

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Bellingham First School**

Bellingham, Hexham, NE48 2EL

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122183

Headteacher: Mrs Wendy Goddard

Lead inspector: Mr Andrew Scott

Dates of inspection: 20 - 22 October 2003

Inspection number: 260579

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	51
School address:	Redesmouth Road, Bellingham, Hexham
Postcode:	NE48 2EL
Telephone number:	01434 220230
Fax number:	01434 220230
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Allen
Date of previous inspection:	15 - 18 October 2003

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bellingham First School is a small village school with 51 pupils. Many pupils come from the immediate village but most live in the surrounding area. All pupils have white British heritage and there is little movement of population in the locality. Most pupils come from average social backgrounds. At present, pupils have above average knowledge and skills when they start school. This varies from year to year, because of the small numbers of pupils, and sometimes their attainment is average. 17 per cent of pupils have special educational needs which is lower than average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties, including speech and communication problems. There is one pupil with a statement of special educational needs.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27545	Andrew Scott	Lead inspector	English
			Information and communication technology
			Geography
			History
			Music
			Special educational needs
12511	Linda Buller	Lay inspector	
28037	Pauline Smith	Team inspector	Mathematics
			Science
			Religious education
			Art and design
			Design and technology
			Physical education
			Foundation Stage

The inspection contractor was:

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>6</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>8</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>22</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The school offers satisfactory provision for its pupils.** There is a warm and supportive atmosphere, which encourages pupils to work hard. Pupils make satisfactory achievement as they pass through the school. Staff are keen for pupils to succeed, and often teach well, but do not adapt their teaching skilfully enough for all pupils to make good progress. The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership and management, but the school's governors are not effective enough. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the positive ethos, which makes pupils feel safe and valued, as well as eager to learn.
- the good standards of English throughout the school
- teachers' planning which is not detailed enough to meet the needs of all pupils in all subjects.
- the high expectations of pupils' behaviour which makes them confident and considerate.
- the school's self-evaluation, which is not rigorous enough to improve teaching and learning.
- the unsatisfactory financial planning to support all the priorities of the school.
- the positive links with the community and other schools which broaden pupils' horizons.
- the good emphasis on promoting pupils' awareness of a healthy lifestyle.

The school has made a good improvement since the last inspection in 1999. Standards have remained steady overall but have improved in listening and writing. Relationships within the school and pupils' attitudes to work have become better. The overall curriculum is much better structured, the quality of teaching has improved slightly and there is a clearer sense of direction from the headteacher. However, the provision for pupils with special educational needs is not as good as it was. The effectiveness of the governors and the quality of financial planning have not improved.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	B	A	E	E*
writing	B	B	E	E*
mathematics	C	B	E	E*

*Key A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; E\* - very low  
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals  
(Caution is required in interpreting the data. In years when there are 10 or fewer pupils, results may not be wholly reliable.)*

**The achievement of pupils is satisfactory.** Children usually enter school with average abilities but this varies from year to year because of the small numbers of pupils. The children in the current Reception class entered school with above average ability. As the teaching is good, children achieve well and are on course to exceed goals expected of them by the end of the year. Pupils in Year 2 had well below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in the national tests of 2003. All pupils achieved the expected level in reading and science, according to teachers' assessments, which was very good. However, no pupils achieved the higher level in reading, writing or mathematics. Standards in reading and writing have fluctuated in recent years but have been mostly above average. There was a significant dip in standards, because the year group contained a larger than average number of pupils with special educational needs. For the current Year 2, pupils' attainment is now average in most subjects. In English, however, they achieve well and have above average attainment in listening, reading and writing. By the end of Year 4, pupils also have average attainment in most subjects and maintain higher than average standards in English. Standards in swimming are good because of the school's determination that all pupils should swim regularly.

Higher attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as other pupils because expectations of their work are not high enough.

The school successfully promotes the personal development of pupils. **The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good.** Pupils have positive attitudes to work and behave very well. Attendance has improved over recent years and is now well above average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall.** Teachers encourage pupils and stir their interests. However, they do not take enough account of pupils' prior learning to plan work which enables all pupils to make consistently good progress. In English, however, teaching is good because teachers have higher expectations and allow higher attaining pupils more scope to exploit their potential. Teaching and learning are good in the Reception class.

The school has a satisfactory curriculum. All subjects are covered, but the time spent on swimming limits the time for subjects like geography and history, so standards are no better than satisfactory. Teachers enrich the curriculum well by planning interesting activities, such as museum visits and playing in a percussion band. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

The school provides effective care and support for its pupils. The school promotes well pupils' awareness of health and safety, and pupils benefit from very good relationships with teachers. Links with other schools and the local community are good. Links with parents are satisfactory. Parents are supportive of the school but the school does not inform them fully of how well their children are doing.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory.** The headteacher provides a clear direction for the school and promotes good teamwork among the staff. There are good systems for monitoring the school's progress, but the judgements are not objective enough. The school does not always spend its money wisely enough on current pupils by identifying priorities for development and allocating funds. The governors are supportive and hardworking, but do not check rigorously enough how well the school performs. They do not fully meet their statutory requirements because they leave out key information in the information for parents.

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

Parents have a good opinion of the school. They consider that teaching is good and that children make good progress. Parents are comfortable about approaching the school with problems, yet have some reservations about the quality of the leadership and management. The inspection team agrees that leadership and management, while satisfactory, is not as good as it could be. Parents think that pupils behave well, but they have some concern about possible bullying. The inspection found no evidence to support this. Pupils also have a positive view of the school and are happy there. Younger pupils feel behaviour could be better; older pupils feel that lessons are dull at times.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- to ensure that teachers plan lessons which meet the needs of all pupils.
- to use more effectively the information gathered from monitoring to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- to improve strategic planning to ensure that the governing body sets priorities which are clearly linked to financial planning and checks the school's progress more rigorously.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- to make sure that information for parents contains key information, including details of pupils' absence, sex education and financial planning.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Achievement is **satisfactory** throughout the school. Standards in English are above average and girls achieve better than boys. Standards in mathematics and science are average. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- standards in listening, reading and writing are above average by the end of Years 2 and 4.
- the achievement of higher attaining pupils is not as good as it should be.
- the development of children's personal and social skills in the Reception class is good.
- all pupils learn to swim well.

#### **Commentary**

1 Standards in the Foundation Stage are good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The standards that children have when they begin the Reception class vary from year to year, and are considered mostly to be average. However, children in the current class have mainly above average knowledge and skills. They are making good progress because they are being taught well by a temporary teacher. However, it is not clear whether the same teacher will teach the children, so it is very difficult to predict how well they will achieve by the end of the year. If the current good progress is maintained, then children are likely to exceed the goals identified for their age in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception year.

2 Children in the Reception class have good social skills. They are confident and keen to learn. Children listen and read well, and clearly enjoy a good story. They write their letters correctly and can count simple numbers accurately. The children understand about human life, how people change physically as they age, and they appreciate the wider world through landscape and glimpses of overseas locations. They have good co-ordination and play games well, and have good basic skills in art and design.

3 Pupils in Year 2 had well below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in the national tests of 2003. All pupils achieved the expected level in reading and science, according to teachers' assessments, which was very good. However, no pupils achieved the higher level in reading, writing or mathematics. Standards in reading and writing have fluctuated in recent years but have been mostly above average. This year, there has been a significant dip in standards, because the year group contained a larger than average number of pupils with special educational needs.

4 The current standards of pupils in Year 2 are average. This shows a clear improvement from last year but standards regularly vary, because of the small number of pupils in each year group. Pupils' attainment in speaking and mathematics is in line with national expectations. However, pupils have above average skills in listening, reading and writing because of the good expectations within teaching. These enable all pupils to achieve well and, especially, lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs. Pupils concentrate hard in lessons and they enjoy reading, both at home and at school. The structure of their writing is good. Pupils write in well-organised sentences, although the range of their vocabulary is only satisfactory.

5 Standards in most subjects are average. This includes science, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design, geography, history and religious education. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in these subjects, although higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they might. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for these pupils to develop their potential fully. It was not possible to judge how well pupils achieve or the standards they attain in design and

technology, music or physical education, because there was too little evidence available during the inspection.

6 Standards of pupils in Year 4 mirror those in Year 2 exactly. Standards in English are above average, apart from speaking which is average. Standards in all other subjects are average. However, too little work was seen in design and technology, music and physical education on which to make a judgement. The school's emphasis on swimming means that standards are above average by the end of Year 4. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils.

**Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes to school are **good** and their behaviour is **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are **good**. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is **good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- pupils have very good relationships with each other and with the staff.
- pupils are clear about what is right and wrong and their behaviour is very good
- pupils are friendly, courteous and considerate; they have a high regard for the feelings of others.
- teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and make decisions for themselves.

**Commentary**

7 From the moment children enter school, they are welcomed into a warm and caring community. Pupils feel comfortable and valued and, as a result, are happy to come to school. They relax in lessons yet concentrate well because they are keen to learn. Pupils play a full part, willingly answering questions and expressing opinions. Their attitudes to school have improved since the last inspection and are contributing well to learning.

8 Relationships between all members of the school community are very good. Staff are good examples for pupils, whom they treat with courtesy and respect. Teachers have very high expectations and so pupils' behaviour is very good. Pupils understand the school rules and abide by them. All pupils work well together and are encouraged to consider the feelings of others. They cooperate readily in lessons, taking turns and sharing equipment. There are times when older pupils help younger pupils, particularly at playtime.

**Exclusions**

*Ethnic background of pupils*

*Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	59	0	0

9 Pupils are very willing to accept responsibility. Even the youngest pupils have jobs, which they do conscientiously on a regular basis. Teachers miss opportunities, however, for pupils to use their initiative, to find things out for themselves, to set their own challenges or to make their own decisions. Children in the Reception class, for example, do not have enough chance to learn through independent play. The pupils' school council has recently been formed but has not been in place long enough to influence pupils' learning or to shape the development of the school. Pupils' social development is very good and as a result they cooperate and play very well with each other. They also raise money to help those less fortunate than themselves, sometimes through considerable personal effort, such as taking part in a 'Fun Run' to support a children's cancer charity. Pupils' moral development is good and this has a strong impact on their very good

behaviour. The spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory, and supported through planned opportunities in lessons and in assembly. However, teachers do not exploit all opportunities for pupils to reflect quietly on personal or wider issues. Pupils have a satisfactory awareness of culture. They are aware of the diverse nature of society through religious education and personal, social and health education lessons, but they have limited knowledge of cultures other than their own.

## Attendance

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (95.7%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.1	School data	0.2
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education that the school provides for its pupils is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The curriculum is satisfactory and there is good provision for personal, social and health education. The school takes good care of its pupils, and there are good links with the local community and other schools in the area.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**, except in English where they are good. In the Reception class, teaching and learning are also good. The temporary teacher in this class is giving pupils a good start to their school life so that they are on course to achieve well by the end of the year.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- very good relationships in classrooms mean that pupils behave very well and are eager to learn.
- teachers encourage pupils and praise their efforts, which raises pupils' self-esteem.
- teachers do not plan lessons skilfully enough to benefit higher attaining pupils.
- lessons have clear aims and teachers explain new learning well to pupils.
- teachers ask good questions of pupils to make sure they understand new learning.
- teachers use resources imaginatively to bring subjects alive.
- the pace of lessons is often slow and pupils do not always complete their work.

### Commentary

10 There is a positive working atmosphere in all lessons. Teachers care for their pupils and want them to succeed. As a result, pupils are respectful, considerate and sustain very good concentration. The older boys, for example, in a Year 3 and 4 English lesson remained rapt as the story of The Pied Piper unfolded. The teachers praise good involvement in lessons and hard work, and this motivates pupils well. Teachers insist that all pupils take part in discussions and ask good questions so that pupils understand their new learning more clearly. However, teachers do not vary the complexity of their questions enough to allow for the different abilities of pupils.

11 All lessons have clear aims so that pupils know exactly what they need to learn. In a Year 1 and 2 English lesson, pupils readily understood the kinds of verbs needed in a list of instructions. Teachers support pupils' learning well in English, especially, by providing precise targets for groups of pupils. One pupil knew, for instance, that he would improve his reading by taking more of a pause between sentences. These targets, though, can be too vague and then are much less effective. Another pupil, for example, thought his reading target was simply 'to read more'.

12 Teachers use learning resources well in order to strengthen learning. In a science lesson, pupils in the Year 3 and 4 class were able to develop their knowledge of magnets by creating their own board games with them. Teachers make good use of artefacts so that pupils have a clear picture of what they are learning. Postcards sent by the well-travelled Barnaby Bear give pupils in the Year 1 and 2 class a real appreciation of landscape in such diverse areas as Canada and Libya. Teachers give pupils opportunities to discover facts for themselves using reference books and the Internet, but often direct pupils' learning too much by providing worksheets with all the vital information on them.

13 Teachers' planning is unsatisfactory. Teachers make sensible use of recognised guidelines to ensure a good framework for learning. Unfortunately, they do not adapt these enough to the needs of all their pupils or make allowances for the different abilities of pupils. Teachers, therefore, tend to give identical work to all pupils. This is often challenging for less able pupils and those in the younger year group of the mixed year classes. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Teachers do not plan separate work but the teaching assistants provide effective support that enables pupils with special educational needs to achieve as well as other pupils. However, higher attaining pupils do not receive enough opportunity to progress at their own pace and to respond to more challenging work. Sometimes, the pace of lessons is slow and so pupils are not inspired to work flat out.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 20 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	1	7	12	0	0	0

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

**The curriculum**

The curriculum is **satisfactory**, but with **good**, stimulating opportunities for learning both in and out of lessons. The accommodation and learning resources are **satisfactory**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- there are good instances of enrichment.
- some subjects do not have enough curricular time.
- there is a good programme for health education.
- individual learning plans for pupils with special educational needs are not specific enough.
- the accommodation for the Foundation Stage is good.

**Commentary**

14 The curriculum is suitably broad but is not as balanced as it might be. The school rightly gives most time to the main subjects of English, mathematics and science. It also gives much more time than is usual to physical education, because of the whole morning spent swimming each week. This results in pupils being able to swim well but limits the time for other subjects such as geography and design and technology, so pupils' attainment in these areas is no better than average. The situation is worse for pupils in Years 3 and 4, since their working week is one hour less than the recommended minimum.

15 The curriculum has developed well since the last inspection. The literacy and numeracy hours are well established in English and mathematics and the school has adopted new guidelines for the other subjects and religious education. These have given a structure to learning and help pupils to learn systematically. However, teachers do not adapt these guidelines well enough to meet the needs of all their pupils. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is much better and gives children a good start to their school life.

16 Activities after school are satisfactory. They are extended to all pupils but it is only possible for the school to offer one session a week. As an addition, members of the local wildlife trust are helping pupils this term to develop their gardening skills. This broadens their knowledge of science, and raises awareness of environmental issues. Pupils participate occasionally in sporting competitions with other schools. The curriculum is further enriched by visitors to school and visits out of school. One exciting activity is the percussion band performance that pupils in the Year 3 and 4 class give at the Hexham Abbey Music Festival, after intensive and enjoyable training at school.

17 The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. There is good teaching of sex education and awareness of drugs and alcohol abuse, through physical education and science lessons. In addition, there are set times every week when pupils can discuss personal and wider issues. Staff exploit opportunities as they arise to reinforce learning about keeping safe and healthy and this reflects the good care and support the staff give pupils. The school is participating in a Healthy Schools Initiative and this is successfully promoting the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

18 The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. This means that it is not as good as it was at the time of the last inspection, mainly because the pupils' individual learning plans have targets that are too broad. There is no deadline to urge pupils to achieve their goals and no clear indication of which staff are involved. Nevertheless, support in lessons is usually good and ensures that pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates. Provision is good in the Reception class and ensures that the curriculum is accessible and appropriate.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. The support and guidance that teachers give to pupils is satisfactory. Pupils' involvement in their own learning is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- very good, trusting relationships are firmly established throughout the school.
- very good organisation prepares the children sensitively for entry into the Reception class.
- the school is safety conscious.
- the school does not monitor the action it takes regarding accidents.

### **Commentary**

19 Throughout the school, very good relationships are formed between pupils and staff. In this small community, staff know pupils very well and they are interested in their life beyond the school day. Pupils know who will help them if they have problems or concerns. The school has appropriate procedures in place to ensure the safety of pupils. All staff and adults who support school activities, such as swimming and visits out of school, know these. Pupils are aware of relevant safety issues.

20 The school makes sure that children in the Foundation Stage have a smooth start to school. In the term before they start in the Reception class, children visit the school regularly. This enables them to grow in confidence and acquire a sense of belonging. Very good relationships are formed and flourish from an early stage. The very good liaison with the village pre-school means that teachers can effectively build on what has already been taught. Parents are pleased with the way children are introduced sensitively into school life.

21 The school makes sure all accidents, which take place in school, are reported correctly in an accident book. However, the school does not always ensure that any subsequent actions are also recorded.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with the community and other schools are **good**. Partnerships with parents are satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- pupils benefit from good links with the village and local organisations.
- there is good liaison with other schools, especially the village pre-school and the adjacent middle school.
- information for parents is not as thorough as it should be.
- parents have a good opinion of the school.

### Commentary

22 Pupils' learning is strengthened by their contact with the local and wider community. All pupils write poems to celebrate the annual village leek show and some pupils enter their own prize specimens. The older inhabitants of the village are invited for school functions, such as Nativity plays. The local wildlife group runs a gardening club with pupils. All Year 3 and 4 pupils have a wonderful opportunity to perform live with percussion at the Hexham Abbey Music Festival.

23 The school has good relationships with other schools. Pupils play in local sports tournaments and pupils in Years 3 and 4 will shortly receive rugby training alongside the pupils from the first two years of the middle school. Pupils are able to use the large ICT facilities at the middle school and, occasionally, teachers from the middle school give lessons to older pupils. There is good communication with the local pre-school. Staff communicate well about children's abilities so that they are able to settle in quickly to the Reception class.

24 Parents think well of the school. They particularly appreciate the high expectations that staff have of their pupils. They support their children at home with reading or spelling, and feel that the school gives the right amount of homework. A few parents are very active in the school, helping in lessons and running the Parent Teacher Association. However, parental interest in supporting their children's work is not always strong. Only seven parents attended a recent workshop to learn how numeracy is taught.

25 Pupils' annual reports give a clear indication of their progress. However, they do not say whether pupils are doing as well as they should be or specify what pupils need to do to improve. The school prospectus is informative but incomplete. There is no mention of the work in the Reception class, although there is a separate booklet. The school does not inform parents of their right to withdraw their children from sex education lessons or report the level of attendance so that parents can compare them with the national average.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory**. The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are satisfactory. However, the governance of the school and the management of its finances are unsatisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- the improvement since the last inspection has been good.
- the headteacher has a clear sense of direction and promotes good teamwork among the staff.
- the governors do not guide the development of the school enough and monitor its progress.
- the governing body does not ensure that financial planning is closely matched to the identified priorities of the school in order to support their development.
- the systems of monitoring have been strengthened but are not rigorous enough.

## Commentary

26 The headteacher has done well to develop the school since the last inspection. The curriculum is more structured, the teaching is gradually improving and standards have been sustained. The headteacher has introduced good systems to check the quality of teaching and to judge how well pupils achieve. As a result, teachers are regularly observed in lessons and pupils' test results are analysed satisfactorily. However, the conclusions drawn are not objective enough or acted upon decisively. For example, the school has known for some time higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should, but too little has been done to remedy the situation.

27 The headteacher has a satisfactory vision for the future development of the school. The emphasis on raising standards is very sensible. Some of the plans that the school have are sharp and well-focused, and should have an impact. The school is shortly to have its own computer room, for instance, and it intends to ensure more independent learning opportunities for children in the Reception class. Some of the plans, though, are too vague and humdrum to help the school develop apace. Reviews of planning and learning resources, for example, are useful but are routine practices and do not relate directly enough to the current needs of the school.

28 The headteacher has created a very positive atmosphere in the school. The staff work well as a team and support each other well. The long-term temporary teacher in the Reception has not only felt very welcome but has also received a good deal of valuable support and training. This has meant that much of the teaching in her class is good. The headteacher ensures that pupils feel valued and comfortable, so that they are keen to come to school. As a consequence, the level of attendance has improved.

29 The governance of the school is unsatisfactory. The school has had some difficulty in recruiting governors in recent times. The current governors are very supportive of the school and give willingly of their own time to undertake training and observe the work of the school. They do not, however, question the school's development objectively enough to make sure that all decisions are best for the school. They do not double-check that all the information for parents contains all that it should. For example, a report on the school's financial situation is required in the annual report to parents. The governing body sets sensible targets for the headteacher's performance, but does not insist that all teachers' targets are sharply enough defined.

30 The school's financial planning is unsatisfactory. The school does not link its spending skilfully enough to the proper development of the school. It has been slow, for example, to establish a computer room which would have almost certainly benefited pupils earlier. The school's action plans are not clearly costed so that it can forecast and maximise its spending. There is an excessive surplus of funds, some 28 per cent of the total income, and there are no specific plans to use this to raise the standards of the pupils. The governors are keen to keep funds in case pupil numbers fall but their own figures show that this is unlikely in the near future.

### ***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	151,075
Total expenditure	135,702
Expenditure per pupil	2,300

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	23,487
Balance carried forward to the next	38,860

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

31 The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Children usually enter school with average abilities and achieve satisfactorily. By the time they begin Year 1, they achieve the early learning goals identified for their age in all six areas of learning. Attainment on entry fluctuates from year to year because the school admits small numbers of children each year. This year the children entered school with above average skills. The temporary teacher is teaching well in all areas of learning and most children are on course to exceed all their early learning goals by the end of the year. Children with special educational needs achieve as well as others in the same year group. The overall provision has improved since the last inspection because the school has ensured a better balance to the curriculum. There is, however, still significant room for improvement by giving children more time in all areas of learning, and more scope to find things out for themselves. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. A notable feature is the very good liaison with the local pre-school which supports a smooth transfer to the Reception class.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The provision for children's personal development is **good**

#### **Main strengths and weakness**

- relationships between adults and children are very good.
- children are happy to come to school and they are keen to learn.
- there are insufficient opportunities for children to use their initiative and make decisions.

#### **Commentary**

32 There are very good relationships between adults and children. The teacher sets a very good example for the children and creates an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in the classroom. The pupils are, in turn, eager to please her and grow in self-confidence and self-discipline. For example, they folded their clothes neatly before a physical education lesson and showed real patience in a dice game because they knew their turn would come. However, children do not have enough chance to develop their own independence, for example, in setting out and putting away equipment.

### **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

The provision for communication language and literacy is **good**

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- children listen intently to what is being said to them.
- children are developing a love of literature and are keen to learn to read books on their own.
- opportunities are missed for children to write independently.

#### **Commentary**

33 Children have good listening and concentration skills, which support all their learning. They listen carefully to what is being said to them and respond well to questions and instructions. They are very focused when sharing books with an adult and their enjoyment is obvious. They discuss stories enthusiastically and recall details well. They are developing good reading skills, and use picture clues and letter sounds to help them read unfamiliar words. One pupil with special educational needs, for instance, knew that 'Tuesday' rhymes with 'away'. Parents give good support to the reading programme at home, and the reading diary is effective. Letter formation is well taught,



so most children form letters correctly. They can all write their own name. and they have the confidence to correctly write simple three-letter words.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The provision for mathematical development is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- children respond well to high levels of expectation and challenge.
- children understand and use mathematical language well.
- there are limited opportunities for children to investigate and use numbers through play.

### **Commentary**

34 Children investigate number successfully when guided by their skilful teacher. They are at the early stages of simple addition. They roll two dice, for example, and accurately count the total number of spots. They can count up to 100 in tens and accurately identify two dimensional shapes, such as circles and hexagons, according to shape and number of sides. Children respond well to a high level of challenge because the teacher makes learning exciting, and uses complex instructions. Children's thinking skills are effectively extended by the good questioning skills of the teacher.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

The provision is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- children have a good understanding of healthiness.
- children do not find things out for themselves enough.

### **Commentary**

35 Children are aware of basic health. They appreciate which food and drinks are good for them and that they have to be very careful with medicines. They are well aware of how people change as they get older, and how they have changed since they were babies. Children explore their own surroundings and can point out buildings, trees and hills. They are aware of a wider world beyond Bellingham. Postcards are sent to them from a variety of interesting locations by Barnaby Bear. On computers, children know how to use the mouse to control the cursor and they print their own work.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for physical development is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- children respond well to the challenges they encounter.
- the outdoor play area is not used as effectively as it might be.
- accommodation for the children is generous.

### **Commentary**

36 Children show a good level of self-discipline during lessons in the hall even when they are excited. They follow instructions carefully and use space well. They have good body control and

hand-eye co-ordination skills for their age and can, for instance, control a ball well. Children grow in confidence and respond well to the high expectations and praise of the teacher. However, they are not given enough opportunity to experiment with the apparatus and share their ideas. At playtime, it is a different story. Children make good use of the adventure play area outside and set their own challenges. They make good progress in other skills such as writing, cutting, gluing, and painting. Children show particularly good control of their pencils and, as a result, they form letters correctly.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

The provision is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- effective links are made with other areas of learning.
- good opportunities are provided for children to investigate colour and texture.
- not enough time is devoted to this area of learning.

### **Commentary**

37 Children are good at using sponges, brushes and printing with shapes to explore the world of colour. Leaves and textiles help them to learn more about textures through collage. Most creative activities support learning elsewhere and this puts learning in context. For example, children made small duck puppets to illustrate the “Five Little Ducks” story, then created a play and investigated subtraction. However, there is not enough time provided in the week for children to develop fully their creativity.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- there are good standards in listening, reading and writing by the end of Years 2 and 4.
- the teaching of basic literacy skills is good and so most pupils achieve well.
- work is not always planned carefully enough to challenge higher attaining pupils.

### **Commentary**

38 The standards of pupils are above average because of the good teaching in the school. Pupils usually begin school with average skills in language. The standards they reach by the time they leave school mean that they have achieved well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils. Both standards and teaching have improved since the last inspection.

39 Pupils learn well because teachers produce positive atmospheres in lessons. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that pupils are relaxed yet attentive, and they sustain concentration well. Teachers ask good questions to help pupils understand new learning. Pupils in the Year 3 and 4 class, for instance, had to concentrate hard to find out what ‘guilders’ might be in the story of the Pied Piper. As a result, pupils develop good listening skills. Teachers encourage all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to take part in discussions. This ensures that pupils have at least satisfactory speaking skills. They respond well to questions but are not used to phrasing questions for themselves. Their vocabulary is sound but not broad, although higher attaining pupils are often very precise. ‘I found it difficult to draw an irregular hexagon,’ said one pupil in a Year 1 and 2 mathematics lesson.

40 Teachers teach essential skills well. For instance, they highlight how to use initial letters and accompanying pictures to help pupils in Years 1 and 2 read unfamiliar words. Teachers use resources well to bring learning alive and motivate pupils. One teacher hid key words in a brightly coloured 'Big Book' with yellow labels to encourage pupils in the Year 1 and 2 class to suggest suitable verbs for a list of instructions. Teachers appreciate pupils' contributions, so pupils feel valued and, therefore are keen to learn. Teachers listen to pupils read regularly and advise them on how to improve. Consequently, pupils enjoy reading a variety of books and achieve good skills in reading.

41 Teachers encourage pupils to be creative in their writing. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have the opportunity to conjure up their own fantasy stories, which promotes extended writing. Teachers enable pupils to produce well-structured writing, through clear explanations of grammar and punctuation. They are not insistent enough about good spelling and handwriting and so pupils' work is not always as good as it might be. Similarly, teachers do not plan lessons skilfully enough to cater fully for the needs of more able pupils. Nevertheless, they do provide more challenging reading books and scope for independent writing. This can result in imaginative language, as an excerpt from one Year 4 pupil's play-script shows:

Boggis (madly): How on earth can we catch the blighter?

Bean picked his nose delicately with a long finger.

Bean (slowly): I have a plan.

42 The co-ordination of English is good and has improved well since the last inspection. The school has established a systematic approach to checking the quality of teaching, which has led to better training. Teachers increasingly assess test results to learn where pupils need most support. In this way, the school has responded to the fact that boys do not achieve as well as girls by introducing more suitable reading material, for example. It is too soon, however, for these initiatives to have had much impact.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

43 Teachers develop literacy satisfactorily through other subjects. Pupils have the chance in every lesson to improve their speaking and listening through discussions. In good lessons, this involves technical language, such as 'dynamics' and 'rhythm' in music. Teachers encourage pupils to read and write about topics in geography and history but do not expect high enough standards of accuracy in spelling and neatness in handwriting.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The provision is **satisfactory**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- some of the elements of teaching are good.
- teachers' plans do not take sufficient account of the ability of all pupils.
- pupils in Year 1 are challenged well.
- lessons run at a fairly slow pace.

### **Commentary**

44 Pupils have average standards by the end of Years 2 and 4. This shows a distinct improvement since the time of the last inspection. Pupils achieve satisfactorily, including pupils with special educational needs, as the quality of teaching is essentially satisfactory. More able pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they should.

45 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but there are some good features. Teachers create a relaxed yet focused atmosphere so pupils want to learn. Teachers extend this by using

good strategies, like games involving mental agility, which succeed in capturing pupils' interest. In a Year 1 and 2 lesson, for example, pupils eagerly rose to the challenge of identifying such shapes as pentagons and octagons. The high expectations of behaviour mean that pupils work sensibly, whether in groups or on their own. However, the pace of lessons is sometimes too slow and, as a result, pupils do not work at as brisk a pace as they should.

46 Teachers' planning is satisfactory overall. They plan well-structured lessons and explain their aims for the lessons so that pupils are clear about what they will be learning. At the end of lessons, teachers check what pupils have learned, reinforcing or investigating issues as appropriate. However, teachers plan lessons according to the age of pupils not their ability. This tends to benefit younger pupils and lower attaining pupils, and is not effective enough for the higher attainers. In the Year 1 and 2 class, for example, Year 1 pupils have to work hard as they do the same work as pupils in Year 2. When in Year 2, though, the level of challenge is not sufficiently maintained and so achievement is not as good.

47 Teachers help pupils to improve by setting targets for improvement. These are useful in making clear to pupils what they need to learn next. The targets are not, however, based closely enough on how well pupils have already learned, and so they tend to be too broad. Similarly, when marking pupils' work, teachers are supportive and encouraging, but could do more in pointing out exactly where pupils have gone wrong and how they can put it right.

48 The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection but the quality of teaching has stayed much the same. The headteacher regularly observes teaching but not rigorously enough to boost its quality.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

49 Teachers make satisfactory use of mathematics to support other subjects. Teachers use number games on computers to help pupils become more skilful on the keyboard and with mouse control. In science, pupils use tables and graphs to show their findings clearly following investigations. Pupils have opportunities to experiment in art and design with two-dimensional shapes.

### **SCIENCE**

The provision is **satisfactory**

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- there has been an improvement in science investigations.
- higher attaining pupils are not challenged at a high enough level.
- assessments at the end of each study unit are good.

#### **Commentary**

49 Pupils reach average standards by the end of Years 2 and 4. This achievement is satisfactory and mirrors the situation at the time of the last inspection. Teachers now place much more emphasis on investigative work and so pupils are now more confident of carrying out fair tests for themselves. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils do not make more than satisfactory progress because the level of challenge is not consistently good enough. This is especially the case for higher attaining pupils who do not have enough regular opportunity to proceed at their own pace. Pupils with special educational needs, on the other hand, are well supported by classroom assistants and achieve as well as other pupils.

50 Teachers often have good expectations of pupils. This certainly applies to pupils' behaviour, which means that classrooms are peaceful and positive learning environments. Teachers encourage pupils to record their scientific findings appropriately and independently. They insist that

pupils label diagrams neatly and carefully. They enable pupils to extend their numeracy skills when recording temperature, making tallies, and converting information in table and graph form. Teachers enliven lessons and hold pupils' interest by using intriguing resources. In a Year 1 and 2 lesson, the teacher used a lucky dip bag full of healthy and unhealthy food to keep pupils on tenterhooks and focused.

51 Teachers assess well what pupils have learned at the end of each study unit. They use these findings to highlight areas of the curriculum that need strengthening, which is good. However, teachers do not use the information to pinpoint strengths and weakness in the work of individual pupils and so set new, effective learning targets for them. Nevertheless, teachers offer scope for pupils to develop as individuals. In a lesson on forces, pupils in the Year 3 and 4 class were able to invent their own games with magnets.

52 The co-ordination of the subject has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. This has led to the introduction of a new curriculum and pupils now benefit from a better framework for their learning. The school has also brought in good monitoring systems to check the quality of teaching and learning, although these are not yet sufficiently rigorous to have a real impact on pupils' achievement.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- pupils have competent skills on computers.
- ICT could be developed more through other subjects.

### **Commentary**

53 The subject has remained much the same as it was at the time of the last inspection. Standards by the end of Years 2 and 4 are average and the achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. The leadership and management of the subject and teaching are both satisfactory. It was not possible to observe any lessons during the inspection and so evidence has been drawn from teachers' planning, pupils' work and discussions with pupils.

54 Pupils have satisfactory skills on computers because teachers teach the basic skills soundly. Pupils are, therefore, able to use a keyboard confidently and word-process accurately, especially those in Years 3 and 4. They can edit text and print their work effectively. For example, pupils in the Year 3 and 4 class word-processed brief biographies of all the wives of Henry VIII. However, teachers do not teach Year 1 and 2 pupils to access programmes or save work for themselves. Pupils use the Internet to research topic work and they know how to send e-mails. Teachers have good expectations of junior pupils and sometimes provide challenging opportunities. For instance, pupils were involved in creating the school's website. They used a digital camera to record key aspects and prepared text for such activities as 'The French Club'.

55 Teachers provide a suitably broad curriculum. Pupils learn how to programme a floor robot, for example, and move around map features on the computer screen to simulate a town map. Pupils have also used computer graphics to design their own Christmas cards. Teachers do not, however, assess the progress of pupils very effectively. Pupils tend to receive the same level of work and this does not motivate more able pupils to achieve at their own pace.

56 Teachers have satisfactory skills but do not yet consistently plan to make ICT an intrinsic part of all learning. The school does not analyse any weaknesses in the subject with a view to further developments. The action plan for improvement is not very innovative. The school is about to have its own computer suite but this is a late development, compared to most other schools.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

57 Teachers promote ICT satisfactorily through other subjects. Pupils enjoy delving into the Internet in history lessons to investigate the gory details of mummification in ancient Egypt. In English, they word-process their own playscripts and, in religious education lessons, they make simple posters to advertise Divali. Nevertheless, teachers do not maximise such opportunities in all subjects, such as word-processing in geography or using computer graphics to display science findings.

### HUMANITIES

#### Geography and History

Provision in geography and history is **satisfactory**

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- teachers make topics interesting for pupils.
- pupils have good opportunities to discover facts for themselves.
- teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' writing and illustrations.

#### Commentary

58 There has been little change since the last inspection in these subjects. The standards attained by pupils are average by the end of Years 2 and 4 and the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The co-ordination of the subjects is also satisfactory. There has not been much recent emphasis on improving the subjects, but the school has introduced a new, more structured curriculum, which guarantees that all topics are covered. The school alternates the teaching of geography and history and so the report judgements are identical.

59 Teachers provide an interesting curriculum which motivates pupils. This is especially true of the pupils in Years 1 and 2. Teachers expect pupils to appreciate different cultures such as those in Tanzania and Kenya, and know the locations of places such as Libya, Canada and Blackpool. This is very challenging for Year 1 and 2 pupils and lower attainers have to work hard to produce effective written work. Teachers capture the interest of Year 3 and 4 pupils well. For instance, pupils in the Year 3 and 4 class visited the Hancock Museum, where artefacts from ancient Egypt inspired them to write about life after death. However, teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' completed work, so writing is not always detailed and illustrations are untidy. Only higher attaining pupils produce full, factual accounts.

60 Teachers encourage pupils to learn for themselves. In a study on the environment, pupils in the Year 3/4 class were expected to suggest ideas on how to improve the school grounds. One idea was to resurrect the greenhouse, to remove the danger of broken glass and use it for its proper purpose. Pupils also produced a graph of their findings on the variety of litter dropped around the school. However, teachers do not exploit all possibilities for developing other subjects through geography and history, such as literacy and art and design.

61 Pupils clearly enjoy both subjects because teachers bring them alive. In a Year 1 and 2 geography lesson, pupils were intrigued by the fact that French people eat goat's cheese and that the Monaco Grand Prix is run through the city's narrow streets. Year 3 and 4 pupils readily recalled the chance they had to explore a CD-Rom to research ancient Egypt.

#### Religious education

The provision is **satisfactory**

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- pupil's work is well presented and supports learning in literacy.
- opportunities are missed for pupils to find things out for themselves.
- pupils' work is not formally assessed.

### **Commentary**

62 It was not possible to see any religious education lessons during the inspection. Evidence was drawn from an analysis of pupils' work and teachers' planning, as well as discussions with pupils. The subject has improved significantly since the previous inspection because the curriculum is now satisfactory and pupils make steady progress. Pupils' attainment is now satisfactory throughout the school.

63 Pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of all the topics. Pupils are interested in this subject and discuss it enthusiastically. Following a visit to local churches, pupils in the Year 3 and 4 class animatedly recalled the features that impressed them. Pupils take a pride in their work and it is well presented in their book with appropriate illustrations. Writing is independent and allows pupils individual scope to produce work at a level appropriate to their own writing ability. Pupils' writing and discussion shows that they have listened intently to the teacher because they remember details and use some specific terminology. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, wrote letters to their teacher inviting her to attend the Hindu festival of Divali. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to work independently to find information for themselves and so develop their basic research skills.

64 The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is a clear focus on maintaining standards, but there is not an effective enough approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning further.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

### **Art and design**

The provision is **satisfactory**

### **Commentary**

65 No art and design lessons took place during the inspection. Inspectors, therefore, analysed work that pupils had already done this term and talked to some of them about it.

66 Pupils' achievement and attainment are satisfactory throughout the school. Year 1 and 2 pupils know how to mix colours and apply them carefully to their pictures, with good control of brush and paint. They can experiment with texture. For instance, pupils in the Year 1 and 2 class used sponges to create a spiky effect for tree bark in a picture of 'All Things Bright and Beautiful'. Similarly, pupils in Year 3 and 4 make satisfactory experiments with pencil techniques to produce line and tone pictures. They also produce good silk paintings. Pupils experiment with clip-art in ICT to create, for example, small posters on a religious theme.

67 The co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. The curriculum is broader than it was at the time of the last inspection. However, teachers do not assess the quality of pupils' work, so their teaching does not reflect the needs of the pupils well enough.

### **Design and technology**

68 There is no judgement on the quality of provision. The curriculum that pupils follow is satisfactory, but it was not possible to see any teaching or pupils' work.

## **Music**

69 It is not possible to judge the quality of provision for music. Two lessons were seen during the inspection but these focused almost entirely on rhythmic performance. There was too little evidence of other performance, such as singing. Pupils do not often sing in assembly, which does little to develop pupils' skills and their familiarity with hymns and songs. There was no evidence of how well pupils appreciate and compose music. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is based on a national course but is not well adapted to meet the school's own needs.

70 Pupils benefit from the chance to learn the guitar in extra lessons. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 gain considerable experience in playing together in a percussion performance at the Hexham Abbey Music Festival. Pupils clearly enjoy their music and respond very responsibly. In a percussion practice, for example, they concentrated hard to learn complex rhythms, and resisted the temptation to experiment on their drums while waiting for their turn to play.

## **Physical Education**

71 It is not possible to judge the quality of provision, because inspectors did not see any lessons during the inspection. Pupils attend the swimming baths every week for two terms of the year and, as a result, they make positive achievements. A lot of teaching time is used to promote this activity but the rest of the physical education curriculum appears to be covered. Within the school day, the curriculum is enriched because visiting coaches support learning in rugby and gymnastics on a half-termly basis. Cricket and running skills are developed after school in the summer. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and active, and has established strong links with other schools

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Personal, social and health education**

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- there is a strong emphasis on healthy living
- staff expect pupils to behave well and mix sociably with others

### **Commentary**

72 The school is a happy place. There is a real sense of camaraderie that pervades the classrooms, corridors and playground. Teachers show genuine interest in the welfare of the pupils and the pupils appreciate this. As a result, pupils value and look after one another. At break times, for example, pupils are lively but thoughtful and a lonely pupil is not lonely for long. The school extols the virtue of a healthy life, not just by eating well, but through exercise and outdoor pursuits, whether gardening or swimming.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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