteacher plays a key role in establishing and maintaining an exceptionally good quality of education for the pupils. She sets a high standard and supports her colleagues well as they constantly strive to provide the best possible education for all. The inclusion of all is a strong characteristic of the school. A key defining feature of the school is the meticulous attention to detail; attention is paid to the particular learning needs of each individual, to the presentation of pupils' work and how it is displayed, to care arrangements, and to the professional development of teaching and support staff. Each member of the teaching staff is responsible for maintaining and improving standards in their areas of responsibility. The subject co-ordinators complete a

thorough annual review that details the quality of teaching and learning and evaluates the standards that pupils attain in each subject. This annual review is based on lesson observations, a thorough analysis of the work pupils' produce, discussions with pupils and with colleagues and an assessment of how successfully pupils are learning. The reports of these annual reviews include details of how standards could be further improved. The reports are presented to the governing body for consideration and action. This systematic self-evaluation helps governors to fulfil their role in monitoring the curriculum and is a key feature in the maintenance and improvement of standards across the curriculum. The reviews also form the basis of the annual school improvement plan.

18. Another key feature of the school's success is the way that all members of staff, parents and governors are involved in managing school improvement. There is a joint consultative committee where two parent representatives from each class meet with the headteacher each half-term to discuss school issues. This is a very good two-way avenue of communication. The management structure and organisation of the school are clearly defined. Representatives from teaching staff, administrative staff, midday supervisors and teaching support staff meet together regularly to discuss issues for improvement. This inclusive style of management is very effective in promoting a good sense of teamwork.
19. The school improvement plan is thorough and detailed. It sets out the school's main priorities clearly and describes precisely how the school intends to meet its objectives. The plan is closely linked to staff targets that are set as part of the school's performance management procedures. Initiatives are geared to raising pupils' achievement and the success criteria describe precisely what the outcomes will be. The document is an excellent management tool that successfully guides school improvement and helps to focus resources on the most pressing priorities.
20. The school never stands still and there is no sense of complacency. The school is reflective and contemplates different possibilities and various ways and means of improving provision. A new arts studio is being created in the grounds as part of the school's current focus on developing the creative arts. This was established with the help of local business support and sponsorship. Plans to develop a music studio are also being considered. Teachers are constantly examining their performance in a systematic, analytical way, in order to identify how they can further improve pupils' learning opportunities. An exceptionally good research paper on 'Effective Early Learning' has just been produced by the school. This culture of aiming for excellence has been encouraged by the headteacher and is now well established as part of the school's ethos. It is well understood by teaching and support staff, governors and parents, who all work together as a strong team. It strives successfully to meet the school's aim of enabling pupils and staff to gain a feeling of achievement and success from 'doing the job well'.

**The school provides a rich and stimulating curriculum and encourages pupils to produce work of a high standard in all subjects.**

21. Each pupil completes a beautifully presented booklet that contains samples of the work that they have completed during the course of each year. These contain a wealth of material that clearly demonstrates the high standards that are attained in each area of the curriculum. For example, one booklet created by a pupil in Year 2 included a delicately painted water colour of a local village church, a piece of writing inspired by listening to Mike Oldfield's 'Tubular Bells', a musical composition, writing about the seaside in Victorian times, details of the life cycle of butterflies, mathematical investigations, digitally produced photographs of dance, gymnastics, finger puppets and well crafted sewing, weather charts, the results of a survey of plants that grow in the school grounds and examples of the pupil's use of computers across the curriculum. The booklets contain information written by pupils about their teacher, their friends and the topics that they have covered during the course of the year. It concludes with the pupil's evaluation of their achievements during the year and their aspirations for the following year. All the material is of exceptionally good quality and indicates close attention to detail. In Year 1, for example, pastel crayons have been used to create high quality pictures inspired by the work of L S Lowry. These have been pasted carefully into the pupils' year books and have been overlaid with a flap of tracing paper to prevent them from smudging. The booklets clearly demonstrate the very good progress that pupils make during the course of a year.

22. Beautiful displays of pupils' work throughout the school confirm the rich curriculum provided and the high quality of work that is produced. The quantity and the high standard of the work produced by pupils in exercise books, class books and project books provide further confirmation. Religious education is well represented. Good quality work has been produced as a result of a detailed study of the Jewish Shabbat. As part of their work in geography, pupils study the modern church in their community with the more traditional church in a neighbouring village. Good links are made between the different subjects of the curriculum. For example, in art and design, pupils in Year 2 have studied the work of William Morris. They have identified the repeating patterns and noted his use of reflective symmetry. They have made cubes as part of their work on shapes in mathematics, which involved careful measuring, and decorated them in the style of William Morris. In information and communication technology they have created and printed colourful computer-generated repeating patterns in the style of William Morris. Many pupils have used the Internet to find out more about William Morris and his works. These links help to unify learning and make it more meaningful.
23. Pupils attain high standards in information and communication technology. They are good at word processing and are shown how to use both hands and the appropriate fingers when using the keyboard. Pupils in Year 2 use computers to produce lengthy stories as well as factual descriptions that are neatly presented. They visit the well-equipped computer suite each week where specific skills are taught systematically. They experiment with computers during the lunch break when they explore the possibilities of a wide range of programs. Computers are used well in many subjects. In mathematics pupils collect data, such as favourite crisps or the most popular subjects, and use computers to produce coloured block graphs of their results. They then take the next step and frame questions, based on the graphs, for their friends to answer. In geography pupils learn how to use the digital camera to make a collection of photographs of local buildings. They experiment with robotic toys that move in certain patterns according to the sequence of commands that pupils have programmed. They demonstrate exceptionally high levels of confidence when using such technology. Particularly good work was seen in design and technology. Pupils in Year 2 had been studying how different types of puppet work. They designed and made good glove puppets where the quality of finish showed careful craftsmanship and good attention to detail. The work produced was well above average.
24. Another exciting initiative is the work that stems from the work of famous artists. Pupils have, for example, recently been studying Uccello's painting of St George and the Dragon. This has inspired a good range of drawings, paintings, collages, dances, drama, musical compositions and written work. Again, the unifying theme helps to tie together different aspects of the curriculum and makes learning more meaningful. It also helps to generate an excitement in discovery. When dancing, painting and composing music, the joy that pupils gain from creativity and from producing work of high quality is clearly evident. Pupils are encouraged to take a pride in their work and have high expectations of the quality of work that they are capable of producing. The class assemblies provide a good opportunity for them to share the work that they have been doing with other classes.

**The school has established very strong links with parents who support their children's learning well.**

25. The school has close links with the local playgroup and the nursery school that shares the same site and so parents know about the school well before their children start in the reception classes. The reception teachers visit children in their homes before they start school and this helps to form a strong bond between children, teachers and parents. Parents of pre-school children are encouraged to pop into the school to exchange reading books in a specially organised library of books selected for these children. The school places great emphasis on the prime importance of parents as educators and has high expectations of the partnership in learning that should be developed. Soon after children start school, parents are invited to take part in workshop sessions where their role in helping their children to learn effectively is discussed. Parents have a clear understanding of their role in helping children to develop communication, language and literacy skills. The strong early links that are forged in the early years are maintained as pupils move from year to year. Parents greatly appreciate the easy and open channels of

communication. Teachers are sensitive to parents' worries. When they collect their children at the end of the day, teachers report anything of significance to parents, 'He's been coughing an awful lot today' or of a child nervous about changing for a dance lesson, 'She really enjoyed dancing this afternoon and was brilliant'. The headteacher is always available to listen to any concerns that parents may have. Any problems that occur are dealt with speedily and effectively.

26. The school regularly produces excellent newsletters as part of its communication with parents. These are beautifully presented, produced in colour and are written in a friendly style. They inform parents in detail about the work that will be going on in class. They include examples of pupils' work, good photographs of school activities, news of forthcoming events and news of the arrival of new baby brothers and sisters. The school also has an informative web-site. The governors' annual report to parents is excellent. It is well presented, contains all the information that it should and is also used a way of celebrating pupils' achievements. It is illustrated with examples of pupils' writing, photographs of their models, their work in physical education, computer generated work, work inspired by listening to music and many of their drawings. The school prospectus is also beautifully produced and is supported by a good video about the school. The annual reports that teachers write on pupils' attainment and progress are detailed and of excellent quality.
27. The school has also established a good consultative committee. Two parents from each class are representatives and meet regularly with the headteacher for a two-way exchange of information and views. The parents have also organised a very effective group, called 'The Millwheelers' that arrange well attended fundraising and social events. Parents also help in the school on a voluntary basis and their contribution is highly valued by the teachers. Parents are invited into class assemblies where pupils share examples of work they have been doing with the whole school. The school also organises 'Men at Millbrook' days when dads, grandparents and friends of the school read to groups of pupils. Excellent avenues of communication between parents and the school have been established. The school and parents work exceptionally well together to support pupils in their learning.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**Planning in the reception classes for the use of the outside area so that it includes details of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are to be taught in each area of learning.**

28. Since the last inspection the outside area, used mainly by children in the reception classes, has been improved with the provision of additional equipment. Teachers include in their planning details of the activities to be provided outside. However, teachers' plans for the use of the outside learning do not specifically indicate which areas of learning or which skills are to be developed in each of the planned sessions. As a result, opportunities are missed to extend and consolidate the learning that goes on in the classroom. Children enjoy using the good range of equipment outside and have good fun, but the lack of a clear focus on the specific development of skills, knowledge and understanding makes learning incidental, rather than planned. For example, the good work on counting in twos in mathematics is not extended by washing socks, sorting them into pairs and hanging them on the washing line. The work on traditional stories is not extended to printing pairs of footsteps with tiny wellington boots, medium-sized wellington boots and great big wellington boots. The tricycles are not used to deliver pairs of shoes to customers. Children do experience a good range of activities but as it is not clear what skills, knowledge and understanding are being developed, it is not possible to assess how effective the learning has been.

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

29. In order to improve standards yet further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:



- (1) Ensure that planning for the use of the outside area by children in the reception classes includes:
- a clear focus on the areas of learning being addressed in a series of sessions;
  - details of the skills, knowledge and understanding that teachers intend will be developed in outdoor activities;
  - closer links with the work that children are completing in the classrooms.
- (paragraph 28)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	28
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	18	9	0	0	0	0
Percentage	4	64	32	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	354
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	2

#### Special educational needs

	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	14

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	5.4

#### 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 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	62	58	120

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	58	59	58
	Girls	58	58	58
	Total	116	117	116
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (98)	98 (99)	97 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	59	57	60
	Girls	58	58	58
	Total	117	115	118
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (97)	96 (100)	98 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group

### Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
333	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
13	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
8	0	0

No ethnic group recorded
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0
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0
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0
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The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.3
Average class size	29.5

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y2**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	329

*FTE means full-time equivalent*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	884 784
Total expenditure	859 414
Expenditure per pupil	2407
Balance brought forward from previous year	42 016
Balance carried forward to next year	67 386

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0.8
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	354
Number of questionnaires returned	174

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	33	2	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	63	36	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	45	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	56	5	0	1
The teaching is good.	67	33	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	50	9	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	33	3	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	25	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	47	47	5	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	61	36	1	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	37	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	50	14	2	8

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents are very pleased with the education provided for their children and no other issues were raised.