

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BEDGROVE INFANT SCHOOL**

Aylesbury

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110282

Headteacher: Mrs. Barbara Capstick

Lead inspector: Mr. George Crowther

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> February 2005

Inspection number: 266395

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	3 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	398
School address:	Ingram Avenue Aylesbury Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP21 9DJ
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E-mail:	office.bedgroveinf@easymail.rmplc.co.uk
Website:	<a href="http://bedgrovetraining.co.uk">http://bedgrovetraining.co.uk</a>
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Nem Shah
Date of previous inspection:	21 <sup>st</sup> – 24 <sup>th</sup> September 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bedgrove is a very large infant school for boys and girls who are 3-7 years old. At the last inspection it was a First School, and has fewer pupils now because it no longer caters for Year 3. It has 335 pupils organised in 12 classes, and 63 children who attend part-time in the nursery. The school is situated on the edge of Aylesbury. Just less than half of the pupils live in the surrounding housing estate, and the rest travel from further afield. The school is very popular and heavily oversubscribed. It serves families from a range of social circumstances but, taken together, these are more favourable than the national picture. Although Buckinghamshire provides no school meals, for the purposes of comparing its performance, the school has been placed in a group of schools nationally in which eligibility for free school meals is below average. Overall, pupils' attainment when they start school is similar to that expected for their age, though there is a wide range of ability within each age group that varies from year to year. Twenty-two pupils, a well-below-average proportion, have been identified as having special educational needs. These are largely moderate learning needs, but a few pupils have physical needs. One pupil has a statement to outline particular special needs. The great majority of pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds, but there is a growing proportion from other backgrounds, particularly Indian and Pakistani. No pupil is at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.

Bedgrove is a Training School, which means it plays a leading role in the initial training of teachers, and encourages continued training for staff within the school and at other schools. It has Investors in People status, which recognises that it has good systems to support and train its staff. Since 2003, the school has gained two awards for curriculum innovation in the Foundation Stage (nursery

and reception). Recently, Bedgrove was the first primary school in England to gain a Challenge Award for the work it does with able, gifted and talented pupils.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18814	George Crowther	Lead inspector	Science, art and design, design and technology, music, physical education
9569	Jan Leaning	Lay inspector	
28069	David Mylroie	Team inspector	English, religious education, special educational needs
31192	John Stewart	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, geography, history
27714	Sheila Wilding	Team inspector	Foundation Stage

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Bedgrove is a very effective school** because it successfully sustains its many existing strengths whilst constantly seeking better ways to maximise pupils' learning. The very good quality of the teaching ensures pupils achieve very well. The friendly, purposeful atmosphere within the school, based on excellent relationships, creates a very positive environment for learning. Parents hold the school in exceptionally high regard. Very good leadership in all aspects of the school's work expects both staff and pupils to aim for high standards. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths are

- The headteacher leads the staff exceptionally well in seeking new ways to enrich pupils' learning
- High-quality teaching in many lessons helps pupils to learn very effectively
- Children get a very successful start to school in the nursery and reception classes
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and they behave very well because the school pays very good attention to their personal development
- The curriculum is very well planned, innovative and exciting, with outstanding opportunities for learning outdoors, both in lessons and at playtimes
- The school's involvement in many local and national initiatives enriches the education it provides

Since the school was inspected in 1998, improvement has been very good. Until 2004, the results of national tests for pupils in Year 2 were consistently high, and rising at a faster rate than the national trend. The weaker 2004 results are a reflection of that group of pupils rather than an indication that improvement has slackened. The school has dealt very effectively with the few, minor issues from the previous inspection, for example becoming a leading school in providing for pupils who are able, gifted or talented. Provision for pupils in the nursery and reception classes has improved markedly.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
Reading	A	A	A	C
Writing	A	B	C	D
Mathematics	A	A	A	C

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

Until 2004, results in national tests were well above average. Although the 2004 results in reading and mathematics were graded well above average, they were not as high as in previous years, which accounts for the average performance compared with similar schools. The 2004 results are not typical. The year group included fewer more able pupils than is usual for the school, and a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The fall in writing results, however, is more significant and the school has been tackling this successfully through its school improvement plan. Standards seen in the current Year 2 indicate that the 2005 results will be well above average.

**Pupils' achievement is very good.** When children join the nursery, overall attainment is normally about the same as expected for their ages. In the nursery and reception classes, children achieve very well. The 'indoor and outdoor curriculum' has a rich variety of interesting activities. Together with very effective teaching, this helps the children to succeed. Most children are on track to reach, and a good number should exceed, the goals expected nationally by the time they join Year 1. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils achieve very well, owing to very good teaching and a well-planned curriculum. Teachers make the learning interesting and challenging. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average. Pupils of all abilities, including those who have special educational needs, and from all backgrounds achieve equally well.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are fostered very well.** As a result, pupils are very keen to learn and they work hard in most lessons. They are very well behaved, both in lessons and around the school. Relationships between pupils and with adults are excellent. The school provides lots of opportunities that develop pupils' social skills and there is a strong emphasis on learning about right and wrong, but there are too few opportunities in lessons to develop spirituality. Attendance is excellent because both parents and pupils value very highly what the school has to offer.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is very good.**

**The quality of teaching is very good.** Learning for children in the nursery and reception classes is exceptionally well planned to provide a wide range of challenging experiences. The teachers use assessment very well to find out exactly what children need to learn next, and they support and extend learning very effectively. In Years 1 and 2, the quality of teaching continues to be very good overall. Very carefully planned lessons are taught in imaginative ways so that the pupils really enjoy their learning. Teachers have high expectations of the standards pupils can reach and set challenging tasks to help them learn very quickly. The pupils respond very well in lessons, working hard and with enthusiasm. Lively whole-class sessions capture the pupils' interest and teachers make sure that tasks are relevant and challenging for pupils of all abilities. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to pupils learning in most lessons.

The curriculum is very well planned and provides a very good range of work in most subjects for pupils of all abilities. It is enriched by the very good range and quality of activities outside lessons. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and checking on their progress are very good at a whole-school level. During most lessons, teachers adjust the difficulty of work effectively, based on their judgement about what pupils can achieve. The school provides excellent care and support for its pupils and has created an outstanding partnership with its parents. Links with the community are very good and those with the junior school are good and improving. The accommodation and resources for learning are excellent, and used very well to support pupils' learning.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management of the school are very good.** The headteacher's leadership is outstanding and she sets high standards for everyone. She has a very clear view of what the school needs to do to sustain the many high-quality aspects of its work, and she leads the staff very well in taking opportunities to improve even further. She is very well supported by key staff in leadership and management positions, who are responsible for pursuing initiatives that are further strengthening the school's work. Governors fulfil their role very effectively. They have considerable expertise, a very good knowledge of the school, and provide the right balance of support and challenge. Very good management ensures that any potential weaknesses in the school's work are identified quickly and dealt

with. Staff are very well supported in building their skills and many share their expertise with other schools. The day-to-day management of the school is handled very efficiently by the headteacher, the staff and the administrative team. All this has a very positive effect on pupils' achievement.

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

Parents have extremely positive views of the school and almost all feel that their children are doing very well. Many have chosen the school because of its good reputation. Pupils like the school, enjoy being here, find lessons interesting and fun, and know they are expected to work hard.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The inspection team found no significant weaknesses in the school's work.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is very good. In the nursery and reception classes, the combination of a very well planned and exciting curriculum, and very good teaching, enables the children to make rapid progress in developing their skills in all areas of their learning. Almost all the children in the current reception classes are on track to reach the expected standards by the time they join Year 1, and a good number should exceed them. Pupils continue to make very good progress in Years 1 and 2 and they achieve very well, particularly in English and mathematics. In these subjects, and in art and information and communication technology (ICT), standards in the current Year 2 are well above those expected for pupils' ages. Standards in science are slightly lower because the curriculum and the quality of teaching are not quite as strong. Pupils of all abilities, including those who have special educational needs, achieve just as well as others.

#### Main strengths

- Children get a very successful start to school in the nursery and reception classes
- Pupils achieve very well in English and mathematics because the quality of teaching in these subjects is very good
- The school makes very good provision to nurture the achievement of pupils who are able, gifted and talented
- Pupils who have special educational needs achieve very well because work is well matched to their needs and they receive very good support from the staff
- Pupils' achievement and the standards they reach have improved since the last inspection

#### Commentary

##### National test results and other performance data

1. Until 2004, results in the Year 2 national tests had been improving at a faster rate than for most schools. In reading and mathematics, the 2004 results were still described as being "well above the national average", but the school's score fell significantly. As a consequence, these results were average when compared with those gained by pupils in *similar schools*.\* In writing, the 2004 results were average, having fallen during the previous two years, and below average compared with similar schools.

\* 'Similar schools' are those with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals

##### Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.0 (17.6)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.0 (15.9)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.3 (18.3)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 113 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. A main focus for the inspection was to investigate the fall in the school's results and to find out whether it is related to weaknesses in the school's effectiveness. The overall dip in the 2004 results was caused by a year group that contained fewer more able pupils than is usual for the school, and a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs. This is well documented, including other test scores that enabled the school to compare these pupils with those in previous years. The junior school also reports that the year group is less able than others and is monitoring its progress. Adding to this evidence is the fact that the

team of teachers working with Year 2 last year is the same as in previous years, and largely the same as seen during the inspection. As the quality of teaching seen in the current Year 2 is very good, with some excellent practice, it is highly unlikely that weaknesses in teaching caused the dip in results. The fall in writing results, however, is more significant. The school has been tackling this successfully through its school improvement plan and the inspection found that standards have risen.

3. Also of concern were national comparative data showing that the 2004 Year 2 results were average compared with similar schools. This casts doubt on the school's view that pupils achieve very well. The grades (in the Summary) are calculated according to the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, but Buckinghamshire does not provide school meals. In the absence of these data, the school has been placed in a group that compares its performance with schools in the most affluent areas of the country, which is a harsh comparison. The grades do not match with the very good quality of education inspectors found in the school. An analysis of the school's own value-added data shows that the 2004 Year 2 pupils made very good progress during their time at the school, considering their starting points in the nursery and reception classes.

4. Children start nursery with attainment that is average overall. The standard of work seen in Year 2 represents very good achievement in English and mathematics. Very effective teaching in these subjects, and a very well planned and organised curriculum, mean that pupils make very good progress at each stage, building their knowledge, skills and understanding very well. Achievement is good in science, with some relative weaknesses in pupils' experimental skills and in the recording of work in Year 2. The very positive environment for learning, with high expectations of what pupils can achieve, plays a significant part in giving each child the confidence to be successful.

#### **Foundation Stage** (nursery and reception class)

5. Children achieve very well in these classes. They are settled, confident and positive from the very beginning, owing to excellent induction procedures. The wide range of high quality activities, extended well by the 'indoor and outdoor curriculum', stimulates the children's learning. The quality of teaching is very good, providing just the right mix of challenge and support to help the children get the most from their work. As a result, the children are very keen and confident learners and very well prepared to join Year 1.

#### **Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2**

6. Pupils achieve very well in all aspects of English because the teaching is imaginative and challenging, and the curriculum is organised so that all aspects of the subject – speaking, listening, reading and writing – are taught harmoniously, each contributing to the other. Pupils' handwriting sometimes lacks care. In mathematics, pupils achieve very well because the teaching is challenging and lively, and so pupils enjoy their lessons. In both these subjects, very good leadership continually seeks ways to improve the quality of pupils' learning, which makes a strong contribution to what they achieve. In most other subjects, pupils' achievement was at least good in the lessons seen because the curriculum is planned very thoroughly and teachers have good skills and subject expertise. In ICT, achievement in the lessons seen was satisfactory, owing to failures in equipment and teachers' relatively weak subject expertise, but other evidence shows that standards in Year 2 are much better than expected for pupils' ages.

#### **Able, gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs**

7. Since the previous inspection, when more able pupils were said to make too little progress, the school has made great strides in its provision for those who are able, gifted and talented. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are taught in ability sets for English and mathematics. This works well and enables teachers to ensure that work is appropriately challenging. Special 'master classes' for talented pupils in subjects such as art and music encourage

excellence. A recent Challenge Award, the first for a primary school in England, recognises the quality of the school's work in this area. There is also an expectation that pupils with special educational needs will achieve very well. These pupils do very well in lessons because teachers plan their learning carefully, and make sure they are well supported. They often reach standards higher than might be expected, bearing in mind their individual needs. During the inspection pupils were seen working in small groups and with the whole class. In all cases they carried out the same activity as the rest of the pupils but adapted to meet their individual needs.

8. At the previous inspection, pupils' achievement was good overall. Pupils' achievement is now very good across the whole school, which is a marked improvement since the last inspection. The school is not complacent and recognises that there are some aspects of pupils' work and some subjects where it can strive for even higher standards.

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

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are very good. They are supported by very good behaviour. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including multi-cultural awareness, has improved since the previous inspection and is now very good overall. Attendance is excellent, and in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Unauthorised absence is well below the national average. Pupils come to school eagerly, regularly and on time.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' very good attitudes and strong motivation support their enjoyment of lessons and their learning very well
- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is very good
- Pupils praise the excellent relationships they have with the staff and are confident that any adult will help them
- Pupils' personal development is very carefully monitored, but there are too few opportunities in lessons to develop spirituality

### **Commentary**

9. Pupils are very happy to come to school and attendance is excellent. In a calm and friendly atmosphere, pupils work hard and are really keen to learn. They settle very quickly to work, listen carefully and concentrate very well on their tasks. This supports their very good achievement. For example, very well motivated pupils in a lively and demanding Year 2 art lesson produced some exceptional pastel work, which was photographed for discussion and evaluation. Pupils are very proud of their school and understand the expectations, which are very high. Analysis of pupil and parent questionnaires indicates a very high level of satisfaction with all that the school has to offer.

10. Pupils' very good behaviour is encouraged very successfully by the rewards system, which they value highly. There have been no exclusions in the past year. Pupils understand the rules. For example, they are confident that any bullying incidents will be dealt with very quickly. One girl was delighted to be 'star of the day' and all pupils welcome the weekly celebration assemblies when they proudly display their work. The 'golden rules' are prominently displayed in each classroom, and the playground is a place of excitement and stimulation, which greatly enhances pupils' social skills. The variety of opportunities and equipment for pupils of all ages is outstanding. Very skilful adults engage the pupils very successfully in a wide range of activities and this contributes very well to the pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

11. All adults in the school set a very good example founded on courtesy and respect. Pupils say that teachers make learning fun and as one boy said, "It makes me try my best." Throughout the school, praise is used very effectively to build confidence and encourage

pupils of all abilities. Pupils listen carefully to each other and work very well together. They have very clear ideas about right and wrong, about fairness and justice, and they develop mature attitudes for their age. Pupils say their teachers are fair and kind and the adults know them very well. Staff are generally alert to pupils' learning needs, take their views seriously and do their best to support them.

12. Pupils' personal development is fostered very successfully through the personal, social and health education programme, which encourages independence. Visitors, such as those who came to the 'Indian day', support the curriculum very well, and pupils study the religions and cultures of other faiths in religious education. Art, music and dance, as well as other creative activities, are used to raise awareness of the cultural and multi-cultural dimension. Opportunities for pupils to develop spirituality have improved since the last inspection and are now good but in some assemblies and lessons the pace is business-like with few opportunities for reflection. Pupils support many charities, including two local ones and understand that there are people less fortunate than themselves. The school council has been set up recently. It is aimed at giving pupils a voice and a real understanding of how democracy works. A delegate told me he was, "... excited because they could share things with each other."

13. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to nurture pupils' attitudes and values very effectively. As a result, pupils' very eager approach to learning and their very good behaviour make a very positive contribution to their achievement.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.2	School data	0.0
National data	5.1	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**

Pupils achieve very well because the school provides a very good quality of education, which has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The pupils thoroughly enjoy their work and learn quickly because the quality of teaching is very good, sometimes excellent, in a high proportion of lessons. A very carefully planned curriculum, catering very well for the needs of pupils of all abilities, provides a rich variety of activities. Teachers assess pupils' progress very effectively, so that work can be targeted to help pupils take the next step in their learning. The school cares for its pupils exceptionally well. Parents rate the school very highly. Staff and parents have an outstanding partnership, and there are very good links with the local community. Good links with the junior school are improving rapidly.

**Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching and learning is very good throughout the school, particularly in the nursery and reception classes, and for English and mathematics. In other subjects, where a judgement could be made, teaching is at least good. As a result, pupils' learn enthusiastically in most lessons and make very good progress. The very good quality of much of the teaching provides a good role model for all the staff and enables teachers to share their expertise with other schools. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection.

**Main strengths**

- Lessons are planned with great care so learning is always purposeful and very well organised
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and are fully involved in their work because teachers use an excellent range of methods and strategies to encourage learning
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, so the work in lessons is usually challenging and designed to help the pupils progress rapidly
- The excellent relationships between staff and pupils result in the pupils being very confident and highly motivated to learn
- Teaching assistants support pupils' learning very effectively
- Teachers use their assessments of pupils' attainment very effectively to identify and target the next steps in learning

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (14%)	18 (49%)	11 (30%)	3 (8%)	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 table shows the quality of teaching in the lessons observed by the inspection team. The high proportion of lessons where teaching and learning were judged to be very good or excellent underlines the high quality of teaching across the school, with a similar pattern found in each age group. Compared with the national picture\*, the statistics place the school in the top 12 per cent of primary schools for the quality of its teaching and hence the pupils' learning.

\* Data taken from *The Annual Report of HMCI 2003/04*

15. Teachers' meticulous planning of lessons is one way in which they make sure pupils' learn very well. Clear and detailed plans give teachers the confidence to teach at a good pace, and in an interesting and methodical way. For example, a very good Year 1 science lesson about sound was exceptionally planned to build on the pupils' existing experiences. They had already been on a 'sound hunt' and identified the different sounds they could hear around the school grounds. In this lesson, the teacher wanted the pupils to make the link between sounds and vibration, a difficult concept for young children. By planning a lesson that reviewed the pupils' previous learning, and then provided a wide range of practical activities to investigate how sounds are made, most children grasped the idea. As with many lessons, planning within a team of teachers improves the quality of pupils' learning. In this case, the lesson was planned by the Year 1 team and had already been taught by a colleague, and so the plans had been refined to make sure the pupils got the very best from the activities. Similarly, in a very good literacy lesson for a reception class, it was the teacher's very careful planning that enabled her to match the work to the varying needs of the children. Work stemming from the story of *The Three Little Pigs* helped some children to improve their writing skills whilst the focus for others was on strengthening their speaking and listening skills. The very good range of planned activities created opportunities for the staff to extend the children's literacy skills very effectively. Throughout the school, a strong emphasis on teachers evaluating the success of their lessons contributes well to future planning, and to the general aim of continually improving the quality of teaching and learning.

16. Pupils' enjoyment of lessons, and hence their motivation to learn, is much enhanced by the very good range of methods and strategies teacher use in their teaching. Most lessons start with a whole-class session, in which teachers are very skilled at quick-fire questioning, with paired and individual activities that really get the pupils thinking. For example, in an excellent English lesson for Year 2, the teacher wanted the pupils to focus on the way in which speech is used and punctuated in stories. She read the first part of a story and then posed specific questions – "What do you think the character said?" – to which the pupils wrote their answers on small white boards. This ensured they were all involved and gave the teacher considerable feedback about their understanding. In many lessons, teachers use 'talk partners' to help pupils discuss their learning. The pupils really enjoy this technique and often contribute good ideas as a result of the opportunity to discuss their

thoughts with a friend. Most lessons also include some individual or group work in which pupils work independently, or with some staff support, to carry out a task. Because this work is almost always interesting, and matched well to pupils' needs, they are successful. For example, in a very good art lesson for Year 2, the pupils were prepared well for a task drawing in pastel a detailed portion of a toy they had brought in from home. As a result, with a little help from the staff, they made very good progress and produced work of high quality. Varied approaches to learning ensure that all pupils have an equal chance to benefit from the very good quality of the teaching, whether they learn best in a whole-class situation or need individual support. Teachers strike a very good balance.

17. The pattern of learning in the nursery and reception classes is very stimulating for the children. The staff use a wide range of methods, working with groups of children for part of the time, and providing a rich variety of activities pupils can choose for themselves. For example, during an excellent session in the nursery, groups of children learnt how to use a simple drawing program on the computer, experimented with painted footprints, made envelopes and greetings cards, played a game matching words to pictures, or learnt how to make pancakes. All the children were very involved in these activities, which moved forward many aspects of their learning. Daily, purposeful use of the outdoor resources for learning extends the activities the staff can offer, particularly in the physical and creative aspects of the curriculum. As a result, teaching and learning for the youngest children is of high quality and staff from other schools visit to see it in action.

18. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement because they know what pupils are capable of learning and they want all pupils, in line with their ability, to do as well as possible. This is evident in lessons when teachers ask challenging questions and set challenging tasks. For example, in a very good mathematics lesson for Year 2 about multiplication, the teacher posed the question, "How do you know that a number is a multiple of 6?" which prompted much discussion. Teachers listen to, comment upon and refine pupils' thinking very skillfully. In Years 1 and 2, for English and mathematics lessons, pupils are organised in sets according to their ability, which helps teachers to make the work appropriately challenging. Within these sets, however, teachers still ensure that work is well matched to the needs of groups of pupils, always providing tasks that are suitable for the less able, the average and the more able pupils. A good example of a very enjoyable but challenging task was when Year 2 pupils were thinking about how to describe characters in their writing. The teacher asked them to role play some of the characters from *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, which led to them suggesting a very sophisticated range of vocabulary to enhance their writing. On occasion, because teachers want to challenge pupils sufficiently, the work is too difficult, as when Year 2 pupils were asked to plan a science experiment but did not have the skills to do so independently.

19. All the staff have built excellent relationships with their pupils, which support learning very effectively. They show their interest, concern and care in the way in which they treat the pupils, listening to their ideas, boosting their self-esteem, and sharing in their successes. This creates an atmosphere of mutual respect in which pupils are willing and enthusiastic learners; it enables teachers to manage and organise pupils' learning very effectively. Strategies to ensure that pupils pay attention, get on with their work and, therefore, make as much progress as possible are very effective. As a result, there is a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Discipline is almost always positive, highlighting pupils who are doing the right thing so that others fall in line. The work of teaching assistants is a very important strength in most lessons. They work with individual pupils or small groups, supporting learning very effectively. A good example was a mathematics lesson in a reception class when the teaching assistant's very good skills ensured that a group of less able children understood the properties of two-dimensional shapes. Teaching assistants also play a valuable role in assessing how well pupils are doing and contributing to lesson evaluations.

20. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and checking on their progress have improved since the previous inspection and are now very good. At a whole-school level, a very good range of testing and analysis of results ensures that teachers have clear information about pupils' attainment at a given point in time, particularly in English and mathematics. The school is currently refining its procedures for tracking pupils' progress over time. The use of day-to-day assessment is very good, with numerous examples in the lessons observed where teachers gathered information about how pupils were coping with the work, adjusted the challenge during the lesson, or made notes to

contribute to future lesson planning. In English and mathematics, teachers give pupils targets that identify what needs to be learnt next, but the pupils are not always clear what their targets are. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is generally very good. It is thorough, encouraging and helpful. In many cases, it identifies clearly what pupils need to do next to improve their work.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is very good. The school provides an exciting and innovative curriculum that extends pupils' learning very effectively. It is challenging and very well adapted to meet pupils' needs. The curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection due to the development of the outdoor curriculum. This has made a particular impact on the quality of learning in the nursery and reception classes. A very good range of learning opportunities outside lessons enriches the curriculum effectively. Accommodation and resources are excellent.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very well planned curriculum provides for all pupils and for all aspects of their development
- Outstanding opportunities for learning outdoors, both in lessons and at playtime, enrich pupils' learning considerably
- The curriculum in the nursery and reception classes is excellent
- Provision for nurturing pupils' personal, social and health education is very good
- The school does not make enough links between subjects in its day-to-day work

### **Commentary**

21. The curriculum is very well planned for throughout the school and teachers frequently make evaluations to ensure that it is meeting their pupils' needs. The use of themed weeks, which have developed physical, musical and cultural knowledge and skills, ensures that the curriculum is further enriched. During these weeks, very good links are made between subjects. The school is aware that these effective links need to be developed further, on a day-to-day basis, so that pupils can make connections between different subjects. For example, there are opportunities to use and develop pupils' literacy skills that are not fully capitalised upon. Professionals, parents and the community support the school with their expertise, and pupils enjoy visits from story-tellers, puppeteers and a sculptor. The striking totem poles in the school grounds are a good example of the way in which a talented visitor has extended the pupils' skills in art and design. A very good range of extra-curricular activities, provided through a variety of clubs, further enhances the curriculum.

22. All pupils enjoy an excellent range of outdoor facilities which include gardens, activity areas, seating, climbing walls and provision for a range of games. Opportunities for drama are made through the use of an outside amphitheatre and stage. These resources have a significant impact on pupils' learning because it becomes fun, practical and relevant. The outdoor curriculum is used exceptionally well in the nursery and reception classes to develop children's skills across all the areas of learning. The curriculum in these classes is planned to enable all pupils to use the outdoor areas extensively every day so that learning is always active. The outdoor curriculum has been extended to the Year 1 classes, particularly in the autumn term, to help the pupils adapt more readily to the increased formality of the National Curriculum. This innovative approach to curriculum development has been recognised nationally, and the school shares its excellent practice across the county.

23. The curriculum for English and mathematics is particularly good because it effectively helps pupils grasp basic skills and make very good progress. For Years 1 and 2, lessons are organised in ability groups and this is very effective in ensuring that work is well

matched to pupils' needs. Other areas of the curriculum, such as art and ICT, are particularly strong. For example, in art, lessons focus on developing particular skills, such as working with pastels, and then encourage the pupils to use these skills in more expressive work. The effectiveness of this approach is clear in the high quality art work seen. The school takes great care to ensure that all aspects of pupils' development are catered for, not just the academic, through its very thorough programme for personal, social and health education. Year 2 pupils are given expert guidance on drugs and alcohol education by professionals from outside the school. Provision for more able, gifted and talented pupils is very good and this has been recognised by a national award. The school is one of four schools nationally piloting further developments in this area. Pupils gain from challenges in English, mathematics and master classes, as well as in other curricular areas during themed weeks.

24. Pupils who have special educational needs and pupils from all backgrounds achieve very well because their needs are quickly identified. Work for them is challenging and well planned to meet specific learning needs. Teachers devise simple but effective targets for learning and include these in an individual education plan. As a result, all the staff who work with these children know exactly what they are trying to achieve. These pupils are involved in all lessons and in all that the school has to offer. They benefit well from the overall curriculum provision of the school and especially from the very good range of after school activities. In most lessons, they are very well supported by skilled teaching assistants and nursery nurses who are well trained and are used very effectively to support both individuals and groups of pupils. The school has a good level of well-qualified teachers and an excellent induction system to ensure all staff are very well trained and supported in their own learning.

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

The school's provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is excellent. Pupils are given very good support, guidance and advice. Processes to seek pupils' views and act on them are very good.

#### **Main strengths**

- Pupils are extremely well cared for and this helps them to achieve to the best of their ability
- Systems to track pupils' personal development are very good
- Excellent procedures to introduce pupils to the school ensure they are quickly settled and confident
- Pupils' views are respected and acted upon

#### **Commentary**

25. All adults in the school show excellent care for pupils, ensuring that they work in an environment that is sympathetic, safe and healthy. Parents rate this aspect of the school's work very highly in their responses to the questionnaires and in discussions with inspectors. At their meeting, parents said, "It's a very caring school." Teachers and support staff provide very sensitive care for all pupils, especially when they have emotional, personal or medical problems. They know the pupils very well and relationships in the school are excellent. Pupils know there is always someone



that they can go to if they need help or advice. Teachers show pupils respect and treat them all equally and fairly. The school extends this attitude when providing extremely good support for parents and staff who may be experiencing difficulties.

26. Providing pupils with a healthy and safe environment is of prime importance to the school. Child protection procedures are very clear and all staff are aware of what to do in case of an incident. The school has very good links with outside agencies to support pupils who have specific educational or emotional needs. Regular checks are made to ensure that there are no health and safety issues around the school building and site, and any problems found are quickly rectified. For example, an outside wall with climbing grips is being re-positioned because it is too near a fume vent. Many members of staff are trained in emergency first aid and the school caters very well for pupils with special medical needs.

27. The great majority of parents confirm that they are very pleased with the school's procedures to help their child to settle in when starting school. Parents are made very clear about these, as the school shares the expectations outlined in the handbook with parents before the pupils enter the school. Pupils and parents are invited to visit the school for a half day to help pupils to get to know the school before joining. Likewise, transfer days help pupils moving from reception into Year 1 and from Year 2 to the junior school. This excellent provision when pupils are moving between classes and schools helps to ensure that they do not lose time for learning through unnecessary worrying.

28. The school has very good systems to check on pupils' progress. Twice-yearly assessments, in October and May, check on the progress pupils are making in English and mathematics. Teachers use these assessments very well to adjust the work given to pupils. All pupils have half-termly learning targets in English and mathematics, but these are not yet fully effective. All pupil records, including those for pupils who have special educational needs, are updated twice a year. Consequently, class teachers have very good knowledge of their pupils' academic and personal progress and plan work that is suitable, enabling all pupils to achieve to the best of their ability. The school keeps details of medical and other confidential records very safely.

29. The school makes considerable efforts to seek the views of pupils and give them the opportunity to say how they think the school could be improved. Although the school council is at an early stage, 'circle time' (when pupils gather in a circle to share their thoughts) is used very well to enable pupils to discuss selected topics and air their opinions. Pupils' views have been listened to and acted upon by the school. For example, the school has an excellent range of outdoor facilities and equipment that were provided by parents, but chosen according to pupils' preferences.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has an outstanding partnership with its parents. They appreciate the very good teaching, regular and effective communication and the school's welcoming approach. Links with the local and wider community are very good and significantly enhance pupils' learning opportunities. Many other schools benefit from their association with Bedgrove, and good links with the junior school are developing rapidly.

#### **Main strengths**

- The school recognises, values and responds to the very strong support it gets from parents
- Parents are very appreciative of the school and praise the very good information they receive, which successfully helps them to help their children
- Very good links with the community and good links with other schools and colleges enhance pupils' learning and support and extend the work of the school

#### **Commentary**

30. The school places great store in the importance of working closely with parents and strives to maintain its excellent links with them. Although focused on the children's learning,

the staff are very approachable and respond very promptly to any concerns raised. The very successful parent/teacher association has raised very large amounts to support the school's activities. Last year, as well as providing blinds for the classrooms, £12,000 was given for the computer suite. Parents and members of the community who help in school are a valuable asset because they are given clear information about what is expected of them. A tea party is held each year to thank them for their hard work.

31. Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with the care and education their children receive. Discussion and the questionnaires identify deep satisfaction. About 120 parents attended the meeting before the inspection, which is a far higher number than in most schools, and indicative of the great interest and wholehearted support most parents have for their children's education. These parents were very positive about what the school provides for their children. Curriculum evenings, including a very successful numeracy evening, and discussions with teachers are very well attended. Newsletters and information about pupils' progress are sent out regularly. All the required information is contained in the clearly presented governors' annual report to parents and the school prospectus. The use of target setting and homework enable parents to help their children very well at home. Detailed annual reports provide information on what their children have achieved and suggestions as to how they could improve.

32. The school has received many awards for its links with the local and wider community. Visitors are invited into school and share their skill and expertise very effectively. The local football club provides coaching, a sculptor holds workshops at which some colourful totem poles were produced, and a number of theatre groups have been welcomed. The pupils' experience has been enriched by creative dance workshops, an interactive drumming group, star puppets and by a 'world music group' among others. The school offers young people opportunities for work experience, and elderly folk are presented with parcels at Harvest time. At Christmas they are invited to watch the production and enjoy a tea party. The community supports the school's fund raising and other events very well. Local clergy are invited in and police and the fire service visit to support pupils' learning about keeping safe.

33. Good links with the on-site junior school include the usual meetings and visits. Records are passed on to ensure that transfer is smoothly managed. The school has Training School status, and is the lead school in the Westminster College/Oxford Brookes University partnership. It has very good links with the cluster of local schools and is used by the local education authority to organise courses. These and many other many external initiatives ensure that the school is at the leading edge of developments both locally and nationally, and confident to be so.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The headteacher's leadership of the school is excellent. She expects high standards and also provides staff and pupils with considerable support in reaching them. She is very well supported by the deputy and other key staff. Governors are very effective in their work. Management of the school is very good, with some excellent features, because all aspects of its work are organised and checked on very effectively.

### **Main strengths**

- The headteacher's exceptionally clear view of how good the school can be, and well-formulated plans for future development, lead the way in making the school very effective
- Senior staff support the headteacher very well because they share her vision and play a crucial role in seeing through initiatives to raise standards

- Aspects of the school's work are regarded very highly, both locally and nationally
- Governors make a very good contribution to the effectiveness of the school because they understand its strengths and weaknesses and are fully involved in planning for the future
- Excellent systems ensure that new members of staff are inducted extremely well

## **Commentary**

34. The school is exceptionally well led by a very knowledgeable and far-sighted headteacher. She is very skilled in motivating and challenging the staff and pupils to aim for excellence. She has a very clear vision for the school and is determined that it sustains and builds upon its happy, caring and challenging learning environment. As a result of her dedication and that of the rest of the staff, the school is going from strength to strength. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good because the school has tackled each point for development, in many cases far exceeding the level of improvement that might have been expected. For example, rather than just strengthening the provision for more able pupils, the school has pursued wholeheartedly an initiative to ensure that all the able, gifted and talented pupils are challenged, and this work has been recognised nationally. All members of the school community are involved in drawing up very effective plans for school improvement. These have clear objectives, related to costs, and identify who is responsible for implementation and how success will be judged. A good example of the way in which the school sees through its plans very effectively is the way in which standards in writing have risen recently because the staff identified a weakness and tackled it systematically.

35. The headteacher is very good at delegating tasks and responsibilities for leading the school. This has resulted in very effective staff teams being built up and emphasises a shared responsibility for success. The senior leadership team shares the headteacher's vision for the school and is committed to continuing to raise standards. Leadership of the Foundation Stage and of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs is outstanding. Some subject leaders are new in post and have not yet had time to implement strategies for raising standards. The example set by leaders in subjects such as English and mathematics means that those new to their responsibility have a very good model to develop their work.

36. Very good support is given to all members of staff through a carefully thought out plan for continued professional development. This is based on the needs of the school, raising standards and personal development. One aspect of particular note is the way the school spots talent and nurtures it through the Training School initiative. For example, staff who were teaching assistants at the school have taken teacher training and are now teachers in the school. This commitment to getting the best out of its staff is the reason the school has an Investors in People award. Its work as a Training School spreads far wider than its own staff, with student teachers and staff from other schools benefiting from the very good practice and expertise at Bedgrove. The headteacher knows how motivating it is for staff to be involved in such work. The skills of the teaching assistants are highly regarded by teachers, parents and pupils. They are well trained and support all pupils very well with their learning, especially those who have special educational needs.

37. The governing body makes a very significant contribution to the life of the school and does a very good job. Its members are an integral part of the school community and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Through rigorous questioning of senior members of staff and through careful planning, they play a leading role in moving the school forward. Governors have very good relationships with the staff,

striking the right balance of friendship and accountability. The governing body has a good range of experienced members, all of whom have received training and are keen to develop their role further, particularly in continuing to build up good relationships with the junior school. Whilst all governors understand their roles well, and they know the developments that are taking place in school, they do not have rigorous enough strategies for monitoring the effectiveness of initiatives.

38. The management of the school is very good and has some excellent features. Excellent systems ensure that new members of staff are welcomed to the school and quickly understand what is required of them. This is achieved through spending time in school during the term before starting work, along with a system of more-established members of staff working alongside those new to the school. The school also contributes extremely well to the training of teachers through its links with Oxford Brookes University and Westminster College where teachers often go to lecture the trainee teachers. The school has a number of Advanced Skills Teachers who support work in other schools. The school is well known for its expertise and very good practice, so the recruitment of new staff is made easier, as there is always a pool of staff who want to work there. The school is very well thought of locally, within the local educational authority and nationally. It is also well ahead of others in implementing the government's scheme for cutting down the workload of teachers through redirecting the work of other members of staff.

39. The school has very good financial routines, which are overseen by the governors' finance committee. For example, after careful consideration, the school decided to buy its payroll and human resources services from outside providers rather than using those of local education authority. This has resulted in an efficient service being offered to members of staff. The school also has very good procedures for ensuring it gets best value for money. It has clear financial routines which are followed, consults parents and pupils regularly, and continually compares its standards with other schools.

40. Since the last inspection, the leadership and management of the school have improved considerably. As a result, the effectiveness of the school has been strengthened and the standards achieved by pupils are much better than they were. But the school is not satisfied with this. Its effectiveness stems from it not being satisfied with existing high standards and wishing to be even better.

***Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	894,942
Total expenditure	893,693
Expenditure per pupil	2,245

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	8,320
Balance carried forward to the next	9,569

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

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

41. Provision for the children in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception classes) is very good. When children join the nursery, overall attainment is normally about the same as expected for their ages, with a wide range of ability within each age group. The children make very good progress during their time in the nursery and reception classes because of the very good teaching, a first-rate curriculum, and excellent resources and accommodation. All these contribute very effectively to promoting children's learning. Achievement is very good in all areas of learning because the challenging activities ensure that most children reach the standard of which they are capable. By the time they enter Year 1, most children reach the learning goals expected nationally and a good number exceed them.

42. Teaching is very good for all areas of learning, with some excellent practice. Meticulous planning, lively interaction between staff and children, and a close attention to the needs of individuals result in children making very good progress in lessons. The staff work well as a team to ensure that children learn very effectively both indoors and out. Assessments of how well the children are progressing are used very well to plan for the next steps in their learning. Due to early assessment and support, children who have special educational needs and those who may require help because English is not their first language make very good progress. Excellent induction procedures for children starting nursery, and when they move into the reception classes, ensure that they are quickly happy and working well in their new environment. Parents are kept very well informed about their child's progress.

43. Since the last inspection, there has been very good improvement in the areas that required development. The outside learning environment has improved considerably so that it enriches the children's learning very effectively. The excellent curriculum is lively, practical, innovative and very well planned to meet the children's needs. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are excellent. All the staff are very well supported so that they can plan and teach practical and relevant activities which make learning productive and fun.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is very good.

#### **Main strengths**

- Excellent induction procedures help children to make a rapid and productive start to learning
- Relationships between children and staff are excellent
- Very well established classroom routines enable children to feel secure and confident

#### **Commentary**

44. Excellent induction procedures ensure that parents are fully involved in their child's education from the very beginning. Children join the nursery and reception classes in small groups so that they receive individual attention from staff. Children make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development because excellent relationships with staff are established quickly. Consequently, children settle well, are happy

and enjoy coming to school. In the nursery, many children play alongside rather than with their peers, but they co-operate effectively. In the reception classes, almost all the children work and play together very productively. Children behave very well because routines and rules have been very clearly explained. They concentrate very well when they work independently because of the very good modeling of activities by adults. The excellent curriculum, resources and exceptional outdoor environment ensure that children enjoy learning and are very well motivated. The practical nature of these activities, both indoors and out, ensures that the children are very engaged in their learning. Literacy and numeracy targets are clearly displayed for all groups of children so it is clear what they are learning.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

Provision in communication, language and literacy is very good.

#### **Main strengths**

- Speaking and listening skills are nurtured very well
- Reading is promoted very effectively through stimulating book corners and attractive books
- Writing is made purposeful and interesting

#### **Commentary**

45. Staff develop children's language skills very effectively through an emphasis on speaking and listening. Children are given frequent opportunities to develop their listening skills. For example, with their eyes closed, they listen to and count the total beats on a drum. Speaking is very well taught through the use of drama. Children use the imaginative play areas, both inside and out, to re-enact simple stories with the use of masks. They make very good progress because adults model sentence structure and actions for them to copy. Children enjoy reading and writing and often choose to do so when they are given a choice of activities, stimulated by a very good range of writing corners, interesting books and story tapes. Children see a reason for writing because activities are purposeful. For example, after reading the traditional story, they enjoyed making a poster to warn the little pigs of the big, bad wolf. Children achieve very well because they are provided with banks of words and letters to support their writing. In the nursery, children are beginning to write their own names, and in the reception classes they are beginning to read and write common words. Older children are encouraged to write independently using their knowledge of letter sounds.

### **Mathematical development**

Provision in mathematical development is very good.

#### **Main strengths**

- Practical activities make learning fun
- Good use of displays reinforces learning

#### **Commentary**

46. Children make very good progress in this area of learning because the very good teaching challenges them. Teachers use questioning very skillfully to extend children's mathematical thinking and they plan a very good range of activities to reinforce learning. In the nursery, lots of tasks, such as counting, sorting and looking at shapes, develop children's understanding very effectively. Mathematics is woven successfully into a wide range of activities. Children are encouraged to count confidently and, gradually, they are challenged to record numbers on number lines and squares. In the reception classes, children are beginning to use addition to ten, and for some children to twenty. Activities continue to be practical, such as when children enjoyed learning to add numbers by making jumps to music. They are asked to double numbers and some children start subtraction. Children learn about the properties of various two-dimensional shapes by making them out of straws, playing shape games and sorting them into different sets. Children are challenged to explore irregular triangles as well as using regular shapes. Displays reinforce what children are learning and

they use number lines inside and outside the classroom to help them count. Mathematical games support children's learning well.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is very good.

### **Main strengths**

- Children's understanding of the world is enriched by visitors to the school
- The outside environment is used very well to promote this area of learning

### **Commentary**

47. A very wide range of activities and very good teaching ensure that children make very good progress in this area of learning. They dress up and act out the roles of other people and discuss who might wear particular footwear and why. Visitors from the fire brigade and the RSPB help to extend the children's knowledge about the world around them. Teachers make very good use of stories to link this area of learning to literacy. For example, after reading the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, children planted beans and are now watching them grow. Biscuits were made after the story of *The Gingerbread Man*, and pancakes were rolled out from play dough and tossed on Pancake Day. Children enjoy using the computers and often do so independently to further their understanding in other areas of learning. Most can use the mouse for themselves and they are taught specific skills to enable them to make further progress. In the nursery, children explored the use of a drawing program by using different colours and repeated patterns.

## **Physical development**

Provision in physical development is very good.

### **Main strengths**

- The outside area is excellently designed and very well used to promote the development of physical skills
- Teachers plan the specific use of tools and teach the skills required effectively

### **Commentary**

48. Children make very good progress with their physical skills. They are given frequent opportunities to use a wide range of resources, including a variety of wheeled vehicles. They pedal and push these around a well-marked road track with road signs. Large climbing and clambering apparatus, with climbing wall, slide and tunnel, give children further opportunities to develop their large muscles. Children also enjoy using hoops and balls, including throwing balls into a net attached to the wall. Fine manipulative skills are developed through opportunities to form letters and patterns on large surfaces with a range of media, including large chinks and paint. The development of these skills helps children with their more formal handwriting in the classroom. Other specific skills such as cutting, sticking and folding are taught so that children can make their own models independently.

## **Creative development**

Provision in creative development is very good.

### **Main strengths**

- Children experience a wide range of planned creative activities
- Displays celebrate children's work

### **Commentary**

49. A wide range of children's own creative work is on display, which values it and provides an attractive environment in classrooms. The excellent range of resources and very well planned curriculum enable the children to achieve very well in this area of

learning. Children enjoy participating in musical activities by singing, developing rhyme and rhythm, and by making their own compositions with pots and pans. They are taught about the different sounds musical instruments make. Very good teaching ensures that the children use a range of media to develop their creative skills. They make patterns and mix colours. Children in the nursery enjoyed making printing patterns by walking through paint in their wellington boots. Children have very good opportunities to draw and paint independently, but are also taught a range of skills. These include how to spray and flick paint and how to fold, roll and curl paper. Children play creatively in the role play areas, and they also make up their own stories using small toys or large cardboard boxes in the outside area. These activities also support their literacy development effectively.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is very good.

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

- By Year 2, standards in all aspects of English are much higher than expected because very good links are made during lessons between the various elements of the subject
- Pupils achieve very well because the teaching is imaginative and challenging
- Very good leadership and management gives teachers effective support in promoting high-quality learning
- The Primary Strategy for Literacy has been adapted very successfully to meet the needs of the school and its pupils
- Inconsistencies in the activities planned for some lessons result in pupils in the same age group not being given a similar level of support to carry out tasks

#### **Commentary**

50. The results of the 2004 Year 2 national tests in reading were well above average, maintaining the high standards over the previous three years. In writing, the 2004 results were average, and weaker than those gained by similar schools, having fallen since the previous year. This was not the result of weaknesses in teaching, but owing to the year group containing a lower than usual proportion of more able pupils and more pupils with special educational needs. Nonetheless, the school has taken effective action to raise standards in writing.

51. Standards in the current Years 1 and 2 are higher than last year. They are well above those expected for pupils' ages in speaking, listening and reading. This is because pupils are taught very well and given a wide range of opportunities to practise their skills in both of these aspects. Standards in writing are slightly lower, but are still well above national expectations. The school recognises that the difference in standards is an issue and has taken action to tackle this through promoting the links between reading and writing, and teaching them together through speaking and listening activities. This has raised standards in writing because pupils are learning to use language as a whole and not the different elements in isolation. The well above average standards also result from the school taking the requirements of the Primary Strategy for Literacy and adapting them to meet more exactly the needs of its pupils. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection and, taking into consideration children's attainment when they start nursery, the pupils achieve very well during their time at the school. Pupils who have special educational needs also achieve very well because they are fully involved in all lessons and, when needed, are given very good support.



52. The quality of learning and teaching is very good. This is also supporting the well above average standards and pupils' enthusiasm for and enjoyment of their work. Pupils learn to speak to a variety of audiences and are confident and articulate when talking about their work in class, both with adults and with each other. Speaking and listening skills are particularly well developed through drama. They are also promoted well during lessons where pupils are often involved in discussions and are encouraged to frame and ask their own questions. For example, in a Year 1 science lesson, the teacher used discussion and questioning very well to ensure that the pupils used the correct vocabulary in their work on sound.

53. Reading and writing are also taught very well throughout a range of activities. Pupils develop a love of reading. Through a variety of reading and writing tasks, they build their skills in predicting what might happen next, drawing conclusions from what they have heard, and discussing characters in a story. Skills learnt during writing lessons are employed well in the wide variety of independent writing assignments carried out by the pupils. In some cases, however, pupils' work is spoilt by handwriting that is difficult to read.

54. Where teaching is very good, occasionally excellent, outstanding relationships between staff and children, the teacher's very good command of what is to be taught, and interesting activities capture pupils' imagination and ensure they make very good progress. Teachers use questioning effectively to lead the pupils to a greater understanding of what is being taught. In the majority of lessons seen 'talk partners' were used very effectively in order to give pupils time to consider their answers and to discuss their work. In one or two lessons, learning was not as successful because opportunities were missed for this sort of activity. The quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work is also very good. It is clear and understood by the pupils. They are given positive feedback and told how they can improve their work in the future. On the whole, lessons are very well planned. There are times, however, when weaknesses in planning result in pupils in the same age group not being given similar levels of support in order to carry out the task required of them.

55. The subject is very well led and managed, with a very clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning, and what needs to be done to improve provision still further. Management provides very good support for staff in planning their lessons, and has used the school's very good assessment procedures to identify future areas for development, especially in improving standards in writing. Observation of lessons has supported the school in developing the quality of learning and teaching. All these factors have contributed to the rising standards. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. The quality of teaching, the organisation of the curriculum and the thoroughness of assessment have all been strengthened.

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

56. Pupils' literacy skills are beginning to be promoted well in other subjects. For example, in Year 2, pupils used the vocabulary of direction very well during a mathematics lesson. However, opportunities to use literacy skills in other subjects are often missed. The school has identified this as an area for future development.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is very good.

#### **Main strengths**

- Pupils achieve very well and reach well above average standards because the teaching is very good and the curriculum is very well organised
- Lessons are very well planned so that tasks are enjoyable and well matched to pupils' needs
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour in class enable them to learn very effectively
- Very good leadership and management provide a clear vision for further improvement, supported by strong procedures

## **Commentary**

57. The results of the 2004 Year 2 national tests were well above average, as they had been for the past three years. They were in line with those seen in similar schools, and the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 was average.

58. Standards in the current Year 2 are also much better than those expected for pupils' ages, representing very good achievement by all pupils, as they enter the school with average attainment overall. Most Year 2 pupils have a very good grasp of calculations with two-digit numbers, including the use of money. More able pupils use their very good skills well in mental, practical and written tasks. For example, they have good knowledge of multiples and calculate mentally problems such as, "Find the nearest multiple of 5, to 10 more than 137". Their knowledge of place value is very well developed and they calculate quickly answers to verbal problems such as, "What number is 1, 10, 100 more/less than ....?" Most pupils have very good knowledge of shape and space, using directional vocabulary confidently. They have very good understanding of simple fractions and can divide shapes into equal parts. The great majority of pupils are working at the level expected at the end of Year 2, and many are exceeding that standard.

59. In Year 1, pupils also achieve very well. The great majority of pupils read, write and order numbers to 20 and have very quick recall of number bonds when adding and subtracting to 10. For example, less able pupils answer questions such as "What do I need to add to 6 to make 10?" Key words are used effectively to support their learning of mathematical vocabulary, for example when following instructions to place objects next to, above, or below other ones. More able pupils have a very good grasp of number to 100 and calculate, using tens and units, accurately. They measure accurately using standard units and know the characteristics of 2D shapes.

60. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are very well planned with a clear structure of progressive tasks. They start with lively and enjoyable whole-class mental tasks that immediately engage pupils. As a result, pupils are very enthusiastic and keen to share their answers, as shown by the high number of hands up when questions are asked. In a very good lesson in Year 1, the teacher displayed a number line on the interactive white board (a big screen linked to a computer) and pupils used their knowledge of subtraction to help a teaching assistant count back to solve problems. The pupils were very keen to correct her intentional mistakes and explain how to do the sum properly. The humour used by the teaching assistant was very effective and pupils clapped when she eventually got the correct answer.

61. Relationships are excellent and teachers show respect for pupils' answers. They encourage pupils to participate and, when they make a mistake, ask them to work with their 'talk partner' to help provide a correct answer. Teachers have very high expectations and, consequently, pupils display very good attitudes and behaviour when working in pairs and small groups. In all lessons, teachers introduce new topics with very clear explanations so that pupils gain understanding of strategies to help them to complete their work. The practical nature of many tasks enables pupils to participate fully, maintain their concentration and, thus, learn very effectively. Pupils also complete worksheets and learn to set out calculations formally. In one lesson seen, however, the worksheets

were confusing, and so pupils did not follow the instructions clearly, thus slowing their learning a little.

62. Teachers, very ably supported by teaching assistants, provide enjoyable and varied tasks that offer suitable challenge and enable pupils to achieve very well. In one lesson seen, however, tasks were too repetitive and the teacher did not provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to work independently once they had grasped the concept. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and comments often help them know what they need to do to improve. Very good use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning. For example, less able pupils use the computer suite daily to help consolidate their learning of number bonds and shape and space.

63. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a clear ambition to enable pupils to achieve as well as possible. The school has a very clear knowledge of what is done well and what needs improving. As a result, very good support for teaching and learning is provided through staff training. Assessment procedures are very good, and so the school is very clear about the progress made by pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good because the school has recognised the need to provide more investigative and practical work in order to give pupils better challenge and more understanding. High standards have been maintained and the quality of teaching and learning has improved.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

64. Pupils' use of mathematics in other subjects is good. They gain knowledge of time and use graphs in history. There are very clear links between mathematics and ICT. In science, pupils in Year 1 record their findings in tables when sorting and measuring. Pupils in Year 2 measure distances when investigating whether the longest legs jump furthest, but mathematical skills are not developed systematically in Year 2 science work.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well because lessons include a good range of practical activities
- Good teaching builds pupils' knowledge effectively, but the development of skills is not systematic enough
- Teachers' shared planning of the curriculum improves the quality of pupils' learning in lessons
- Pupils enjoy their learning, particularly the practical tasks, and they work very well together
- In Year 2, pupils' recorded work does not provide a clear and organised picture of the progress they are making

### **Commentary**

65. Standards are about the same as at the last inspection. In 2004, teachers' assessments of Year 2 pupils' attainment showed that all reached the expected Level 2, which was far better than most schools. On the other hand, about a quarter gained the higher Level 3, which was below average compared with similar schools. Other assessment data show this group of pupils was less able than is usual for the school. Standards in the current Year 2 are better than expected for pupils' ages and more pupils than last year are likely to reach Level 3. Most have a good knowledge of science for their age, such as classifying materials into different types, knowing what happens to a range of materials

when they are heated, and understanding how people change as they get older. Pupils talk intelligently about scientific problems, for example discussing how to make an experiment fair by measuring carefully and making sure that everything is the same except the variable being tested. With help, they carry out simple experiments, for example answering the question, "Do the longest legs jump the furthest?" They predict what they think the answer will be, test a variety of children, record their results and reach a simple conclusion. There are, however, too few examples of this type of investigation in pupils' work, and so the skills of being a scientist, testing out questions and reaching conclusions, are not being developed systematically enough. The school has identified this as an area for improvement.

66. Pupils' achievement is good. When they join Year 1, standards are average. In Year 1, pupils' recorded work shows their knowledge of science developing rapidly, and they also build skills in carrying out experiments. In their work about living things, Year 1 pupils investigated the question "Are older children taller?" They measured the children in their class, compared heights with ages, and reached the conclusion that it is not true. In the Year 1 lesson seen, lots of opportunities to investigate sounds successfully reinforced the idea that sounds are made when something vibrates. In Year 2, the quantity and quality of pupils' recorded work is not as good, and it is kept with work from other subjects, which makes it difficult for management to track the progress pupils are making. Whilst it is clear from teachers' planning and discussions with pupils that they continue to make good progress, the skills of recording findings in a structured way are not being developed sufficiently. During Years 1 and 2, though pupils are generally given the same work, good support is provided for the less able pupils and sufficient extra challenge for the more able. This ensures that pupils of all abilities achieve well.

67. In the two lessons observed, the quality of teaching was very good in one and good in the other. Teachers review previous learning very effectively so that pupils understand how it relates to the next lesson. For example, in Year 2, the teacher led a lively discussion about how the pupils had ensured their previous investigation was fair because she wanted them to carry out a similar investigation and build on their existing skills. These sessions also provide teachers with valuable opportunities to assess pupils' understanding. Teachers explain new ideas clearly and extend pupils' thinking with challenging questions. They have good strategies to encourage pupils to share their ideas with others and with the class, and they listen carefully to what pupils have to say. In both the lessons seen, the practical work provided a very good vehicle for extending pupils' understanding. In Year 1, pupils used stethoscopes, musical instruments, tube telephones and a variety of other resources to investigate sound. Their enthusiasm and enjoyment were evident in the way they shared their discoveries with the adults who, in turn, reinforced and extended the pupils' understanding effectively. The recording tasks set by the teacher were, however, too difficult for many of the pupils. In Year 2, the pupils started very energetically on their investigation into whether the biggest hand would hold the most plastic blocks, but they did not have the skills to plan and carry out the experiment independently. Although the teacher had not anticipated this, perceptive assessment of how the pupils were progressing enabled her to intervene effectively to point out better ways in which they could approach the task. Pupils work together sensibly, using and developing their good social skills. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils create a happy and productive environment for learning.

68. The curriculum is good and covers all aspects of scientific knowledge thoroughly, but the way in which pupils build their skills in carrying out experiments and recording their findings is not planned systematically enough. As a result, there are too few examples in Year 2 pupils' work of experiments leading to conclusions that draw on what they already

know from their everyday experience of science. Joint planning, in year group teams, is a strength because teachers evaluate their lessons carefully so colleagues learn from successes and weaknesses. Science lessons are organised in blocks, which is a good way of ensuring that learning does not become fragmented. A recent change in the leadership of the subject is working well, and management is currently satisfactory, with an increasingly clear view of what needs to be done to raise standards. Pupils make some use of ICT, such as an impressive Year 2 computer presentation about an experiment with melting ice, but the use of ICT to support science work is patchy. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress are good. Resources are good and supported pupils' learning well in the lessons seen. The school recognises that, to build on satisfactory progress since the last inspection, improving pupils' skills in experiment and investigation is the main priority.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

69. Only two lessons were observed, so it is not possible to make a judgement about overall provision or the quality of teaching and learning. This report relies on evidence from pupils' work displayed in the classrooms, and discussions with staff and pupils.

70. Evidence from pupils' work on display confirms teachers' assessments that standards in Year 2 are well above average. For example, pupils know that information can be stored on CD ROMs and they have the skills to retrieve information using the computer. More able pupils use the menu and search bar effectively to access information about the solar system and dinosaurs. Pupils write very well organised stories using their word processing skills. They use internet research to further their knowledge about life in other locations. For example, they find out about the daily routine of a boy of their age in Africa. They also research events and lives of people from the past. In science, Year 2 pupils have produced a very good slide presentation, using a range of applications, when investigating melting ice. Pupils in Year 1 draw pictures about holiday locations using simple graphics programs.

71. In both the lessons observed, teaching and learning were satisfactory. Pupils' work suggests that teaching is normally better than this. In both lessons, relationships were very good, pupils were well managed and, as a result, they displayed good attitudes and behaviour. Teachers explained and modelled tasks well, but the resources provided were too difficult for some of the pupils. They achieved satisfactorily because of the support from the teacher and teaching assistant. In one of the lessons, system problems caused great difficulty and hindered progress.

72. Leadership and management are very good and have seen through considerable improvements since the last inspection. There are clear plans for further improvement. Teaching and learning are very well supported by a comprehensive scheme of work and, as a result of training, staff confidence and expertise are improving.

73. Since the last inspection, resources have improved considerably. They are now excellent and, as a result, pupils are making good progress in a wide range of skills. There are two computer rooms and every classroom has two computers for pupils to continue their work. There are also digital cameras, scanners, listening banks, colour printers, televisions and CD players in many classrooms. Interactive whiteboards in the majority of classrooms are beginning to be used to enliven and support pupils' learning. As yet, staff expertise does not match the quality of these physical resources.

## **HUMANITIES**

74. Only one lesson was observed in history, and no lessons were seen in geography or religious education. This pattern of observations was partly because none of these subjects

was a focus for the inspection and partly because, owing to the way the school organises the timetable, some subjects were not being taught during the inspection. As a result, it is not possible to make judgements about overall provision in any of these subjects. This report relies on examples of pupils' past work, teachers' planning and discussions with teachers and pupils. The overall picture is that pupils receive an appropriate curriculum in each of these subjects, and 'themed weeks' organised by the school inject a good deal of variety and depth into the work, particularly in geography and history.

75. In **geography**, wall displays show that pupils gain knowledge of human and physical processes in different locations around the world. Year 2 pupils use internet research to find out information about the daily routine of a boy of their age living in Africa. They also gain knowledge of hot and cold climates. A very imaginative display in one classroom includes letters written by Barnaby Bear as he travels to different holiday locations, telling of the climate and lifestyle. In Year 1, pupils gain knowledge of India and learn about the types of food, animals and musical instruments that are found there.

76. In the one **history** lesson observed, standards were above average. The teaching was very good and pupils learned and achieved very well. Pupils were given challenging tasks to find out about the lives of famous people in the past. They learned very well that information can be found from a variety of sources, and used books and computers to research. Pupils worked very well in pairs to find out about people such as Florence Nightingale, Queen Victoria and the work of Louis Braille when developing an alphabet for the blind. The teacher skilfully drew together pupils' findings at the end of the lesson and enabled them to gain more understanding of the passage of time and the order of historical events.

77. In **religious education**, pupils' work and teachers' planning show that the requirements of the Buckinghamshire locally Agreed Syllabus are being met. The amount of pupils' recorded work, however, is sparse, which suggest that the subject is not making sufficient contribution to developing pupils' literacy skills. It also makes it difficult for management to check on pupils' progress. Pupils are taught about a range of the world's major religions and are encouraged to understand the lessons that can be learnt from their different beliefs. The curriculum is enhanced by visits, such as one to the local Catholic church undertaken by Year 1. Teachers' planning for religious education lessons is very thorough. Leadership of the subject is very enthusiastic and is preparing to implement changes to what is learnt in line with the local education authority's new recommendations. Resources are good.

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

78. Inspectors observed one lesson in each of art and design and physical education, and none in design and technology or music. This pattern of observations was partly because none of these subjects was a focus for the inspection and partly because, owing to the way the school organises the curriculum, some subjects were not being taught during the inspection. As a result, it is not possible to make judgements about overall provision in any of these subjects. In art and design, a good selection of pupils' work was available from which to make judgements about standards. Teachers' planning and the views of subject leaders were also taken into account. The overall picture is that the school provides an appropriate curriculum for each of these subjects, with art and design being particularly strong.

79. Standards in **art and design** are much better than expected for pupils' ages, and have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Pupils experience a good range of

work, which helps them to build their skills very effectively. A good feature of pupils' learning is the way lessons are planned to focus on developing skills in using a particular medium before encouraging pupils to be more expressive. As a result, pupils have very good mastery for their age of materials such as paint and pastels, which is reflected in the high quality of their work. For example, in Year 1, pupils practised mixing shades of blue using primary colours and then painted sky backgrounds before drawing the outline of a 'winter' tree in charcoal. This work is much better than normally seen in Year 1 because of the variety and subtlety of the colours and the care taken with the painting. Another good example is pupils' weaving, in a range of materials, inspired by looking closely at different types of fabrics and the work of artists before completing the weaves.

80. In Year 2, observational drawings of teddy bears are of high quality, with pupils looking very carefully to include details that bring the drawings to life, and using skills with pastel they had practised earlier. The pupils use pastel in a variety of ways, with colours blended or pressure applied with the point to add detail, which shows that they are very confident in using the medium. A range of Year 2 art work is linked to their topic on Africa, with striking sunsets in pastel inspired by the paintings of Tony Hudson, water colours of African animals, and an impressive hanging of patterns from African cultures to which each child has contributed a tile. Almost all the pupils produce good work, which is why standards are much better than normally found. Gifted pupils have the opportunity to extend their skills, as seen in the African masks made during a 'master class'.

81. In the lesson seen, the quality of teaching was very good. Year 2 pupils were thinking about how artists decide on the view they are going to draw. Using a piece of card with a rectangular frame cut in it as a 'view finder', the pupils drew the detail from part of a toy they had brought from home. Very good explanation, demonstration and lots of support helped the pupils to make very good progress. The teacher built carefully on skills in using pastels the pupils had already been taught. Adults used digital cameras to show the pupils what their view might look like, which was a very imaginative way to support pupils' learning. Sketch books have been introduced recently in Year 1 and pupils are recording a good range of work in these, which is adding to their visual experience. Management of the subject is good, with effective support for teachers' planning and assessment, for example through the high-quality portfolio of pupils' work, which shows the standards pupils can reach. The development of work in art was given a high profile in the school improvement plan last year and the impact of this is clear in the quality of pupils' work.

82. In **design and technology**, there was too little of pupils' past work to make a judgement about standards, but the work seen is of good quality. In Year 1, pupils have been thinking about playgrounds and how the various rides work. They looked carefully at playground equipment, drew their own, simple designs, and then made swings, slides and roundabouts using a range of materials. In Year 2, pupils' work has focused on the theme 'Can buildings speak?' They visited Bedgrove Pavilion and looked at its design, the materials from which it is built and its function. They looked carefully at the textures of the materials and compared them with those used in the school building. Pupils then designed and made attractive clay tiles which might be used to decorate a building. These show an imaginative range of designs and good skills in making. Following the visit of a puppeteer, Year 2 pupils designed and made their own puppets. They practised sewing skills before cutting felt to fit their own hand using a template, and making their own puppets, depicting a range of colourful characters, such as a pirate captain. All the puppets are sewn well. Work seen throughout the school shows that pupils have a suitable range of experiences in designing, making and evaluating products. Specific skills are taught carefully so that pupils can make things to a good standard. The subject is planned in line with national guidelines and teachers' plans cover all required aspects and ensure skills are developed

systematically. Management has a clear view of the way the subject is developing and how it can be improved further. Resources are good.

83. In **music**, very little evidence was gathered. There are clear, detailed plans for class music lessons, taken by a specialist in each year group, which show that pupils have a good range of experiences. Pupils' singing in the assemblies seen was enthusiastic. They clearly knew the hymns well and they all joined in even though, at times, quality was sacrificed for volume. Pupils listen well to appropriate music as they enter assembly, and teachers point out the composer and the type of music to help pupils develop their musical knowledge. The school is fortunate to have a number of teachers with musical expertise, as seen when pupils' singing was accompanied by piano and flute in one of the assemblies. These teachers organise a choir and a recorder group for Year 2 pupils, and there are additional activities for talented pupils. Leadership of the subject is good, and keen to provide more opportunities for music making. Demonstration lessons for teachers and students help to boost staff confidence and expertise. Pupils' social skills are developed well through concerts and performances in school, which are much enjoyed by parents, and through sharing music with people in the local community. The school has good resources and facilities for music, particularly a performance hall.

84. In **physical education**, teachers' planning shows that the pupils have a suitable range of experiences. In the one lesson seen, for the whole of Year 2, teachers organised a range of activities on the field to develop a variety of games' skills. After an appropriate warm up, each class took their turn in a carousel of games, for example passing a football around a circle of children for the length of time it took one of them to run round twice. The pupils enjoyed the games but, owing to the scale of the activity, there was too little opportunity for pupils to practise and improve their skills individually. The lesson was managed well so that the pupils were kept active for most of the time.

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

85. No lessons were seen in this subject and there was no past work completed by the pupils that could be used to evaluate the standards achieved. As a result, it was not possible to make judgements about pupils' achievements or the quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum section of this report evaluates provision for pupils' personal, social and health education as very good.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### **Grade**

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
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	2

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	1
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	1
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
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	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
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).*