

INSPECTION REPORT

BROOKSIDE SCHOOL

Bicester

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number:123007

Headteacher: Kathy Wood

Lead inspector: Judith Charlesworth

Dates of inspection: 29th September - 2nd October 2003

Inspection number: 255633

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	274
School address:	Bucknell Road Bicester
Postcode:	OX26 2DB
Telephone number:	01869 252 482
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Hilary Dale
Date of previous inspection:	May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school was built in the 1960s and occupies a large site on the outskirts of Bicester. Most pupils live close by. Bicester has changed considerably over the past ten years. It is the second largest growing town in England, and statistics show that crime and drug offences are increasing rapidly. Children's skills as they enter the nursery are below average – particularly in the areas of personal and social development, and communication, language and literacy. The school has developed its curriculum to meet its changed circumstances. It has gained a number of national awards (Artsmark Silver 2002, Activemark 2003) and other awards in recognition of this, as well as the Investor in People Award (2002) and the government's School Achievement Award (2000.) New schools are being built around Bicester to cater for the new housing developments, and these have attracted potential pupils away from Brookside. The roll of the school has fallen over the past few years, but at 274 pupils, including 52 who attend the nursery part time, the number of pupils is still a little above average. Depending on when they were born, children have either one or two terms in the reception class. Those born in the summer term months do not have the benefit of any time in Reception at all and move straight from the nursery into Year 1. This is the Oxfordshire system.

The great majority of pupils in Years 1 - 6 (95 per cent) are white British. The remainder are from various minority ethnic groups with no predominant group, which reflects the area. Two per cent (4 pupils) have English as an additional language, and two of these who speak Tagalog are at an early stage of learning English. A number of pupils move in and out of the school at other than the usual times. Twenty five per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is above average overall, and the percentages in some year groups are nearly double this. These pupils have various difficulties, but the largest group have moderate learning difficulties, and increasingly, challenging behaviour. Six have statements of their special educational needs, a proportion which is higher than average. Around average numbers of pupils are eligible for free school meals overall, but percentages vary considerably between year groups.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21501	Judith Charlesworth	Lead inspector	Foundation stage; English as an additional language; religious education; history; geography; art and design; design and technology; music; personal, social and health education
9736	John Brasier	Lay inspector	
22178	Kate Robertson	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English; information communication technology; physical education
4357	Ian Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics; science

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very effective** school. In the last seven years, the pupil population of the school has changed. There has been a decrease in the percentage of higher attaining pupils, and an increase in the percentage of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), and in the severity of those needs, which prevent those pupils learning effectively. Over the past five years, Brookside has made wide-scale changes to help all the pupils learn more effectively. As a result, much of what the school does is very good, and a considerable amount is excellent. The local County system means that no children moving into school from the nursery have the benefit of a full year in the Reception class, and the youngest pupils do not have any Reception experience at all. This is a barrier to raising the standards attained. The school provides **good value** for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership overall is very good, and the leadership of the head teacher is excellent;
- Teaching is good and all pupils achieve well;
- The strategic planning for the school's development, incorporating outside support, is excellent;
- The assessment and monitoring of individual pupil's skills over time, and their use, are excellent;
- The curriculum is very good; its enrichment by out of school activities and partnerships with the community and the wider world is excellent;
- Provision for pupils' personal development and behaviour management are very good, so pupils are very well behaved, try hard and are very proud of Brookside and all that they do;
- Partnership with parents, and their satisfaction with the school, are excellent;
- The nursery provision is not as well developed as the rest of the school;
- Attendance is unsatisfactory, largely due to holidays taken in term-time.

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. All weaknesses identified have been very well addressed, and developed far beyond what was required. A wide range of exciting developments has been successfully implemented. Standards attained in design and technology and information and communication technology have risen from below to in line with expectations for pupils' age. Pupils' achievement has improved very considerably as progress was judged unsatisfactory or poor in several subjects of the curriculum in the last inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	E	E	E	C
Mathematics	E	E*	E	C
Science	E	E	E	D

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Achievement is good overall. Nursery children make rapid progress when they first begin school, but nevertheless half are not on line to achieve the goals children are expected to reach by the time they enter Year 1 except in physical development and speaking and listening. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well although they are still immature and a large number have SEN which limits the standards they attain. These were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics, as measured by the Year 2 national tests. In Year 1 standards are currently below average in all other subjects except physical education and art and design, where they are at expected levels. Pupils in Year 2 are on line to attain standards that are expected for their age in all subjects except art and

design where they are above average. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 also achieve well. Standards attained in the Year 6 2003 national tests were average in English and mathematics, and below average in science in comparison with similar schools. However, pupils in the year group had an exceptionally large number of problems which make these comparisons misleading. The pupils due to take the tests in 2004 are on line to do better, and should compare well with national averages. Standards in other subjects of the curriculum are as expected for pupils' ages in Years 3 to 6 except in art and design, singing and physical education where they are better than this. Girls do better than boys throughout the school. Pupils who do not have SEN, and who have stayed at Brookside from Y1 to Y6 make good progress; many entered school with below average skills but attain at least expected levels for their age, and often at more advanced levels by the time they reach Year 6.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Attendance is below the national average, but improving due to the school's efforts. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work and school are very good. This is a significant achievement for many who enter the school with under-developed personal skills.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are good overall, with many very good features. Teaching is good in the nursery. Children are enthusiastic about their work and play, and are well behaved. Learning is satisfactory as it is limited by the lack of sufficient vibrant resources to support independent learning. Teaching is good in each Year from 1 to 6, and in all subjects. In particular, it is very well planned and resourced, and subjects are very well linked together. As a result pupils enjoy lessons, are keen to succeed and learn well. The curriculum is very good and extremely well enriched by excellent out of school activities and links with the community. The support given to the pupils as a result of the assessment of their academic and personal skills over time is excellent. The school's links with parents, and efforts to include them and recognise their own importance in the education of their children, are also excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is very good. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. She has an extremely clear vision of what sort of place the school should be, and what it should provide for the pupils to help them achieve as well as they can. She is very well supported by the staff and governing body in achieving the school's aims. Management is very good. The school is meticulous and rigorous in its self-evaluation of the staff's and pupils' performance, and in providing what is needed to raise standards, such as staff training and support for pupils. Governance is good. Governors have a strong commitment to the school and its improvement, and a developing involvement in, and understanding of, how it works, what needs to be developed and why it is as it is. Members contribute very well to the school's ethos in which every single pupil matters.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are highly satisfied with the school and all that it does for their children; the information they receive about their children's progress and work, and the way they are involved and consulted. The pupils are happy at school. They enjoy their work and the reward system; they like their teachers, feel safe and free from bullying and are proud to be part of the Brookside community.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Develop the nursery provision and practice;
- Improve attendance.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is satisfactory in the nursery but children's skills are, overall, below expectations for their age by the time they move into Year 1. Achievement is good in Years 1 to 6. Standards as measured by the 2003 national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 were well below average, but improved on previous years'. Standards are now as expected for pupils' ages in all curriculum areas in Years 2 and 6; above expectations in art and design and physical education from Year 2 onwards and above expectations for pupils' age in singing in Years 3 to 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 6;
- Pupils with SEN achieve well;
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language achieve well;
- Pupils achieve very well in art and design, singing and physical education;
- Standards achieved in the 2003 Year 2 national tests are improved in reading and mathematics; they remain well below average in writing;
- Standards achieved in the 2003 Year 6 national tests in English, mathematics and science have improved, but reflect year group difficulties, and other external influences; current standards of pupils' work are around average for pupils' age.

Commentary

1. Children enter the nursery at various stages of development but overall, their skills are below expectations for their age. Some are well below which means that on entry at three and a half, they have skills similar to two and a half year olds. Staff records show that children make rapid progress when they first begin nursery. Observations and records show that around half are currently on course to achieve the expected goals in all six areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1, but few are advanced for their age. The other half of the nursery children are considerably behind – often by as much as a year. If the current arrangements for the Reception class remain, inspection judgements anticipate that about half will not have reached the goals expected, other than in physical development and speaking and listening, by the time they enter Year 1.

2. Some pupils come straight into Year 1 from the nursery and take time to settle and understand what is expected of them. In addition, increasing numbers of pupils have SEN which means that altogether, these young pupils find concentrating and learning difficult. The school caters for the immaturity and SEN very well, and pupils achieve well. Nevertheless, for these reasons, the standards attained by pupils in Year 1 are generally well below average for their age, particularly in reading and writing and in those subjects which depend on them. By the end of Year 2, they have caught up somewhat, but the number of pupils with SEN in the year group influenced the overall standards in 2003.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	14.8 (14.5)	15.9 (15.8)
Writing	12.0 (11.8)	14.8 (14.4)
Mathematics	15.3 (15.1)	16.4 (16.5)

There were 37 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Because the school is vigorously addressing weaknesses in writing and boys' overall performance, which is weaker than girls', the most recent tests show improvement in reading and mathematics. **In comparison with similar schools, a well above average percentage of pupils reached levels expected of nine year olds in mathematics, reading and science.** This shows how the support given to all pupils, many of whom have SEN, results in their good achievement, and for the higher attaining pupils this means they reach good standards in their work.

4. The Year 6 national test results vary considerably depending on the characteristics of the year group. Standards achieved in the 2003 Year 6 national tests were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science, **but in comparison with similar schools, were average in English and mathematics, and below average in science.** This is a very good achievement for these pupils, when their circumstances are taken into account. Around half of them had SEN, more than half had significant social problems, and more than one quarter of these pupils had joined the school in Year 3 or above. Analysis of the records of current Year 6 pupils shows that those pupils who have been in the school from Year 1 have made good progress and achieved well. The skills of many were below average at the start of Year 1, but those who do not have SEN are now on line to be average, or above for their age.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.3 (23.7)	27.0 (27.0)
Mathematics	24.8 (23.4)	27.0 (26.7)
Science	25.8 (26.7)	28.8 (28.3)

There were 24 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

5. The school has not achieved its target for mathematics results for the past two years. Pupils have left and joined the school to such an extent that the original targets set were too high and they were not sufficiently amended. A large number of pupils who were "hosted" by Brookside whilst their own school was being built – and on whom high targets for attainment in the Year 6 tests were set – left the school before taking the tests. Several higher attaining Brookside pupils left at the same time. This adversely affected the test results and achievement of the targets. The current Year 5 and 6 pupils, however, are likely to perform around average for their age overall in the 2004 and 2005 national tests. This is a good achievement for them.

6. Pupils with SEN, and those with English as an additional language achieve well due to carefully focused support based on very close assessment of their skills. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers in relation to their abilities, and some are amongst the school's higher attainers. Pupils achieve very well in art and design, singing and physical education, helped by the fact that reading, writing and calculation play less of a part in these subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

7. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are all **very good**. Attendance is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' behaviour and conduct are very good; they live up to the school's extremely high expectations;
- Pupils are proud of themselves and their school;
- Relationships are very good. Pupils are responsible and work together very well.
- Pupils are keen to learn because the school makes learning exciting;
- Both the provision for, and its impact on, pupils' personal development are very good;

- Children in the nursery make good progress towards the goals in personal, social and emotional development that children are expected to reach by the end of the Reception year, but nevertheless, half will not reach them at the right time;
- Attendance is below the national average.

Commentary

8. Developing and implementing systems for the management of pupils' behaviour in order that they can learn effectively has been a top priority for the school. Both parents and pupils say they think that behaviour is very good, but both groups commented on some difficulties with a small number of last year's Year 6 pupils, which they say were well handled by the school. An excellent, well-devised and consistently implemented system of rewards and sanctions is very well established and underpins pupils' very good behaviour. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Most teachers' behaviour management is now invisible. In addition, the positive ethos of exciting learning, and a drive to develop pupils' self-esteem and independence through recognition of their success, have been extremely successful in motivating pupils and encouraging good behaviour. Pupils say they love getting their badges as rewards, and indeed some jumpers are weighed down with them as their collection grows. If necessary, pupils are excluded, for example for violence towards others. Last year, there were six fixed period exclusions. These related to two white British boys in Year 6 who had particularly challenging behaviour. Pupils with SEN have the same positive attitudes to school and learning as their class-mates. High quality support helps them to come to terms with their difficulties and build strong relationships with adults and their classmates. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language are happy and well adjusted.

9. The taught curriculum complements the positive ethos and provides very well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is very good. It now provides very well for recognition and celebration of multi-cultural diversity which was not well developed at the time of the last inspection. For example clay work inspired by a Ugandan sculptor who worked with pupils for two weeks, is of outstanding quality. Some displays include the home languages of those with English as an additional language. The curriculum also supports true reflection and spiritual development very well, such as when, following the death of a classmate, pupils were encouraged to think deeply and wrote poignantly about their emotions.

10. Pupils are respected, valued, listened to and given many opportunities to take responsibility in school. In turn, they listen with respect to others' viewpoints and show pleasure in their achievements. This provision for pupils' social and moral development is very good. Pupils are proud of their school and its place in the community, and say so freely. They have good relationships with one another and with adults, and say that they are not bullied or harassed. They work very well together in any combination and take part in lessons and the many extra-curricular activities enthusiastically. The presentation of their work is very good, both in exercise books and in topic work, where it is very well complemented by their creative use of art, design and ICT. It is obvious that pupils are encouraged to make their work their own – for example whilst many pupils in Year 5 had word-processed their topic covers, each pupil's was different. Such high standards of personal development represent good achievement for the pupils of Brookside.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.2
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.4
National data	0.5

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

11. Although attendance is unsatisfactory, it is improving and the pupils say they are very keen to be at school. More parents understand the importance of regular attendance since good procedures have been put into place to improve it – which is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

However, holidays taken in term-time are still a problem. The school analyses absence data, but needs to do more to improve attendance further. Punctuality in the mornings is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

12. The quality of education is **very good**, and has some outstanding aspects. Teaching is **good** throughout the school. Learning is **good** in Years 1 to 6. The curriculum is **very good**, and enrichment by out-of-school activities and community links is **excellent**. Pupils receive **very good** care, and the support and guidance given to them is **excellent**. The school's partnership with parents is **outstanding**, and they are increasingly contributing to their children's achievement.

Teaching and learning

13. Teaching is good throughout the school, and has very good features in Years 1 to 6. Learning is satisfactory in the nursery and good in all other classes. The assessment of pupils' work is of very good quality and enables individuals' needs to be very well met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in every year group, and in all subjects of the curriculum; learning is good in Years 1 to 6 and satisfactory in the nursery;
- Assessment is very good; it enables individuals' needs to be met and means that all pupils are fully engaged and challenged by the lessons;
- Lesson planning in Years 1 – 6 is well-adapted to suit the needs of the class and the individuals within it;
- Behaviour management is very good and combined very well with encouragement, praise and reward;
- In Years 1 – 6, teachers do good beginnings and endings to lessons, so pupils are clear what they are to do and the teacher can assess whether they have achieved the lesson's aims;
- Support assistants are used very well, and particularly effectively to support pupils with SEN;
- Teachers do not always check on whether pupils have responded to their comments in marking.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 42 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	6 (14%)	24 (57%)	10 (24%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

14. The great majority of teaching is good or better. Teaching in the nursery is good and learning is satisfactory. The new teacher has good ideas and activities are well-organised and presented, with a good emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy skills. The nursery nurse works well to support learning and already has a good partnership with the teacher. The children are keen to participate, well behaved and interested in what they do. However, their immaturity and under-developed skills mean that they need considerable support to make the most of the activities, and they do not always learn enough through independent play.

15. The uniformly good quality of teaching and learning reflects the efficiency of the school's staff performance management and professional development systems, through which teachers are continually encouraged and supported to improve their skills. In the last inspection, one lesson in ten was judged to be unsatisfactory. This is very much improved. The single unsatisfactory lesson

observed was taken by a teacher who did not know the class and pupils were not stretched to learn as much as they could have done. Pupils learn particularly well in subjects that do not depend on writing or on linking together too many abstract concepts. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 had difficulty understanding what *deeper meanings* meant in a religious education lesson.

16. There are strengths in the teaching which particularly support learning. Activities are well-resourced and motivating for the pupils. Lesson plans are good, with good detail, and are based on very good subject plans. Work is very well planned to meet the needs of individuals on the basis of the very useful, detailed assessment information held on each pupil's skills, knowledge and understanding. This means that all pupils, including those with SEN and English as an additional language, have work that matches their needs, but keeps them learning which is why they achieve well. This is a very significant improvement as the use of assessment was a key weakness identified in the last inspection.

17. Pupils respond to the positive approach to behaviour management and work and try hard in lessons. They become increasingly independent as they mature. Pupils are sensible and happy to work on their own, as a class or in any combination in smaller groups and pupils from minority ethnic groups and with SEN mix in without a thought. Support staff are briefed, deployed and involved very well to make sure pupils learn effectively and everything runs smoothly. They have very good relationships with the pupils which encourages them to try their best. This contributes very well to the pupils' good achievement. This and maintains the strong support for these pupils noted in the last inspection. Teachers are particularly good at introductions and endings to lessons. This means pupils know what they have to do, and the teachers can assess they have learned what was intended. This information is recorded and contributes very effectively to records of pupils' attainment, and to planning. Pupils' work is regularly marked. However, at times, follow-up work – or lack of it – is not commented upon although teachers' comments are generally helpful in identifying what pupils should do to improve.

The curriculum

18. The curriculum is **very good**. It is extremely well supported by an excellent range of additional activities and community links, and very good accommodation and resources. The nursery curriculum and resources are satisfactory overall, and developing well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum planning at Key Stages 1 and 2 is excellent;
- There is very good provision for pupils' personal development, and for pupils with SEN;
- There is an outstanding range of opportunities for learning outside the school day;
- Excellent innovation and cross-curricular links support pupils' learning very effectively;
- Very strong promotion of the arts and sports enriches the curriculum significantly;
- Nursery resources are adequate, but not sufficient or imaginative enough.

Commentary

19. The curriculum is very much improved since the previous inspection when several significant weaknesses were identified. It is now very innovative and outward-looking, and draws extensively from outside the school. For example, in the recent past, the school has held: a World Book Day; a World Music day; an International/Commonwealth Day and an Arts Week. The *Life Education Bus* promoting drugs awareness was at the school during the inspection. Such activities provide extremely well for both pupils' educational and personal development. The nursery curriculum is well-balanced and meets all requirements, but resources are rather dated and insufficient to provide a wide and varied choice which limits children's learning through independent play and exploration. However, nursery practice is developing very fast, based on up-to-date methodology and good assessment of children's skills.

20. Very careful planning ensures that pupils develop their skills systematically in each subject as they grow older, and curriculum and teaching plans are reviewed and adapted rigorously and regularly. This is very important as class groups vary considerably. The school incorporates innovative ideas into the curriculum and teaching to support pupils' different learning styles. One example is the introduction of *Brain Gym*, which helps pupils' thinking and problem solving skills. The school is well-staffed and staff are well used. Arrangements for teaching in pupil groups of similar attainment in mathematics in the upper school are effective and contribute very well to pupils' achievement. Pupils with SEN achieve well because class work is well-matched to their particular needs. The use of teachers' particular subject expertise to teach one of art, design and technology, and music to all the eight and nine year olds in Years 3 and 4 contributes very well to pupils' good achievement in these subjects. The very good, well-stored and accessible resources, and the spacious re-developed accommodation all contribute to the very good quality of educational provision.

21. The use of key skills, for example in literacy and ICT, is built into lessons and there is a strong emphasis on the development of language in each subject of the curriculum. Work in one curriculum area draws frequently on other subjects, and pupils come to do this of their own accord. Excellent topic work produced by Year 5 pupils showed how teachers had planned the use of ICT, mathematics, and science in geography work on islands, and how pupils had chosen to use their musical knowledge, design and art skills to enhance it further. There has been some very innovative work linking science, geography and design and technology around the theme of *sustainable development* – a recent government initiative in schools.

22. The school places a very strong emphasis on pupils' personal development, The day to day work of the school is aimed at underpinning this and pupils' social and moral development, self-esteem and responsibility grow steadily as a result. This ethos is very well supported by a specific programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) A wide-ranging commercial scheme is well taught and enhanced by visits, visitors and events such as *the Life Education Bus*. Careful planning also links it very well into other aspects of the curriculum, such as science and physical education, and emphasises pupils' wider, global responsibilities, for example in the sustainable development work.

23. There is a very substantial emphasis on providing extra activities to enrich the curriculum and motivate pupils, both during the school day and in out-of-school hours. These have recently included singing in a national choir event, and visiting a private art gallery in London which stimulated some work of outstanding quality in the style of Picasso. The use of artists in residence has enabled pupils to learn about different countries and cultures and produce work of a very high standard. There is a wide range of after-school clubs which are attended by large numbers of pupils. The overall provision for arts education – including extra-curricular activities - is excellent and the school has gained the *Artsmark Silver* award for its work. Similarly the very good provision for sports education has won the *Activemark* award. Brookside has run Saturday and Easter holiday schools to support pupils' achievement. The Bicester Children's University, initiated for Oxfordshire by Brookside and now run in partnership with other schools in the area, is much praised by parents. It is a highly popular choice for pupils, and a tremendous support for their personal and academic development.

Care, guidance and support

24. Pupils are very well cared for and supported by the school. The support and guidance given on the basis of the assessment and monitoring of their academic and personal skills is outstanding. Pupils are very well consulted and involved in the life of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pastoral care, based on trusting relationships with teachers and support staff and very clear reward systems, is excellent;
- There are very good arrangements for child protection, welfare and health and safety. Pupils say they feel happy, safe and secure;
- The systems for assessing each pupil's academic achievement and personal development, and targeting support where needed, are outstanding;
- Pupils are given a very good level of responsibility for their own learning, and are widely consulted about aspects of the school's work;
- The support and guidance given to pupils with SEN is very good,

Commentary

25. Pupils told inspectors how happy they are in school, and parents confirmed this. They said that they could go to an adult with any problems, and one Year 6 boy reported that he had been bullied at his last school, but not at Brookside where the staff were "much more supportive." Pupils' views are sought regularly in class, by questionnaires, and through the School Council. Their views are taken seriously, and, for example, last year resulted in three different improvements to the play areas. Their views as expressed to the inspection team were highly positive.

26. Health, safety and consideration of pupils' welfare are prominent in the life of the school. Over the past five years, there has been a very substantial spending programme to upgrade and make safe the building and grounds. These are now of very good quality with wide-scale improvements in security and safety. Several members of staff are trained in handling critical medical conditions and the school has good arrangements for child protection and administering medicines.

27. Excellent support given to pupils due to highly effective tracking and recording of changes in their attainment over time, and the trusting relationships pupils have with adults. The school knows exactly how well each pupil is achieving in all subjects, and provides a flexible range of support to meet individuals' needs. Half-termly academic and personal targets are set for all pupils, and pupils assess themselves weekly as to how well they feel are doing in relation to them. This gives pupils a very good level of responsibility for their own learning and behaviour.

28. The school has very good procedures for the identification and support of pupils with SEN. The requirements of pupils' statements of SEN are addressed very well through the targets set in both high quality individual education plans, and in the targets set for all pupils. This ensures that the pupils with SEN achieve as well against their identified targets, and in their everyday learning, as their class-mates. Learning support assistants move with pupils as they transfer from one class to another, so maintaining their close relationships. which contributes very well to these pupils' security and achievement. The school also has very good working relationships with outside agencies supporting these pupils, which also works well for the very small number with English as an additional language. The very young children who move directly from the nursery into Year 1 are supported very well to help them settle, conform and learn well. For example, they are withdrawn from some lessons and are taught in a smaller group, often with a more practical basis.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

29. Links with parents and the community are excellent, and links with other schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes extensive efforts to involve parents in the education of their children, to increase their understanding of their own role in this, and to consult them on developments;
- The information provided for parents, and their views of the school are excellent;

- Brookside takes a leading role in joint enterprises to increase both pupils' opportunities for learning, and the effectiveness of that learning;
- Community awareness of Brookside is increasing rapidly as it continually extends its links;

Commentary

30. All indicators show that parents and pupils have a very high opinion of the school and they made this clear to the inspectors in all contacts. Excellent information is provided for parents by frequent, friendly newsletters; the new, professional and very attractive prospectus; the governors' annual report and the annual reports written about their children's progress. These are of very high quality and include targets for the pupils' next learning steps. They help parents to understand how well their children are doing, and to support their achievement. Parents are effectively informed about their children's progress towards their individual targets. Annual reviews of statements of educational needs are very well organised.

31. Parents are welcomed into school at all times, and the importance of their role and contribution to their children's achievement is consistently emphasised. Joint plans are made to tackle attendance and behaviour problems, and twice a year, consultation evenings are arranged with alternative dates so that as many parents as possible can attend. There is one *showpiece open day* each year for parents and the community, which includes demonstrations, displays and performances, as well a variety of other events that parents can attend. Pupils describe how much they enjoy showing the school and their achievements to their parents. The school puts on courses and events specifically for parents, such as *Supporting Children's Handwriting*. Two creative workshops for parents of nursery and Key Stage 1 pupils ran during the week of the inspection as part of the school's usual programme of events. Parents are consulted about wider issues through an annual questionnaire, and more regularly by personal contact with staff and governors. Parents are becoming involved in the school in increasing numbers, giving their support in various ways.

32. The school takes part in many community activities, such as festivals and pageants, and welcomes community use of its facilities, for example for Brownies or first-aid courses. Part of the building houses the Bicester Under Fives and Families organisation, and these very young children and parents benefit from the school's re-furnished facilities. Brookside hosts the Bicester Children's University and has numerous links with other organisations. Links have been forged with other countries, for example through *Comenius*, which supports a range of school partnerships across Europe. All these events contribute very effectively to pupils' understanding of citizenship and the wider world.

33. Brookside has very close physical and professional links with the adjacent Catholic primary school, for whom it provides nursery places. Close liaison is also maintained with the main secondary school to which pupils transfer. Visits in both directions by staff and pupils are made. For example, Brookside is very careful about passing on relevant information, about transferring pupils, and Year 10 and 11 secondary school pupils run an annual sports event at Brookside. These regular contacts help pupils transfer successfully.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance

34. Both the leadership and management of the school are **very good**. There is a crystal clear vision for the development of the school which is shared by leaders and governors, and reflected very well in the management procedures put into place to achieve it. The school monitors its performance exceptionally well and uses the information to set highly appropriate priorities for development. Governance of the school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of head teacher is excellent. She is very effectively supported by the other leaders in the school, the governing body and by the school staff;
- Self-evaluation is rigorous;
- Strategic planning is highly effective, and finances are very well secured and used to achieve the school's priorities;
- Staff development and performance management are given a high priority and result in good quality teaching and learning.
- The management of the provision for pupils with SEN is very good.

Commentary

35. Parents and governors praise the transformation of the school over the past five years, despite the difficulties it has faced. The headteacher has an exceptionally clear vision for the development of the school and how it can best serve its pupils. She provides an excellent role model, inspiring and uniting staff to develop the school and their own skills. The governing body and other leaders work with the head teacher very effectively to create an ethos based on high expectations and the principle that every single pupil matters and deserves the best. They have taken the brave step of choosing not to "coach" pupils for a few extra points to be gained in their national tests, which they feel would be short-lived, artificial success, and not likely to interest the pupils sufficiently. Instead, they have chosen to help pupils become ready to learn, for example by expert behaviour management and the provision of a safe, secure and high quality environment; to raise pupils' self-esteem, by publicly celebrating their successes and developing the school's positive name in the community; to develop in the pupils a love of learning, by supporting staff to develop high quality skills, and by providing a rich and exciting curriculum which draws extensively from outside the school. The school's leaders firmly believe that this approach will help pupils achieve as much as they can, will raise their attainment and give them skills that they will take through to adult life. The school's management systems all work to this purpose.

36. Strategic planning to achieve the school's vision is exceptionally good. The last few years' school improvement plans show the clear, purposeful, realistic prioritisation of developments. Money is used very well to meet priorities, for example considerably more is spent on provision for pupils with SEN than is allocated. Additional finance has been secured by application for various external grants. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when financial management was identified as a key weakness. In addition there is continuous and systematic development of both teaching and support staff through well-established and welcomed systems of performance management and consultation. The lack of such a system was also identified as a weakness in the previous inspection. The school is attempting to address the County policy of variable (including no) Reception class experience by using its own funding so that all children will benefit from a full year in Reception with the express aim of raising attainment.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total expenditure	676763	Balance from previous year	32741
Expenditure per pupil	2692	Balance carried forward to the next	31874

37. Day to day management of the school is highly effective, because the staff are so clear about their purpose and motivated to fulfil the school's aims. Routines and policies are well established and consistently implemented which provides security and consistency for the pupils. Governors are highly supportive and fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively. This is a considerable improvement because several statutory requirements were not met at the time of the last inspection. Governors now know the main strengths and weaknesses of the school and are involved in all aspects of its work

38. Evaluation procedures in the school are excellent. Setting objectives for school improvement, and the systematic monitoring of progress towards achieving them, are carried out with the full involvement of governors and staff, and in consultation with parents and pupils. There is systematic evaluation of teaching by staff with leadership responsibility, which feeds into performance management and the school improvement plan. Excellent monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress allows planning to reflect the needs of different groups within the school, and support to be targeted at those pupils who need it most. This contributes very effectively to pupils' achievement.

39. The management and co-ordination of provision for SEN is very good and very effectively organised. The co-ordinator has a very good knowledge and understanding of all the pupils and meets regularly with the learning support assistants who work with individuals. Monitoring of the provision is very good and ensures that pupils' targets are clear and helpful to support learning, and that appropriate adaptations have been made to teaching and curriculum plans to meet the pupils' needs. The special needs policy is helpful and offers clear guidance for teachers in helping them to identify when additional support is necessary.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Community Links

40. The school has an **outstanding** range of external links which directly contribute to a richer curriculum, widen pupils' horizons and raise their achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's drive to make productive educational links with other places;
- The creation of the Bicester Children's University for the benefit of all local school children aged eight to thirteen;
- The school's joint leadership of the Network Learning Community Project;
- Initiation of the Comenius School International Partnership;
- Securing a £500,000 grant for a sports and arts complex that will be used for both the school and the community.

Commentary

41. Brookside continually seeks enrichment from outside, and does this in a number of ways that are threaded through its everyday work. Email links have been established with local schools and those further away, within and outside England. Participation in the *Comenius* project, with associated funding, has begun and will include exchanges of pupils and staff with those from Spain and Finland. Links with schools in other countries have been established which benefit both staff and pupils, and give very good support for pupils' understanding of different cultures.

42. The Bicester Children's University, initiated, housed and administered by Brookside, is now approaching its fourth year. It works in modules of six-week units, covering subjects as diverse as German, international cookery and crime detection. Pupils have the social benefit of mixing with others of different ages and from other schools. Awards are made when pupils have successfully attended three, six and nine modules in a "proper" academic award ceremony at Oxford Brookes University. This venture contributes greatly to pupils' understanding of the value of a broad education and lifelong learning. Parents are highly positive about this venture, and a number of pupils wrote that they liked the Bicester Children's University in their inspection questionnaires.

43. Brookside has identified writing, mathematics and boys' achievement as weaknesses to be improved. The school improvement plan outlines how this will be achieved, and one of the ways is through the Network Learning Community project. This involves a number of local schools whose

pupils have similar weaknesses to Brookside's. The project's objectives are that schools should work together in order to accelerate classroom learning and raise achievement. The first study day was attended by over 300 teachers and assistants and in-school support initiated as a result. It is too soon to measure the impact of the project on pupils' attainment as yet, but the school intends to do this as part of its usual monitoring and evaluation procedures.

44. Over the past few years, Brookside has secured many additional grants to provide better facilities and opportunities for learning for the pupils. For example, it has secured Cliff Richards Tennis Funding in 2000 and Arts Council Funding for artists in residence in 2002 and 2003. The most recent award is £500,000 to build a sports and arts centre and enhance the school's already very strong provision, and pupils' very good achievement, in these areas. This will also be used by the community, and further establish Brookside's place at its heart.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

45. The nursery provides places for two schools other than Brookside. All children attend part time, starting at about three and a half years old. The oldest children move into the Reception class in January, and the next oldest group join them in April. The youngest children move straight from the nursery into Year 1. There was no Reception class running at the time of the inspection.

46. The nursery provides a safe and secure start to children's school life. Their attainment on entry is variable, but generally below average for their age, some by as much as a year. Records show that children make rapid progress when they first begin, but that this rate is not maintained through to Year 1, although the children continued to make steady progress. Achievement overall is satisfactory. This is partly due to the reduced time in Reception, and partly due to the nursery curriculum and resources which were not focused on helping children, and particularly the oldest, to achieve as much as they could.

48. Teaching and learning observed during the inspection were good. Activities were well planned, appropriate, and used resources to the full. However, the nursery leadership has just changed and the new regime had only been running for three weeks. It is too soon to judge the impact of the changes in management and provision on the children's achievement. Weaknesses in the provision, such as aspects of the curriculum and the resources, have been fully recognised and plans are being developed to improve them. The Foundation Stage is currently a prime focus in the school's strategic development plan. A very considerable amount of money has recently been spent on refurbishing the building and extensive outside areas, which are now very good. Discussion indicates that plans for development are very appropriate. Very useful work has already begun on collating the assessment of a wide range of the children's skills in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses and establish systems for improving them more systematically. The school's managers recognise the need to link the nursery more effectively with the Reception class. Funding is being allocated so that all children will have a full year in the Reception class. This will create an integrated Foundation Stage to improve children's achievement and prepare them better for Year 1. Plans are in hand to develop the nursery curriculum in all six areas of learning. Whilst the curriculum for each area of learning is satisfactory, it is not up to date and does not include enough provision for the oldest children, none of whom have a full year in the Reception class. Resources for communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world are barely adequate; and those for creative development are unsatisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

49. Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good. Learning and achievement are good and on line to be very good.
- Relationships are very good which supports children's personal development very well;

Commentary

50. The skills of the children who have joined the nursery this term are below average for their age. Half of them are up to a year behind and are not likely to reach the Early Learning Goals for this area of learning by the time they enter Year 1 because they have a long way to catch up. Nevertheless, they learn well because the teacher understands their needs very well and works hard to meet them. All activities promote children's personal development, and the staff recognise the importance of this in supporting learning in other curriculum areas. The teacher and nursery nurse work very well together to give the children a sense of belonging, security and to know what is expected of them. At

story time, for example, the nursery nurse moves to sit with individuals who find sitting and concentrating difficult. They are encouraged to become engaged in the story, and not reprimanded which would distract them further. This is a very good tactic, and the older children are clearly well-used to becoming involved in activities for long periods of time, and understand the class rules such as putting your hand up before answering a question. They listen well to other children's explanations. Children with SEN and English as an additional language are very well supported by extra attention and consideration. For example, some labels on displays include words from the home language of children from minority ethnic groups. Relationships are very warm; children are cuddled and comforted if they are upset, but they are also encouraged to become as independent as possible. Many show the confidence to talk freely to adults, and some children initiate this conversation. Older children have made particular friends. As yet, the youngest are not able to take themselves to toilet or wash their hands without some support, and many need help to make the most of their activities, otherwise their concentration wanes.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

51. Provision in communication, language and literacy is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff use every opportunity to develop children's speaking and listening skills, and the children learn well;
- Activities and resources to support reading and writing are not always interesting enough;

Commentary

52. Teaching and children's achievement are satisfactory overall in this area of learning. Children's speaking and listening skills are better developed than early reading and writing skills when they first start nursery, and a very good emphasis is placed on developing them further. Achievement is good and the majority of children will reach the Early Learning Goals for speaking and listening by the time they enter Year 1. Teaching is good in this area because staff listen carefully to what children say in group activities which helps them realise that it is important to be quiet and take account of what others say. The strong emphasis on children's personal development – for example conforming to story time rules - supports this further. The staff question children effectively, for example about an activity they are about to do, which extends their ability to speak in sentences, explain and use interesting vocabulary. Some children speak to adults freely and confidently, talking about their families and events important to them such as a birthday. They enjoy practising their skills in imaginary play.

53. Teaching and children's achievement are satisfactory in reading. Early reading skills are well promoted in whole class activities, such as story time, but overall, standards are below expectations for the children's age. A very small number of the oldest pupils can already read a range of simple words and several understand what the *author* and *title* of a book means. Most children apart from the youngest know some letter names and sounds. Adult-directed group activities are planned which effectively develop children's early reading skills further, but the curriculum does not take account of the Reception year of the *Joint Primary Strategy (Literacy)* to help the systematic development of the older children's skills, or compensate for their reduced time in Reception. The book corner has a satisfactory number of books, but is not very inviting and children tended not to use it by choice during the inspection.

54. The teaching of early writing skills is satisfactory. Children's skills are well below average for their age when they first start nursery, their achievement is satisfactory and writing remains a relative weakness as they move into school. Teaching links writing and its various purposes, and letter names and sounds together well in adult-directed group activities. However free choice activities relating to developing writing are sometimes based on uninspiring resources, such as tracing paper, which slips and becomes opaque, paper-clipped to a tatty picture. This does not entice children to

use the resources, and limits what they learn. Overall, children will not reach the Early learning Goals in reading and writing at by the time they enter Year 1.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

55. Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff question children very well;
- Resources to support mathematical development are not always interesting enough;
- Curriculum planning does not take sufficient account of the *Joint primary Strategy (numeracy)* Reception year.

Commentary

56. Although still below expectations for their age, children's number skills are more advanced than any other area of their development when they first enter the nursery, although their use and understanding of numbers to calculate is much less secure. Nevertheless, they make satisfactory progress in both areas, and in their understanding of shapes, and achievement overall is satisfactory. However most children will not reach the Early Learning Goals in all areas of mathematical development at the right time because they have too much ground to make up.

57. Teaching is satisfactory. Staff take every opportunity to develop children's mathematical skills through other areas of learning, especially language, and draw their attention to shapes, numbers, and concepts such as *less than* or *how many more?* in their everyday work. Children accurately use words such as *up*, *down*, *big* and *small* in their language and play. With support, most older children can sort categories of objects, such as toy vehicles, explore patterns, for example placing a car after a lorry several times, and match colours and shapes. Many recite numbers to 10, but some cannot accurately count a group of objects over four. They understand the concept of money, and enjoy giving and receiving money in their shop role-play. Curriculum planning is satisfactory. It is broad and covers all the necessary areas, but does not sufficiently include material from the Reception year's *Joint Primary Strategy* curriculum to support the older children's learning more effectively. Some of the mathematical resources are good quality, newly purchased classroom equipment. However, resources for learning through play, such as the sand and water trays and accompanying equipment did not hold much excitement and were often without any children.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

58. It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards in this area. Records show that children's skills on entry are better in the science and humanities strands than in designing and making and information and communication technology. Nevertheless, records show that they make steady progress during their time in the nursery, and their skills even out. The large outside classroom is used very well in this area of learning; for example children investigated the properties of soil and described what plants need to grow. The children enjoy working at the computer and the skills of those observed using a *mouse* to control a computer program were appropriate for their age. Children from minority ethnic groups are well included as members of the group by displays featuring their home language. Children were observed using wooden shapes to make structures, but these were not very imaginative, nor imaginatively used. Completed work displays show that children know the main features of a house, and could stick these onto an outline appropriately, although skills varied considerably and the task itself used dull materials.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

59. Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outside area is very well used to promote children's physical development.
- Teaching is good and children achieve well.

Commentary

60. Children enter the nursery with physical skills that are below expectations for their age. They make good progress and are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals for this area of learning at the right time. Activities are well planned and set up and the very large outside play area is used very well to promote children's physical development and body control. Careful staff intervention and support ensure that children develop their skills rapidly whilst remaining safe. Children move freely around the playground without knocking into each other. They ride wheeled toys and bikes on "tracks," run across wide open space, weaving in and out of obstacles, stopping and starting with no problem. They really enjoy running down a very steep bank, which they manage without falling over. Children judge accurately whether they can fit into small spaces, such as a play tent. They learn to manipulate materials and objects through classroom activities such as cutting, sticking and using construction toys, but these skills are less advanced than their body control.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

61. Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Music is under-emphasised;
- Resources are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

62. Art and design, music and imaginative play are all provided for in the nursery, and the teaching to help develop children's creativity was good during the inspection. Very good use is made of the outside area, for example some "action painting" was set up against the fence. However, the lack of sufficient exciting resources shows most in this area of learning and this limits children's creative development and achievement. Overall, children are not likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals at the right time. Art and craft materials are unimaginative; for example, paper is in dull colours, and collage materials do not include much sparkle. There is a range of musical instruments – largely percussion - but they have to be got out and put away; there is no permanent music corner to capture children's interest. The home corner has pretend kitchen equipment, such as a cooker, but when the doors are opened, they hold no smaller equipment such as pots and pans. The dressing up clothes include a small range of items from other cultures, such as saris. Children like using the materials provided, and particularly enjoyed their role-play as shop-keepers and shoppers which was set up very well to support their creative development. The nursery leader understands the weaknesses in provision in this area of learning and has appropriate plans to improve it.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

63. Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and pupils achieve well; standards attained by pupils in Year 6 are improved this year, although writing remains a relative weakness;
- The support given to pupils by teachers and teaching assistants is very good;
- The assessment and tracking of pupils' attainment and progress is excellent;
- Planning to meet the needs of individual pupils is very good;
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Commentary

64. Overall, the standards of the current Year 6 pupils are likely to be in line with national averages by the time they leave the school at the age of eleven. This is an improvement as the previous two Year 6 groups had significant difficulties and a considerable improvement since the previous inspection, where progress in both key stages was judged to be unsatisfactory. All pupils, including those with SEN and English as an additional language, achieve well, although boys' performance remains behind girls' overall. This is a whole-school focus for improvement. Very good leadership and management are driving the improvements. The subject leader has a clear vision for the development of English based on a very good understanding of the pupils' needs and difficulties. The introduction of the national Literacy Strategy (now part of the *Joint Primary Strategy*) has strengthened the English curriculum. It is now much better planned and taught and the teaching of basic English skills is a strong feature of all lessons. Pupils' weakness in writing is being specifically addressed through a range of well-managed strategies, and standards are improving.

65. The subject leader is fully involved in monitoring teaching and learning, through observations and the analysis of test results and class work, and plans appropriate curriculum reviews and staff training to improve them. New members of staff are included in this as soon as possible. Teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection when it was judged satisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and has been enhanced by literacy training; they are now very skilled and secure in all that they do and pupils learn well as a result. Behaviour management is very good; teachers rarely raise their voices and use praise prudently which encourages pupils very effectively as they know it is well deserved. On-going assessment is a strong feature of all lessons. Very good use is made of careful open questioning to encourage pupils to use their developing speaking skills, and to check their understanding. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening. They communicate ideas and opinions fluently when encouraged, show increasing confidence as they mature, and talk freely to visitors. The review time at the end of lessons is used very effectively by teachers to check pupils' understanding and help them confirm and extend what they have learned. Teachers note down pupils' achievements which contributes effectively to planning further lessons and work for individuals. All this makes a very good contribution to pupils' achievement.

66. Pupils' achievement in reading is good overall, and the standards of those without SEN are around the national average throughout the school, except in Year 1 where many pupils are still catching up. However, a minority of pupils of all ages are unable to read at the standard expected, generally due to their SEN. Pupils with SEN have reading targets carefully linked to their individual education plans. They are given very good support and encouragement by teachers and support assistants, and their progress is very closely monitored. These pupils achieve well and develop a range of strategies to help them read.

67. The standard of the oldest pupils' writing varies, and is satisfactory overall. Writing is recognised as a weakness – children tend to enter the nursery with well below average writing skills

- and the school is working hard to improve it. Writing skills are reinforced well throughout the curriculum, so pupils write with a purpose such as writing up topics or science work. Most learn to tackle some of the aspects that do not come easily to them, such as writing independently. Pupils are given good support to help organise their writing, such as by the use of examples to look at, and there is an increasing focus on spelling and extending writing to longer pieces.

68. Whole-school assessment in English is excellent. Test results are analysed to track the attainment and progress of every single pupil, and planning is very effectively based on this information. Pupils each have a termly personal target in English, which they understand and work towards. Marking of pupils' work is usually constructive, but sometimes, pupils do not follow up the teacher's comments.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

69. Pupils are given very good opportunities to use literacy across the curriculum. This reinforces their skills, and helps them see a purpose in what they do. Speaking and listening are encouraged in every subject, including practical subjects such as physical education. The use of reading for gaining information or understanding what they have to do is consistently reinforced, and younger and lower attaining pupils are very well supported to make sure they understand what they read. Writing is made interesting and exciting to motivate pupils to apply themselves, for example, staff encourage the use of ICT and art to enhance written work in all subjects.

MATHEMATICS

70. Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the subject are very good;
- Teaching is good and pupils learn well;
- The assessment and tracking of pupils' developing skills, and the use of this information to set targets, plan the curriculum, and give support where most needed are excellent;
- Curriculum planning is good.

Commentary

71. Subject leadership is very good because there is a very clear plan for the development of mathematics provision to address the weaknesses in pupils' mathematical skills. Very good management procedures have enabled the plan to be achieved. This includes a very substantial investment in the training of teachers; for example, all except the newest have attended three or five day numeracy courses in the past twelve months. The school has implemented the national Numeracy Strategy (now part of the *Joint Primary Strategy*) very well, and standards of mathematics are improving as a result. Teaching and learning in mathematics are much improved since the previous inspection. All pupils achieve well, and those without SEN attain standards as expected nationally from Year 2 onwards.

72. Teachers have excellent skills in the management of pupils' behaviour, and high expectations of them to learn and make progress, which they live up to. Lessons are very well prepared with clear learning objectives that are explained to pupils, so they know what they are going to do and whether they have achieved them. Work is very well matched to pupils' abilities due to the excellent systems for assessing and tracking each individual's attainment over time. The last few minutes of the lessons are used very well to check pupils' understanding and reinforce the main learning points. All the information gained is used very well to contribute to each pupil's personal mathematics target; match work to pupils' personal needs; identify where support is needed to ensure all pupils achieve, and to make changes to the curriculum to ensure that pupils are taught what they need rather than what the paper work dictates. This is why all pupils achieve well. Teachers are very good at giving

clear explanations, and getting pupils to think and work things out for themselves, particularly in mathematical investigations which pupils do not find easy. Pupils' work is regularly and constructively marked but they do not always follow up the teachers' suggestions, which sometimes goes un-noticed.

Mathematics across the curriculum

73. Mathematics is well reinforced through other subjects of the curriculum, both in "academic" subjects - for example bar charts are used well in science and geography to record and analyse data – and also in creative subjects such as art and physical education where pupils learn about shapes and patterns. Staff pay careful attention to the development of pupils' mathematical language; there are good displays of mathematical vocabulary in all classrooms and teachers give clear explanations of new mathematical terms in lessons.

SCIENCE

74. Provision for science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and pupils learn well;
- The assessment and tracking of pupils' developing skills and the use of this information to inform planning are very good;
- Curriculum planning is good;
- Pupils' investigational skills are less well developed than other areas.

Commentary

75. The good quality of teaching results in all pupils achieving well. This maintains the view of the previous inspection, although several aspects of the provision, such as assessment and achievement at Key Stage 2, have clearly improved. Some teaching is excellent, and pupils achieve very well, and make very good progress. This includes some with SEN. Although standards attained in the teacher assessments and national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 are below the national average, more pupils' skills are above average for their age by the end of Year 2 than expected, in comparison to similar schools. This is a great achievement. The latest Year 6 results reflect the extent of the difficulties experienced by the group, and the fact that teaching was in whole classes, rather than smaller groups as it was for English and mathematics. Current observations and pupils' work shows that pupils without SEN are attaining at the levels expected for their age in all years. Good achievement is due to the very good support pupils receive from both teachers and support staff, and the way that work is so well planned to suit their particular needs and ages. For example, in an excellent lesson with the youngest pupils, the teacher helped them understand the properties of different materials by linking the work to the story of *The Three Little Pigs*, which was particularly appropriate for their age. Both the highest and lowest attaining pupils in all classes have work set that challenges them, but that they can succeed in.

76. Good leadership and management of the subject maintains the good teaching and exciting curriculum. Staff and pupils' performance is carefully monitored to inform improvement plans. Careful and systematic assessments of pupils' skills over time are used as a basis for planning for whom extra support should be given, at what level work for individuals should be set, and how the planned curriculum should be adapted and taught. For example, careful monitoring showed that of all the aspects of the subject, pupils found self-directed investigations difficult. In particular, their understanding of how to create a hypothesis and test it out, predict what might happen in an investigation, and plan their own extensions to investigations is not always secure. As a result, the curriculum is being revised to meet this need. The curriculum is very well planned to ensure that pupils in both mixed and single age classes are taught all they should be to meet the requirements of

the National Curriculum, and at an appropriately challenging level. As a result of these good features, standards are improving.

77. Particularly good features of teaching include good use of scientific language which pupils in turn use in their discussions and writing. Very good quality resources are used very well to demonstrate to pupils, enable them to investigate on their own, and to extend their knowledge. This includes the use of ICT. For example, a lesson with the oldest pupils used a microscope linked to a computer and video projector to demonstrate how filter paper works in close-up magnification, which they found fascinating. Pupils also use the Internet well to learn more about topics.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

78. Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The improvement in provision and standards of pupils' work since the last inspection;
- Planning ensures that pupils build up their skills systematically as they move up the school, although until recently, not all strands of the curriculum were equally emphasised;
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

79. The school has developed its ICT provision very well since the last inspection, when pupils' progress was unsatisfactory throughout the school. This was due to a curriculum which did not meet requirements, and the lack of staff expertise to teach it effectively. Teaching is now good overall, and pupils achieve well. They are very motivated by ICT and the use of technological resources in other lessons, which contributes to their good achievement. The curriculum now meets all requirements, and a well-constructed scheme of work and good lesson plans encourage the systematic development of pupils' skills from the earliest years. The teaching of the *control and monitoring* component of the National Curriculum is not yet as well advanced as other aspects of the ICT curriculum, but is developing well. The standards pupils achieve are generally as expected for their age, which is a great improvement. Strong leadership and effective management have successfully driven these significant improvements, based on clear development planning and effective monitoring of teaching and learning. Whole staff training has improved teacher expertise considerably, and a teaching assistant provides competent technical support and works effectively with teachers in ICT lessons. Teachers are beginning to have the confidence to encourage pupils to attempt more difficult tasks such as web design, and the range of software available supports this well. Resources have been considerably improved. Very good use is made of extra equipment, such as the *data projector*, for demonstrations and to reinforce pupils' skills,

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

80. ICT is used well in many other areas of the curriculum, for example for drafting and redrafting written work, creating graphs for science, mathematics and topic work, and enhancing text, for instance with illustrations and interesting presentations. Pupils use the Internet for research; they program and control simple robots and create and analyse spreadsheets in mathematics and science. ICT is used well to develop learning on a one-to-one basis for pupils with SEN.

HUMANITIES

81. One lesson in each of history and geography was observed, and a limited amount of pupils' work analysed. It is not possible to make judgements about the overall effectiveness of the provision or standards attained in these subjects, although some comments can be made. Three lessons of religious education were observed, work was analysed, and discussions held with teachers and pupils.

- Teaching and learning in both the lessons observed in geography and history were good; teachers introduced the lessons well, and pupils looked forward to the work they were to do and applied themselves very well;
- The curricula for history and geography make the subjects interesting and exciting for the pupils because:
 - o They are very well planned to appeal to the pupils' interests;
 - o They link very well with work pupils are currently doing in other subjects – for example Year 6 history work on ancient Greece linked with their English work on Greek myths;
 - o They are very well supported by good quality resources and additional activities, such as a residential visit to Conwy in Wales, where both the history and geography of the locality were investigated;
 - o Topic work produced by pupils based on both history and geography is of very good quality. It shows clearly how other subjects such as art and design, ICT, mathematics and music are used to enhance and develop the work, and make it individual to each pupil.

Religious education

82. Provision in Religious Education is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching observed during the inspection was good;
- Pupils showed difficulty in understanding some deeper meanings and concepts;
- The curriculum lacks the vibrancy of the other subjects in the humanities area.

Commentary

83. The teaching observed during the inspection was good because teachers were clear about what the pupils were to do and learn, and explained this well to them in the introductions. Pupils worked well during the lessons and tried hard to get to grips with some difficult concepts. They were well supported in this by good resources and work sheets which helped explain and illustrate the concepts under discussion, but some pupils found getting “underneath the surface” difficult. For example, some found the difference between a *symbol* and a *logo* difficult to understand, particularly when some *logos* come to have a symbolic meaning, such as the Brookside logo. Few pupils in a Year 5/6 class understood the significance of a circular (never ending) wedding ring in a marriage. This difficulty limits the standards that pupils attain. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, and standards are around average for pupils' age, but few are above this. This represents an apparent decline since the previous inspection, but the pupils' capability is different now, and overall, pupils still achieve well. Work was not set at different levels to match pupils' individual needs but all pupils completed the work set – albeit at different rates, and there was more than enough to challenge the higher attaining pupils which kept them interested and working well. Support was given as needed by staff for the lower attaining pupils, which made sure that they understood and learned. Pupils also helped one another in these lessons, as they generally worked in pairs or small groups, and they did this freely and supportively. The last few minutes of the lesson were used well for teachers to assess what the pupils had learned, and to reinforce the main points.

84. The curriculum is based securely on the local agreed syllabus, which in turn is based on national guidance, and so is broad-based and relevant to the pupils. The cultural and religious differences of various groups within humanity are well explored which provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, the planning and delivery does not have the creativity and vibrancy of other subjects of the curriculum at Brookside. The subject leader is new in post this term and has outline plans for developing the curriculum but there has been no time for these ideas to be developed or to impact on teaching and learning as yet.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

85. Four lessons each in physical education and art were observed, two lessons were observed in music and one lesson in design and technology.

86. Insufficient lessons were observed or past work analysed for many judgments to be made about music and design and technology. However, observations, discussions with teachers and pupils, documented evidence and pupils' work all indicate that provision for these subjects is **strong**.

Music

87. Teaching in music was good, and the lesson for Year 4 was very good. Pupils' musical skills are well above expectations for their age in Year 4, and singing, as seen in choir, assembly and lessons was very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection where standards were as expected for pupils' age. The music subject leader has great musical talent, expertise and enthusiasm, which contributes very well to pupils' achievement in this subject. The curriculum is very well planned and provides for pupils' skills to be systematically built up as they move through the school. Brookside places a great deal of emphasis on supporting pupils' musicality, for example by arranging activities to supplement the curriculum, such as a *World Music Day* and inviting musicians to visit and work with the pupils. Music plays a big part in the school's performances and open days for parents and the community, and the Brookside choir takes part in national events. All of this contributes very successfully to the strong musical provision

Design and technology

88. The provision has improved very considerably since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory. The curriculum is now very well planned to build up pupils' skills systematically, and the design and evaluation processes are given good emphasis where they were previously neglected. In the good lesson observed in Year 3, pupils were clearly very motivated by their practical work, and learned about *pneumatics* well. The subject leader is skilled and enthusiastic about the subject and has trained and supported staff in developing the necessary skills to improve it, and raise the standards pupils attain. These are now overall in line with expectations for pupils' age which is a great improvement, as the last inspection judged them to be well below average with poor progress throughout the school.

Art and design

89. Provision in art and design is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school emphasises art and design as a subject in which pupils can excel;
- Standards attained are above expectations for pupils' age;
- Teaching is good and pupils learn well;
- The taught curriculum is very good and enriched by excellent additional activities;
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Commentary

90. From Year 1, art is given a very strong emphasis in the curriculum. The school's enthusiasm for the subject is promoted by very good leadership and management, which ensure that the curriculum, staff skills, resources and supporting activities are all of very good quality and pupils are given every opportunity to succeed really well, whatever their ability, gender or race. This commitment and pupils' high achievement has been recognised by a national *Artsmark Silver* award. Teaching is imaginative and focused; pupils are actively taught skills, and their progress is not left to chance. In one very good lesson in Year 2, pupils were shown how to experiment to make

pictures in the style of *Monet*; his particular style was described very effectively as pupils looked at examples of his work; his methods were explained, and pupils were given very good quality resources to produce similar work themselves. Their delight and wonder at seeing their completed work was marvellous. This enthusiasm and creativity on the part of both staff and pupils is evident throughout the school. The curriculum is very well planned and art is very well supported through other subjects which reinforce learning and the unity of the curriculum as a whole. For example pupils in Year 2 made *papier mache* bowls (*science, materials*) and decorated them in the *pointillism* style (*art*). Displays show some outstanding examples of pupils' work. This is often the result of the additional activities that pupils experience which reinforce the taught curriculum. For example, a visit to a London art gallery inspired some exceptional work in the style of Picasso; a Ugandan artist in residence resulted in excellent clay figures, and a residential visit to Wales included time spent on creating some high quality close observational drawings of buildings.

Physical education

91. Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and pupils achieve well;
- The opportunities given to pupils to take part in sporting activities within and outside school.

Commentary

92. Physical education is given considerable importance in Brookside, and all pupils, regardless of gender, ability and race are encouraged and supported to succeed. This very good provision has been recognised by receipt of the national *Activemark* award, and the school's commitment is reinforced by the successful application for a grant to build new sports facilities. The subject is enriched by the use of sports coaches and a variety of extra sporting activities through clubs and local tournaments for pupils throughout the school. This contributes very well to pupils' achievement.

93. The curriculum is well planned, and pupils' developing skills are assessed as carefully as they are in more "academic" subjects. This enables support and guidance to be carefully directed to help pupils improve and refine them. Teachers approach the subject very professionally, and the dedicated sports hall and attention to health and safety are very helpful in this. Through very good demonstrations – both their own and pupils' - teachers motivate and encourage pupils very well. This means that their attitudes are always positive and their behaviour very good. Pupils are encouraged to think carefully, evaluate their performance, and suggest ways that they might improve. Their skills are above expectations for their age by the time they reach Year 6.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

94. Provision in PSHE is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good use of a commercial scheme;
- PSHE is extremely well supported by the ethos of the school;
- Provision is very outward looking.

Commentary

95. One lesson in PSHE in Year 5/6 was observed. However, provision for pupils' personal development is threaded through the everyday work of the school as Brookside puts it at the forefront of all that it does. In particular, the school aims to widen pupils' horizons and see the value in lifelong learning, and help them understand how different people, communities and cultures live. Many external links have been created to this end. Staff have taken on the subject as a formal part of the curriculum very willingly, and make good use of a commercial scheme of work. The lesson observed was about citizenship, and was very appropriately centred around being a good friend. Each class has allocated time where they learn and develop their skills, and discuss issues which might arise both within school, such as bullying, and in the outside world, such as war.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	5
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).