

INSPECTION REPORT

Highfields Primary School

Manningtree

LEA area: Essex

Unique Reference Number: 114769

Inspection Number: 182946

Headteacher: Mrs H Cook

Reporting inspector: Mrs E Pickford
23128

Dates of inspection: 15th - 19th November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707290

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Colchester Road Lawford Essex CO11 2BN
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Crabtree
Date of previous inspection:	May 1996

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	Information technology	Leadership and management
	Music	Staffing and learning resources
Christine Haggerty, Lay Inspector	Equality of opportunity	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Attendance
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
		Accommodation
Piers Bilston	English	Teaching
	Design and technology	
	Art	
	Physical education	
Thelma Edwards	Areas of learning for children under five	Curriculum and assessment
	History	
	Geography	
Gerry Slamon	Mathematics	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
	Religious education	Efficiency
	Special educational needs	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Pupils behave very well, and get on extremely well with each other; the teachers and other adults provide very positive role models.
- The headteacher is a very effective and strong leader and is well supported by governors and senior staff in developing and managing the school.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There are excellent opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils are valued as individuals.
- Parents, governors, staff and pupils are proud to belong to the school community.
- The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent.
- Teaching is good in two thirds of lessons. Good use is made of teachers' subject expertise.
- The provision for music, dance and art is very good and result in high standards of attainment.

Where the school has weaknesses

- There is no systematic approach to the teaching of writing and standards are below expectations throughout the school.
- Standards in English, mathematics and science are not high enough in Key Stage 1.
- The school's marking policy is not consistently applied. Insufficient guidance is given to help pupils improve their written work and reading.

The strengths outweigh the weaknesses but the weaknesses will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents and carers of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The overall response to the previous inspection has been effective. The school has made very good progress through its action plan to improve standards in information and communication technology. The teaching staff has been strengthened by the appointment of staff with expertise and an enthusiastic subject co-ordinator. The school has received funding and resources from a national project which has enabled a computer suite to be created. A new and detailed scheme of work has been adopted. Classroom computers have been upgraded with the help of parental funding. At eleven, pupils confidently use information technology as a tool for learning and standards are now in line with national expectations. Good progress has also been made to improve the accuracy and consistency of assessment across the curriculum. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainments have been revised and are conscientiously applied. Appropriate use is made of the information gained to inform future planning. Short-term planning has improved and now has clear learning objectives which meet the needs of higher attaining, lower attaining and pupils of average ability. In some subjects, such as literacy, numeracy and science in Key Stage 2, pupils have recently been grouped by age and ability in order to raise standards. Changes have been made to Key Stage 2 staffing, national initiatives in literacy and numeracy have been introduced and changes made to the science curriculum. In order to raise expectations, meetings have been held with parents and pupils to set individual annual targets. The majority of parents attended and say that they now have a clearer understanding of what can be achieved. As yet, all these changes have not had a significant impact on attainment. Good progress was observed in Key Stage 2 lessons during the inspection. The school now has effective strategies in place, the staffing and the determination to improve its standards.

Standards in subjects

This table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1999 based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	
English	C	D	<i>Well above average</i>	A
Mathematics	D	D	<i>Above average</i>	B
Science	D	E	<i>Average</i>	C
			<i>Below average</i>	D
			<i>Well below average</i>	E

The attainment of children at age four, as measured by the baseline assessment, is below that expected for their age. Results show that there are dramatic differences in the potential attainment of individual year groups. In some year groups a higher than average percentage of children have special educational needs and there is a below average percentage of higher attaining pupils. The school is aware of these variations and uses assessment information when setting targets for particular year groups.

Results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds show that pupils' performance in the end of key stage tests in English is close to the national average. Standards in English in 1999 were below those of similar schools. In mathematics and science, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard was below the national average. Standards in mathematics were below average compared to similar schools, although the percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades improved significantly. In science, standards were well below those of similar schools. However, the inspection found standards in English, mathematics and science to be close to the national average. At the end of Key Stage 1, when pupils are aged seven, the percentage reaching the expected standards in reading in 1999 was well below the national average and well below that of similar schools. The year group tested in 1999 had a particularly low baseline profile when they entered the school in 1997 and over one third of the pupils were identified on the register of special educational needs at the time of testing. Although these pupils had made good progress in relation to their ability, they did not reach the expected standards for their age and lowered the overall school results significantly. In 1999, standards in writing were below the national average and well below in relation to similar schools. In mathematics in 1999, standards were below the national average and well below those of similar schools. In science, results of National Curriculum teacher assessment in the year 1999 were below the national average and below those of similar schools. The inspection found standards in reading to be close to the national average, but below average in writing, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils' attainment in information technology is in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. In religious education, pupils' attainment matches the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Key Stage 1 and exceeds them at the end of Key Stage 2.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in	Under 5	5 – 7 years	7 – 11 years
English	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Mathematics	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Science		Satisfactory	Good
Information technology		Good	Good
Religious education		Satisfactory	Good
Other subjects	Good	Satisfactory	Good

Teaching is satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is good, overall, as almost two thirds of teaching is good or better. However, it is generally good for children under five and at Key Stage 2, and mainly satisfactory at Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, two thirds of teaching is good or better, of which one quarter is very good or excellent and no teaching is unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 1, one third of teaching is good and the rest is mainly satisfactory, although two lessons were unsatisfactory. Teaching in music and dance is consistently of very high quality and contributes to the high standards of attainment.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. ‘Satisfactory’ means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils are very attentive, listen to the teacher and to each other. Pupils show respect for each other and for adults. They behave very sensibly in the small playgrounds.
Attendance	Good. Standards have improved since the previous inspection and are now above the national average. The percentage of unauthorised absence is very low.
Ethos*	Very good. Relationships are excellent. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work. Standards of social development are very high.
Leadership and management	The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher, senior staff and governors form a strong and effective team.
Curriculum	Very good. The rich curriculum is broad and well balanced. The provision of a wide range of clubs and after school activities is excellent. Assessment procedures are used well to match work to pupils’ needs.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good provision is made. Pupils make good progress in small groups and are well supported in class.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good, overall, with excellent provision for social and cultural development which makes a significant contribution to the development of the individual pupil.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The number and qualifications of support staff are good and meet pupils’ needs. Accommodation is bright and clean and enhanced by the stimulating displays. The accommodation is cramped and restricts the delivery of the curriculum.
Value for money	Good. Pupils come into the school with below average levels of attainment, they are provided with good teaching at average costs which lead to average levels of attainment by 11.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The positive ethos created by rewarding pupils and raising their self-esteem. • Parents are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school and involved in their children's learning. • The excellent information the school provides for parents. • The positive values, attitudes and good behaviour the school promotes. • Pupils are happy and keen to come to school. • Staffing. A male teacher in each phase and teachers exchanging classes to teach particular subjects are seen as good preparation for secondary school. • They appreciate the wide variety of additional activities offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of space in some classrooms, the hall and outside in the hard play areas. However, parents feel that the school makes the best use of the available space. • The timing of meetings was not seen as being conducive to working single parents. • The arrangements made for the youngest four year olds to attend school on a part-time basis in the Autumn term. • A lack of clubs for pupils in Year 4 to join.

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. The lack of space is a problem. The school makes the very best arrangements to overcome any problems this causes. Meeting times are planned to suit the majority but the school is extremely flexible and will meet any parents at their convenience time. Inspectors found that the school introduces the youngest four year olds to full time schooling in the most appropriate way to meet the children's needs. At the time of the inspection, several children were already attending full-time on some days. There was found to be a good range of additional activities for Year 4 pupils.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve the quality of education and raise standards the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- develop a systematic approach to the teaching of writing to complement the good work being done in the literacy strategy by:
 - implementing a handwriting policy which is consistently applied throughout the school;
 - giving pupils more opportunities to extend their creative writing and use their writing skills across the curriculum.

*(Paragraphs: 12,17,31,81,86,90)**

* The school has identified this as an area for development in the management plan.

- improve standards in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 1 by raising the teachers' expectation and increasing the pace of pupils' learning;

(Paragraphs: 32,90,93, 98, 100, 103, 105, 107)

- consistently apply the school's marking policy so that pupils understand how to improve the quality of their written work;

and make clear comments in reading diaries to show what pupils can do to develop their reading.

(Paragraphs: 33, 89, 93,100,107)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weakness should be included in the action plan:

- ensure the consistent and efficient use of teaching assistants in all classes to support learning.

(Paragraphs: 76,93, 101)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Highfields is a large Primary School situated in the village of Lawford, on the outskirts of Manningtree. Manningtree is a small rural market town and lies ten miles to the North East of Colchester. Highfields Primary School serves a mixed catchment area that includes Lawford and parts of the surrounding villages of Mistley and Manningtree. At eleven, most pupils transfer to Manningtree High School which is on the same site.
2. The 368 pupils come from a large council estate situated to the front of the school and a private housing estate to the rear. The development of the private estate has been responsible for the rapid growth in pupil numbers over the last seven years. A large proportion of parents living on the council estate are local to the area and work nearby. A high proportion of the parents living on the new estate commute to Colchester or Ipswich. The school is organised in thirteen classes and pupils are taught in mixed age classes in Key Stage 2. The majority of children entering the school have attended one of the two local playgroups on a part-time basis. Ten per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average. There are slightly more girls than boys. No pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. Eighteen per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs; this is just below average. Four pupils have a statement of special educational need.
3. Attainment of pupils on entry to the school at age four is wide and varied, but is generally below the national level expected for children of this age. During the inspection, which was held in the second half of the Autumn term, there were 23 children under five attending the school on a part-time basis in the early years class and 22 children attending the reception class full-time.
4. The building is of modern design, but was originally built for fewer than half the number of pupils now on roll. There have been additions to the building over the years, but the hall and many of the teaching bays are too small to accommodate the current school population. Due to retirement, over a third of the teaching staff have changed in the last two years. At the time of the inspection, one member of staff was on long term sick leave following an accident. The supply teacher covering the class had been in the school for only one week prior to the inspection.
5. The school has a Mission Statement, which is 'to promote independent, confident, self-disciplined children with inquiring minds and the skills to maximise their full potential.' Currently the main priorities on the school development plan are to implement the National Numeracy strategy, improve provision for more able pupils and continue to develop information technology. As a result of data analysis, the school has identified writing as an area for development.

6. Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1
for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	25	25	50

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	16	18	22
	Girls	19	21	19
	Total	35	39	41
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	70 (78)	78 (75)	82 (81)
	National	79 (80)	83 (81)	85 (84)

Teacher Assessments		Reading	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	16	20	20
	Girls	22	21	20
	Total	38	39	41
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	84 (78)	82 (81)	80 (83)
	National	79 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

Attainment at Key Stage 2²

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2
for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	30	25	55

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	21	18	21
	Girls	21	18	20
	Total	42	36	41
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	77 (70)	66 (54)	75 (61)
	National	68 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	20	18	21
	Girls	21	19	21
	Total	41	36	41
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	75 (65)	67 (65)	78 (57)
	National	77 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year: 1997/8

		%
Authorised Absence	School	5.6
	National comparative data	5.7
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.3
	National comparative data	0.5

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	0
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	20
Satisfactory or better	98
Less than satisfactory	2

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

7. When children start school at age four their attainment, as measured by the baseline assessment over the last three years, is found to be below that expected for their age. There are dramatic differences in the attainment of individual year groups. In some year groups a higher than average percentage of children have special educational needs and there is a below average percentage of higher attaining pupils. In some year groups there is a fairly high turnover of pupils. The school is aware of these variations and uses assessment information when setting targets for particular year groups. It is important to note that subject standards judged against national expectations in the previous report were based on one year's results and that the additional data now available give a clearer picture of the school's performance over time.
8. Results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests show that at the end of Key Stage 2, when pupils leave the school, pupils' performance in the end of key stage tests in English is close to the national average. Standards in English in 1999 were below those of similar schools. In mathematics and science, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard was below the national average. Standards in mathematics were below average compared to similar schools, although the percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades improved significantly. In science, standards were well below those of similar schools.
9. At the end of Key Stage 1, when pupils are aged seven, the percentage reaching the expected standards in reading in 1999 was well below the national average and well below that of similar schools. The year group tested in 1999 had a particularly low baseline profile when they entered the school in 1997 and over one third of the pupils were identified on the register of special educational needs at the time of testing. Although these pupils had made good progress in relation to their ability, they did not reach the expected standards for their age and lowered the overall school results significantly. In 1999 standards in writing were below the national average and well below in relation to similar schools. In mathematics in 1999, standards were below the national average and well below those of similar schools. In science, results of teacher assessment in the year 1999 were below the national average and below those of similar schools.
10. National performance data for the years 1996 to 1998 which use pupils' average scores and compare them with national averages indicate that, at the end of Key Stage 2, standards in English have risen. In 1996, standards were below the national average and were in line with the national average in 1998 and 1999. Standards in mathematics have fluctuated since 1996, but have remained slightly below the national average. In science, results have varied from being close to the national average in 1997 and 1998 to below in 1998 and 1999.
11. Using similar data, but for Key Stage 1, comparisons show that reading standards have improved steadily, with an above average percentage of pupils reaching the higher level 3. This improvement coincided with the school's participation in the Early Reading Research programme. However, standards in the 1999 national tests fell well below average, due to the low profile of the year group. In writing, standards from 1996 fluctuated, improving in 1997, but declining in 1998 and 1999. Standards in mathematics have varied from below average in 1996 and 1998 to above average in 1997. The data show that girls do better than boys in reading and writing and in 1999 only girls achieved the higher grades in these subjects. In mathematics, more boys than girls achieve the average and higher grades. In science, results of National Curriculum teacher assessment in the years 1996 to 1997 remained around the national average, but fell below the national average in 1998 and 1999. Over time, in science, there has been an increase in the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level 2, but a decline in the percentage of pupils achieving the higher level 3.

12. Inspection evidence shows that overall attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 1 is below average. By the age of seven, standards of speaking are above average. Pupils' speech is good and they are confident in expressing their views and explaining their work to the class. Pupils' talents develop as they are encouraged to talk to an audience in assembly. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, listen very carefully to their teachers and one another. They listen to stories and instructions well and settle to their group activities with a clear understanding of what is required. Standards in reading are average. Pupils' writing is below average. Standards of handwriting are below those expected and letter formation is inconsistent. By the age of seven most have not developed a clear joined style. In Year 2, pupils write accurate sentences with mainly satisfactory, simple punctuation, but, often, writing is below average in spelling and descriptive detail. Inspection evidence found overall attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2 to be average and to match attainment in the national tests. Standards in speaking and listening are above average. Pupils listen with good concentration. A significant number of pupils have standards in conversation, discussion and answering questions that are well above average. Reading is in line with what is expected, pupils read accurately and have a satisfactory understanding of their chosen texts. Pupils can write for a range of purposes in both past and present tenses and attainment is in line with expectations.
13. In mathematics, at the end of Key Stage 1, inspection evidence shows that although standards are improving as a result of the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, they are still below average. A greater emphasis is placed on mental mathematics and pupils are developing confident mental calculation skills. They have a good understanding of two and three-dimensional shapes. They can measure and order objects and use mathematical language to describe their position. In Key Stage 2, inspection evidence found that standards had improved and are in line with national expectations. The implementation of the National Numeracy lesson is enabling pupils to develop a good understanding of number. Pupils can describe number patterns and relationships, including multiples and factors. They have a sound understanding of area, perimeter and rotational symmetry. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have also benefited from ability grouping for numeracy lessons.
14. In science, inspection evidence found standards at the end of Key Stage 1 to be below national expectations and similar to those in the teacher assessments. Pupils have a secure knowledge of living things, but are less secure in their knowledge of the properties of materials and forces, because less emphasis was placed on these areas in the topics previously studied. In Key Stage 2, inspection evidence suggests that attainment has improved and is now in line with national expectations. This is due to the impact of a new scheme of work, the sharing of subject expertise and age and ability grouping in Years 5 and 6.
15. In religious education, at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are attaining standards that are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus and, by the end of Key Stage 2, standards are above those expected. Pupils age seven know a range of Bible stories and can describe important events in the life of Jesus. They know that everyone is special. Pupils aged 11 can relate the concepts of different faiths to their own experiences and have a good understanding that religions share some common features. At the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, the attainment of pupils is in line with national expectations. Seven year olds can confidently use the computer to write, draw pictures and access information from a CD ROM. Eleven year olds independently use information technology throughout their work. They use both a CD ROM and the internet to retrieve information. They can send and retrieve e-mail. Standards of literacy and numeracy are above average by the end of Key Stage 2. In other curriculum areas, many pupils aged eleven achieve above average standards in art, history, music, swimming and dance.
16. Children enter either the Early Years or Reception class in the year following their fourth birthday. Baseline assessment, which is now in its third year, shows that attainment on entry is, overall, below average. Scores are below average in speaking and listening, aspects of reading relating to awareness of sounds, writing and mathematics. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys. The children make good progress, overall, and, by the time they are five, most have

reached the expected levels in their personal and social development, language and literacy development, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development. Some are making a good start on the National Curriculum programmes of study. Children make very good progress in speaking and listening. They learn to listen to their teacher and to each other and answer well in class. They are given good opportunities to gain confidence when talking to an audience. Less progress is made in the development of writing because many have poor pencil control and there are fewer opportunities to develop this aspect of their work in comparison with other areas of language. Children make very good progress in the dance aspect of their creative development and their attainment is above the expected level. A particularly good feature is the importance placed on developing children's personal and social skills and children quickly develop very good attitudes to work and play. Teachers and support staff in each class work well together and also work particularly well as an early years team. They monitor children's progress carefully and plan work which is interesting for them and meets their needs. Children who have special educational needs make good progress, due to the help and support they receive.

17. Overall progress is broadly satisfactory in Key Stage 1. Progress in English is satisfactory, overall, and very good in speaking and listening. Pupils make satisfactory progress in reading and good progress in their knowledge of sounds and sight words as a result of regular teaching and daily practice. Pupils are able to use their knowledge of sounds to help them spell simple words. They make slower progress with their writing and correct letter formation. In mathematics, pupils make satisfactory progress in the speed and accuracy of their mental calculations. They develop a sound understanding of number and shape. However, there is a lack of pace in some lessons for pupils of average and above ability. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of science, but expectations for pupils to record their work for themselves are not high enough. In information technology, pupils make good progress because teaching is good and expectations are high. Pupils make satisfactory progress in religious education. In other areas of the curriculum, pupils make very good progress in music and dance as a result of specialist teaching and high expectations and good progress in art and swimming. Elsewhere, progress is satisfactory. The curriculum provided supports good progress. However, the overall quality of teaching and expectations of pupils are not as high as in Key Stage 2.
18. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 where two thirds of the teaching is good or better and one quarter is very good or excellent. In English, progress is good, overall, but varies in reading from class to class. Progress in speaking and listening is very good, due to the good questioning skills of the teachers and the conscious effort made to develop pupils' vocabulary by encouraging them to express their opinions and feelings. In mathematics, progress is good, as a result of the good quality of teaching and the interest this generates. In science, pupils make good progress in the development of investigative skills and their knowledge and understanding, because tasks are well matched to their ability and prior attainment in lessons. Pupils have made very good progress in a short time in information technology and all pupils are now working at the level expected for their age. In religious education, pupils make good progress, overall, and very good progress at the end of the key stage, where the quality of teaching is very high. Progress is very good in art, music and dance due to the high quality of teaching and the additional opportunities given for pupils to participate in clubs. In swimming and history pupils make good progress and satisfactory progress in geography and design and technology. Progress in literacy and numeracy is good.
19. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in meeting the targets in their individual education plans, when supported individually or in small groups. This gives them full and equal access to the curriculum and the opportunity to make progress equal to that of other pupils in lessons. This good progress is due to the good quality support given by teaching assistants and adult volunteers and the care that teachers take to plan appropriate tasks for these pupils. Pupils with statements of special educational need have full access to the curriculum and the learning activities taking place within the classroom are well supported by an assistant.

Higher attaining pupils are identified and make good progress in Key Stage 2, where challenging activities are planned and where they are given good opportunities for personal research.

20. The school collects and carefully analyses the data it derives from the baseline profile, from four years of national testing, as well as the results of internal tests and the optional national tests. The school has used this information to set realistic targets with the local education authority to raise standards in literacy and numeracy. Inspection evidence suggests that the school is likely to achieve its targets and that standards will improve.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

21. Overall attitudes to learning, behaviour, relationships and personal development are very good. This contributes significantly to standards and the quality of life in the school. These standards have improved since the last inspection and are a strength of the school.
22. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, have very good attitudes towards learning. The under fives in the nursery and reception classes are developing very positive attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic and concentrate for appropriate lengths of time on their activities. In lessons at both key stages, pupils are keen to both ask and answer questions. Generally, pupils concentrate well and listen intently. They persevere when the task is challenging, until they achieve an acceptable standard. For example, during an information technology lesson some pupils had difficulty in controlling the mouse, but they persevered and every member of the class was successful by the end of the lesson. This has a very positive effect on their learning. All pupils concentrate very well and stay on task in spite of the noise intrusion from other classes, due to the design of the buildings. However, in a minority of lessons at Key Stage 1 where the task is not challenging, the attention of some pupils can wander. The majority of pupils, including the youngest were to be seen to work co-operatively in pairs and in small groups. This has a positive effect on their social development. Pupils' capacity for personal study is being developed through homework, which includes independent research, using the Internet. Homework is set consistently and this has a positive impact on standards, attainment and progress.
23. The behaviour of pupils in and around the school is very good. Pupils are polite, inquisitive, friendly and welcoming to visitors. Pupils with special needs are fully integrated into the life of the school. The under fives behave very well. Behaviour at lunchtime and during breaks is very good. Behaviour in the classroom is generally very good, but, in a few lessons at Key Stage 1 when pupils sit for too long on the carpet, behaviour deteriorates. This has a negative effect on the attainment and progress of the pupils in those classes. Behaviour during assemblies at both key stages is very good and pupils show very good self-discipline when filing into assembly in silence and sitting very close together. Pupils respect the grounds, the buildings and the furniture, which show no sign of graffiti or vandalism. The school operates as an orderly community.
24. Relationships within the school are excellent between pupils and between adults and pupils. Pupils respect the views of others even if they differ from their own. Relationships are constructive, pupils work well in pairs and collaboratively in small groups. Racial harmony between pupils is good. There was no evidence of bullying or racist comments during the inspection. Pupils report that, if bullying does occur, staff or the head teacher will always deal with it. Pupils are very supportive of children with special needs offering help and advice as appropriate. Pupils relate well to each other during physical education lessons, they co-operate to put equipment away safely and sensibly. Pupils share resources and take turns in using equipment.

25. The personal development of pupils is excellent. The under fives take increasing responsibility for the resources in their classroom and they share the work of tidying and clearing up. Pupils' responsibilities increase as they move through the school. They are involved in setting their class rules and in the school's routines. Pupils in year five write to pupils in the early years and invite them to an Easter Egg hunt. This has a very positive effect on pupils' personal development. Older pupils help younger pupils with swimming and with wet playtimes. This has a very positive effect on relationships and building pupils' self-esteem. The very wide range of clubs which are available to pupils, the residential trip and the activities week considerably enhance their personal development. The school council meets regularly and they are encouraged to raise the concerns of their peers, take minutes and set their own agenda. The daily assemblies and the weekly sharing assemblies play a very important part in the confidence building of all pupils through performance and presentation. There are a number of fund-raising activities which involve pupils in the wider community. This, also, has a positive effect on their self-esteem and personal development.

Attendance

26. Attendance was described as above average in the last report. The attendance is now good and is improving.
27. The attendance is broadly in line with the national average for the last reporting year of 1997/8. The attendance figure for 1998/9 is now above the national average and is well above the national threshold. This has a positive effect on pupils' attainment and progress. However, scrutiny of registers showed that at least seventeen weeks schooling have been lost so far this term due to holidays taken in term time. This is unsatisfactory and has a negative effect on the attainment and progress of those pupils. A spot check on one week's attendance this term shows attendance to be very high. The unauthorised absence figure is very low compared to the national average. There is no truancy, but the school does occasionally authorise a third week of holiday.
28. Many pupils arrive at school early to take part in pre-school clubs, but there is some minor lateness, which is recorded in registers. Lessons begin on time and pupils report they enjoy coming to school.
29. Registration is taken quickly and efficiently and in the Early Years and Reception classes pupils use an effective system of self registration.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

30. The quality of teaching is good, overall, as almost two thirds of teaching is good or better. However, it is generally good for children under five and at Key Stage 2, although mainly satisfactory at Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, two thirds of teaching is good or better, of which one quarter is very good or excellent and no teaching is unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 1, one third of teaching is good and the rest is mainly satisfactory, although two lessons were unsatisfactory. The overall judgement on teaching is an improvement since the previous inspection in 1996, especially at Key Stage 2. Some of the success can be attributed to the monitoring of classroom management and the modelling of literacy and numeracy lessons by senior staff. The key issues of improving short term planning and learning opportunities for information technology have been well addressed.
31. The teaching of children under five is good and is, occasionally, very good or excellent. Children are managed very well with an appropriately wide range of learning opportunities.

Teaching staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the needs of young learners and give good quality support. However, although good opportunities are offered in most areas of the under five curriculum, there are insufficient opportunities for children to learn how to begin to write and form letters. Teachers, nursery nurses and support staff share their observations of what the children can do and plan activities and experiences to enhance children's knowledge and skills development. All the early years staff know the children well and carefully assess the progress they are making. Children work in a well organised, bright and attractive environment. Sometimes, the teaching directs children, but they also have many opportunities to think for themselves and to use their imagination. Staff have good expectations of the children and very good management strategies. Time and resources are used appropriately and there is a clear routine which makes children feel safe and secure. Detailed records are kept and on-going, daily assessment of what children have learned and can do is well used in further planning. The good team work in both classes is very evident.

32. In Key Stage 1, lessons for five to seven year olds, the quality of planning and teachers' knowledge and understanding are good. However, teachers' expectations are not always high enough and this is particularly evident in the quality and quantity of written work expected. The teaching of reading is good and pupils develop a good sight vocabulary and learn sounds systematically. There is no consistent approach to the teaching of correct letter formation and handwriting. The quality of teaching in all subjects other than music and information technology, which are taught by specialists, is predominantly satisfactory. In music, the teacher has very good subject knowledge and ensures very good links with other curriculum areas. In information technology, there are very clear whole class lessons with careful explanations which ensure that all pupils make good progress. All teachers have developed their knowledge of information technology by the sharing of expertise within the school. Teachers display appropriate knowledge of the equipment in their own classrooms, but some accept that more training is needed. In English, during the literacy hour sessions and in mathematics during the numeracy sessions, teachers give satisfactory introductions. In the better sessions, teachers ensure an appropriate pace to pupils' learning and ask challenging questions. In science, teachers have sound subject knowledge, but do not always ensure that there are sufficient 'hands on' activities for pupils. There are too few opportunities to use their literacy skills in science to record the results of their experiments and this low level of expectation is reflected in history, geography and religious education where pupils write very little. Teachers make satisfactory use of homework, although it is mainly reading.
33. In Key Stage 2, the teaching is good and very good in one quarter of lessons in a variety of subjects and year groups. In one English lesson in Year 6, teaching is excellent. Teachers give good quality introductions with good pace to the literacy and numeracy sessions. In English and dance lessons in Years 5 and 6 the teachers' infectious enthusiasm is clearly having a very beneficial affect on pupils' standards. The use of teaching assistants and parent volunteers is inconsistent, but there are clear examples of good practice where the teacher and assistant are used very effectively to improve the pace of pupils' learning and monitor pupils' oral contributions. In some lessons, for example in a Year 6 art lesson, the use of the computer with Internet access is very effective for pupils to learn about Mondrian. Resources are generally used well, particularly in supporting pupils with special educational needs. Most lessons are well planned and pupils are managed well. Homework is used effectively for pupils to finish work and find information for themselves. However, in reading, the quality and consistency of reading homework do not always ensure that pupils have positive attitudes towards their chosen books. Teachers make good use of day to day assessment and use this to inform future teaching. However, the quality of marking is inconsistent and often unsatisfactory in showing pupils how to improve. The quality of presentation is also variable and reflects teachers' differing levels of expectation.
34. The teaching and provision for pupils with special educational need is good. Pupils are well supported by the class teachers, special educational needs co-ordinator and support assistants. They monitor and record pupils' progress and ensure that these pupils are suitably challenged.

35. A strength of teaching throughout both key stages is the caring attitude of all teachers and the wish to raise pupils' self-esteem. This is very evident in all lessons. The consistent management of pupils in lessons ensures good pupil attitudes and provides a sound platform for an increase in standards.

The curriculum and assessment

36. The curriculum planned for children in the Early Years and Reception classes includes all the essential areas of learning and provision for their personal and social development. The opportunities provided have effectively promoted the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills and are preparing them to achieve the nationally agreed desirable learning outcomes for children at the age of five.
37. The curriculum is rich, broadly based, balanced, relevant to the pupils and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. It clearly reflects the aims of the school and ensures that all pupils have equality of access. Pupils' personal development receives due attention. Younger pupils discuss together in 'circle time' the things that are important to them. Older pupils receive sex education and are made aware of the dangers of misusing drugs. The school is developing a scheme of work for personal, health and social education and time is allocated for it to be taught as part of the curriculum.
38. There is excellent provision for the arts and this is a strength of the school. Pupils have many opportunities to achieve in music, art and dance. The school provides specialist teaching in music and in dance and the many extra-curricular clubs include further opportunities for pupils to participate in the choir and in the art club.
39. The curriculum for English and mathematics includes the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Literacy and numeracy are also supported by other subjects, but there is too little emphasis, at present, on the promotion of writing, including good handwriting and presentation, across the curriculum.
40. The combination of separate subject teaching and cross-curricular topics effectively includes all subjects. The curriculum is well planned and there are good cross-curricular links. As an example, pupils working on the history of Tudor England have learned Tudor dances; work on Planet Earth has successfully included science, geography and information and communication technology in pupils' learning. In a range of subjects, including science, the school is incorporating the schemes of work suggested by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority into their existing planning. This doubly ensures continuity and progression for pupils within interesting and challenging programmes of work for pupils of differing abilities.
41. The school makes good use of its own grounds, notably for the teaching of geography skills to young pupils when they study the features of the immediate area. Pupils also make a study of the village of Lawford, often focusing on the church. Older pupils make residential visits to Norfolk and the coastal areas as they learn about contrasting areas and engage in fieldwork.
42. Provision for pupils who have special education needs is very good. Careful attention is paid to meeting the needs of the pupils within the curriculum. The good support pupils receive from specialist teachers, class teachers and support assistants ensures that this aim is substantially achieved. There is very good equality of access to the curriculum, with pupils having opportunities to succeed. Pupils normally receive their support in class alongside their peers, unless the demands of the activity make withdrawal to another area essential. The Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs is being followed. Individual education plans

define the work to be done and set clear and assessable targets for pupils. These plans are implemented and pupils' progress is regularly reviewed.

43. The school has policies and schemes of work for all subjects. Teachers work together to plan the curriculum, sharing their ideas and experience. In Key Stage 2, teachers with a particular expertise in a subject, regularly teach other classes in addition to their own. The development of a two-year cycle of topic work at Key Stage 2 effectively ensures that pupils who are in classes with more than one age group do not encounter the same topic in their second year. There is no detailed guidance for teaching handwriting.
44. Homework is given out in each class and, overall, supports the progress pupils make. There is, however, some reservation about the over-emphasis on graded reading books in one year group being used for home reading when the addition of a broader choice of literature is possible. This is having a negative effect on the interest some pupils show in reading for pleasure.
45. The last inspection judged that the school needed to improve the way it used continuous assessment of pupils' progress to inform weekly and daily planning. There were also reservations about the clarity of short-term planning and the quality of marking. As a result, assessment procedures have been reviewed and are developing well. The school has devised a clear and systematic approach at several levels. Lesson plans usually have clear aims and assessments of pupils' understanding follow individual lessons. There is assessment at the end of a unit of work, as in a history topic, and the school studies data from standardised tests. Targets are set in many areas, notably literacy and, increasingly, numeracy. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainments are conscientiously applied and appropriate use is made of the information gained to inform future planning. A weak link in the system, however, is in reading records and marking. Neither consistently identifies for pupils what is going well and what needs to improve. The school is keen to promote pupils' own self-assessment and the marking, in particular, does not help this. Baseline assessment of young pupils on entry, which is now in its third year, is providing valuable and detailed information to the teachers of the youngest children and to the school, as it assesses the 'value-added' aspects of its work. In most subjects, work samples are collected which show different levels of attainment and may be studied by teachers as they assess the work of their own pupils. Termly records are kept of pupils' progress in each subject and in their personal and social development. These inform the end of year report to parents.
46. The assessment of the progress of pupils with special educational needs is conducted regularly by class teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator. The information gained informs future planning of work for these pupils.
47. The school makes generous extra-curricular provision; some of it before school, some during the lunch break and after school. The areas covered include many sports, the arts, including calligraphy, and gardening. Pupils' learning experiences are enriched by this excellent provision.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

48. This is a happy, well ordered school which offers its pupils a welcoming, secure and caring environment. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good, overall, and makes a strong contribution to the very positive ethos of the school. There has been a very significant improvement in this area of the school's provision since the time of the last inspection.
49. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. The calm, peaceful atmosphere that has been created in the school very effectively supports pupils' spiritual development. It is carefully and successfully nurtured in assemblies and in religious education lessons. There are good opportunities for reflection and prayer, which form part of the daily acts of collective

worship, which meet statutory requirements. In many areas of the curriculum, such as English, music, dance, drama and art there are opportunities for pupils to reflect on their personal experiences. Some excellent examples of this were seen when pupils were watching others performing a Tudor dance and when members of the dance club were considering the significance of the Hakka. The quality of singing and instrumental performances in assemblies effectively adds to the spiritual atmosphere that exists.

50. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The very strong ethos of the school, which stresses respect for self and others, provides an effective focus for pupils' moral development. Values are fostered through the very caring and supportive relationships which exist in classrooms between staff and pupils and by the very good example set by all who work in the school. This area of pupils' development is underpinned by the school's aims and pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong. They are frequently reminded of shared values and principles in the day-to-day life of the school and through the school's very effective, positive behaviour policy, the central theme of which is 'caring for others', and classroom codes of conduct. The school organises an annual 'Good Manners Week' which is a very good example of the school's commitment to this area of pupils' development. The importance of honesty and justice are communicated through the evident concern which the school community has for them. Pupils are provided with appropriate opportunities to discuss and to reflect upon issues such as the effects of drug abuse during the personal, social and health education week. They are appropriately praised and rewarded for their good behaviour. Pupils' names are entered in the 'Excellent' book for very good work and behaviour and for outstanding contributions to school life.
51. Provision for pupils' social development is excellent. The school actively encourages the development of good social skills and a sense of citizenship. The ethos of the school effectively promotes good social interaction and equality of opportunity. Pupils are constantly reminded of the importance of everyone to the success and happiness of the school community. Older pupils in the school are given opportunities to respond to the needs of their peers in a thoughtful and empathetic way. Members of the Year 6 council, for example, are thoughtful and caring in the performance of their duties. Year 5 pupils act as 'godparents' to children new to the school. There is a very strong personal and social education policy which positively enhances pupils' social development, through, for example, discussions on friendship, caring and helping each other. Many very suitable opportunities are given to all pupils to appreciate and to contribute to the community in which they live. Local studies, entertaining the elderly to Harvest Tea, taking part in local dance, musical and floral festivals are some very good examples of this. The very good provision for extra-curricular activities and participation in inter-school competitions are other examples of this very rich provision. Pupils are also offered opportunities to contribute to the wider community through donating to charities such as Children in Need. Year 5 pupils are provided with an annual residential visit, while Year 6 pupils enjoy an activities week. These activities, together with opportunities to perform in musical and dramatic performances, enhance pupils' social development and sense of achievement. The very strong working ethic and partnership between members of staff, governors and parents, effectively promote constructive social and working relationships among pupils. The very good attitudes and values promoted by the school are strongly endorsed by parents.
52. The school makes excellent provision for pupils' cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate and develop their knowledge of British culture and traditions, for example, through visits to places of historical and cultural interest such as Harwich Museums, Lawford Church, Colchester Zoo and to the Colne Valley Orchestra Concert. There are many very well planned opportunities for pupils to understand and to appreciate the diversity and richness of other cultures and faiths through their religious education programme. Music, dances and art and the celebration of different festivals such as Divali, the Chinese New Year and American Thanksgiving, make a very strong contribution to pupils' cultural development. Visiting speakers who relate their wartime experiences and those who speak about different faiths, such as Hinduism and Judaism, are well used by the school. The school also makes very effective use

of visiting performers, such as a Shakespearean Company, artists, and African dancers to further support this provision. Commitment to pupils' cultural development is evident from displays and resources around the school.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

53. The school's ethos is very supportive and caring. Pupils are happy and confident in the school. They are valued as individuals and treated with respect by staff. They have a high self-esteem and most want to do their best for their teachers and the support staff. These factors have a positive effect on pupils' academic and personal development. The previous report was very positive about the support, welfare and guidance which the school provided for its pupils. The school continues to provide pupils with a caring environment.
54. The induction of pupils to the school is very good. Children make a planned and careful entry to the school. As a prelude to the excellent induction programme, parents who are thinking of sending their children to Highfields meet with the headteacher, members of staff, the school governors and older pupils who act as 'godparents' to individual children, helping them to settle into the school. On entry, parents have opportunities to stay with their children until they have settled. Parents may, if they wish, take lunch in the school hall alongside their children and the rest of the school, as part of the induction programme. The school's procedures for support when a child does not want to go to school are very good. There are good procedures in place for the transfer of pupils to secondary school.
55. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress and personal development are good. There are clear procedures to record and monitor pupils' academic progress on a regular basis which begin with the use of baseline assessments to inform planning. Pupils are given targets which are reviewed with parents and pupils. During lessons, staff use questions and answers to assess knowledge and understanding and to provide additional support on a day to day basis. However, effective use of classroom assistants is inconsistent, particularly during the introduction to the literacy and the numeracy hour. There is also monitoring of progress through parent/ teacher consultation meetings. Pupils with special needs are monitored by regularly reviewing targets in individual education plans. Personal development is monitored by the rewards and sanctions policy, the contributions pupils make to assemblies, the attendance of pupils at the many extra curricular clubs, meetings with parents and observations by staff. Staff have access to and make good use of outside agencies to support pupils.
56. The procedures for monitoring attendance are good. The school has recently introduced new procedures to promote good attendance. This includes first day contact with parents if the school does not know the reason for a child's non-attendance at school. The school reports that this procedure has already led to an improvement in the attendance figures. The school are reviewing their recording procedures to ensure that minor lateness is monitored and that registers meet legal requirements. Holidays in term time have a negative impact on the school's attendance figures.
57. The school's procedures for promoting discipline and managing behaviour are very good. The school promotes self discipline within the school and this is re-enforced by the behaviour policy, which aims to develop good individual and class behaviour. The school has built its policy on rewarding good behaviour and this is very effective. Pupils understand the rewards system and when a group were asked what happens if they do something wrong, they responded "No-one really does anything wrong." Pupils take great pride when showing their work at assemblies and when receiving certificates for good behaviour or good work at the weekly sharing assemblies. Pupils at both key stages enjoy the recognition which comes with their names being entered in the book of excellence. Pupils with individual behaviour plans have a weekly progress report which is linked to rewards at home. The school has found this to be effective in dealing with any rare incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Midday assistants have received training in

behaviour management. Staff are consistent in their use of these procedures which are very effective and positive. There was no evidence of bullying during the week of the inspection. Staff have a high expectation of behaviour and the pupils generally respond to this. There is no recent history of exclusions.

58. Child protection procedures are very good. There is a school-specific policy in addition to the Local Authority guidelines. The named person has received the appropriate training. Staff receive annual updates on the identification of child protection issues. Procedures for health and safety are satisfactory. Pupils are well aware of the procedures for first aid and know who to go to for medication. All incidents are recorded. The school nurse has provided training for staff on how to deal with asthma and other medical issues. There are sufficient first aid boxes both in number and content. Fire equipment is tested regularly and fire drills meet legal requirements. There are regular risk assessments and statutory requirements are met with portable appliance testing and the five year wiring test. Very good attention is paid to health and safety in physical education, science and design and technology. The school is reviewing its policy for school trips and addressing the issue of noting no trained first aider on site for the full school day. The school is reviewing the use of the computer room, for size and number of pupils.

Partnership with parents and the community

59. The school's partnership with parents and the community is very good. The last inspection report was mainly positive, but identified business links as an area for development. The school has responded to this and has appointed a governor with responsibility for building links with business. Overall, the school has improved this aspect since the last report. Partnership with parents and links with the community are now a strength of the school.
60. The information supplied to parents is excellent. The school now consults regularly with parents on a range of issues, for example, the home school agreement. The school does not operate a termly parent teacher consultation meeting; instead, they have an "At Home" each week throughout the year where parents make an appointment to see the class teacher to discuss any concerns they may have. The attendance at these meetings is monitored and any parent who has not attended is contacted and offered an appointment. Pupils' annual reports are informative and meet statutory requirements. Some parents reported that they find the reports too positive. The school policy for reports states that reports should be positive. The school holds year group meetings for parents in the Autumn term to explain what will be happening during the school year. For example, Year 2 class teachers explain the National Tests to parents and Year 5 teachers explain the sex education policy. The minutes of these meetings are sent to any parents unable to attend the meetings. In addition to this, there are termly curriculum evenings. A lot of time and effort has gone into producing the very good quality governors' annual report to parents and school prospectus which are packed with helpful information and meet legal requirements. There is a wide range of informative booklets produced for parents and monthly newsletters to keep parents up to date on what is happening in the school. The class teachers speak to every parent after the baseline assessments are completed. There are no home visits
61. Parental involvement in their children's learning is very good. The hardworking parent teacher association is professionally organised. There is a range of fund-raising and social events throughout the year and a substantial amount of money is raised. Fund-raising events are well supported by parents and the local community. Parents of pupils with special needs are fully involved in their children's learning and work is set directly relating to targets in pupils' individual education plans. Parents are involved in their children's learning through homework and hearing their children read. Parents are given targets for their children to work on during school holidays. This is much appreciated by parents. Parents help regularly in the classroom, with swimming, making resources and on visits. This has a positive effect on pupils' attainment and progress. Parents are invited to weekly sharing assemblies at both key stages. The attendance at these assemblies is very good, with almost sixty parents attending the Key Stage 1

assembly. Home school diaries contain pastoral and academic information, although not all parents contribute to them.

62. Links with the community are very good. The local policeman and the school nurse regularly support the personal and social education programme. Speakers from different religions give talks to support religious education and regularly take assemblies. There are a number of after-school and pre-school activities which support the music and physical education of pupils that are organised by staff and parents. The school organises a special assembly at Christmas to say thank you to the helpers. The warden from the local nature reserve visits and pupils also enjoy a visit from a theatre company. Pupils visit the Eastern Farm Park, Colchester Castle, Colchester Zoo and Bressingham Steam Museum. There are business links with a regional newspaper and a local supermarket. Year 5 pupils enjoy a residential trip in Norfolk and Year 6 pupils take part in an activity week. The school choir sings carols at the local shopping mall, they entertain senior citizens and take part in concerts. This contributes positively to pupils' personal development. The speakers who visit the school and the trips which pupils make enhance and support the curriculum. This has a positive effect on pupils' attainment and progress.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

63. The overall leadership and management within the school are very good. The headteacher is a very effective and strong leader and is well supported by governors, the deputy headteacher and senior staff in developing and managing the school.
64. The headteacher has a very good understanding of educational issues and National Curriculum requirements and has effective interpersonal skills. She has high but realistic expectations of both staff and pupils and provides clear educational direction for the work of the school. She is successful in engendering a strong sense of community and teamwork and her impact upon the school is significant. The headteacher delegates effectively and helps colleagues to develop professionally through the responsibilities given. Co-ordinators set out strategies for development in their areas of responsibility. The headteacher keeps in touch and up-to-date with progress through regular meetings, monitoring plans and reports and offering support where it is needed. Recent appointments have ensured a good balance of subject expertise across the curriculum. In all subjects there are 'shadow', less experienced co-ordinators, who assist in each area. Co-ordinators have provided good schemes of work in all subjects, which include details that are helpful to teachers when planning their lessons. Several schemes of work have been updated to take account of recent national guidance. Co-ordinators organise the provision of resources well, monitor planning and teaching and support colleagues if necessary. They have a positive impact on the quality of teaching in their subject.
65. The aim of the school 'to promote independent, confident and self-disciplined children' is extremely successfully reflected in its everyday life. The headteacher and staff have a personal interest in every pupil from the moment he/she starts school and they communicate very well with parents, even though the school is large. The school works hard to produce pupils who believe they can achieve academically, are well rounded individuals, able to relate to others and can contribute fully to their local community and beyond.
66. The governing body contributes substantially to the effectiveness of the school. They have considerable expertise and are very well organised and thorough in their approach. They are active, questioning, supportive and open-minded. They are keen to involve the school in projects such as the National Grid for Learning, which brought additional funding for information technology to the school and the Early Reading Research Programme to improve reading standards. The governors are proactive and keep themselves well informed about what is

happening in the school. Many make regular visits, have links with curriculum areas, are involved in a monitoring programme and report back to meetings of the governing body. The governors give a very detailed account of their work in the Annual Report to parents. Governors have become more effectively involved in the development of the school since the last inspection.

67. The school's development plan for the next three years is a very effective working document and is based on a thorough audit of the school's present position. The involvement of staff and governors ensures that the priorities are highly relevant and known to all. The detail and guidance given in the plan reflect the school's commitment to raising standards and giving good value for money. Monitoring of teaching and learning is conducted formally by the headteacher, subject co-ordinators and governors. The results of monitoring have impacted positively on classroom practice, where pupils have been encouraged to think for themselves and develop independence in their learning. Last year, considerable time was spent monitoring the introduction of the National Literacy strategy and identified the weakness in writing. Another focus of monitoring has confirmed that, in lessons, tasks are now planned to meet the needs of different abilities within the class. Monitoring is beginning to identify where teaching needs to be refined in order to raise standards in the National Curriculum tests.
68. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed. The special needs co-ordinator works effectively with her team of support assistants. She liaises with classroom teachers and carefully monitors pupils' progress. The named special needs governor is knowledgeable and liaises effectively with the co-ordinator, parents and the headteacher. This ensures that there is good oversight of provision and that the good support is maintained.
69. At the time of the last inspection, the use of information and communication technology and the standards achieved at eleven were a key issue for action. The school has made very good progress in this subject through its action plan. The teaching staff have been strengthened by the appointment of staff with expertise and an enthusiastic co-ordinator. The school has received funding and resources from a national project which enabled the creation of a computer suite. A new and detailed scheme of work has been adopted. Classroom computers have been upgraded with the help of parental funding. Staff with computer expertise teach whole class lessons and all staff have been keen to develop their own skills through training. The new system has been operational for only two terms and already standards at eleven are in line with national expectations and, in some areas, exceed them. At age eleven, pupils now confidently use information technology as a tool for learning. Good progress has also been made to improve the accuracy and consistency of assessment across the curriculum. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainments are conscientiously applied and appropriate use is made of the information gained to inform future planning. Short-term planning has clear learning objectives which meet the needs of higher attaining, lower attaining and pupils of average ability. In some subjects, such as literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 2, pupils are now grouped by age and ability. Less, but satisfactory, progress has been made in raising standards in Key Stage 2. As well as National Initiatives in Literacy and Numeracy, changes have been made to Key Stage 2 staffing and to the science curriculum, in order to raise standards. At the end of the previous academic year, meetings were held with parents and pupils to set targets for the following year in order to raise expectations. The majority of parents attended and say that they now have a clearer understanding of what can be achieved. Good progress was observed in Key Stage 2 lessons during the inspection which suggests improved National test results in 2000. The school has a clear insight, effective strategies in place, the staffing and the determination to improve its standards.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

70. The school is well staffed with appropriately qualified and experienced teachers and a good number of support staff who work very well together. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of staff changes due to retirement. Recent appointments have strengthened the teaching staff, bringing fresh ideas to the school and expertise in information and communication technology. Teachers with subject responsibilities have significant expertise in their areas of responsibility and work with a 'shadow' co-ordinator from another phase. Job descriptions clearly identify responsibilities for all. Staff policies, practices and procedures are clearly laid out in a very good Staff Handbook. There are very clear procedures for staff professional development and regular courses are identified for staff to improve their skills. Appropriate training has taken place in literacy and numeracy. The special needs team is well trained in this area of their work. The special needs co-ordinator gives class teachers good guidance on planning work for pupils. There is a good number of special needs support staff whose work is effectively monitored by the co-ordinator. Teaching and lunchtime assistants also receive good quality training. New staff are supported by an effective induction programme. Good arrangements are made to ensure that temporary staff, covering absence, are familiar with school policies and routines. Administrative and caretaking staff contribute significantly to the smooth running and well ordered environment of the school.
71. The school meets the statutory requirements for appraising the work of teachers through a well structured programme identified in the school development plan and shows improvement since the last inspection. The teaching assistants provide very good support for the work of the school, particularly for pupils with special educational needs. They give valuable assistance in the classroom, supporting pupils' learning, although their time is not consistently used to full advantage in some lessons. They are well motivated and play a full and active part in the life of the school.
72. The modern accommodation is very well maintained and considerably enhanced by the high quality of stimulating displays. The last report identified inadequacies in the accommodation which cannot be resolved until capital funding is available. The school roll has been steadily increasing and the additional, accommodation has had insufficient overall impact on class teaching areas. Overall, the schools accommodation is unsatisfactory to deliver some aspects of the National Curriculum to such large numbers of pupils. Opportunities for teachers to vary classroom organisation are restricted. The staff have made extraordinary efforts to improve and disguise defects in the accommodation, but their efforts cannot hide the claustrophobic effect in some classrooms. The semi-open paired bases shared by some classes allow noise intrusion, although pupils commendably sustain their concentration. Classes are interrupted when pupils return from lessons in specialist rooms and have to pass through another class to reach their own. The new information technology suite is too small for whole class use and older pupils must stand throughout their lessons. The building design impacts on pupils' spiritual development because there is limited opportunity for quiet reflection in the open planned bays. The middle phase classrooms are too cramped to provide a range of practical activities. For example, during a mathematics lesson, pupils could not move around freely when measuring in metres. Some investigative work in science is restricted due to lack of space and concerns for safety. When a physical education lesson takes place in the hall, either the lesson is interrupted or the secretary's office is used as a thoroughfare. The hall is small and inhibits the range of movement in dance and physical education, particularly for older pupils. Pupils are extremely cramped when the whole school gathers for assembly. There is no medical room and sick pupils have to be treated in a narrow corridor outside the school office. The staff room is too small to accommodate the full staff and there are only two staff toilets. There has been no increase in the restricted hard play area and the large field has drainage problems which limits its use.
73. The range of resources is satisfactory in most areas of the curriculum. There has been a marked improvement in resources for information and communication technology since the last inspection. The school has ten computers in the computer suite with a good range of software, as

a result of being part of the National Grid for Learning project. Three computers are linked to the Internet. Parent Teacher Association funding has enabled classroom computers to be upgraded. These resources have been a contributory factor in the improvement of standards in this subject. Resources are also good in music, history, art, religious education and for pupils with special educational needs. The resources for teaching the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are adequate and being developed when needs arise. The new library has been situated in the only available space, which is a corridor. It is adequately stocked with a range of good quality books but its use is restricted. There is no room for quiet reading and the space does not allow for whole class research activities. For children under five, space is at a premium, but good use is made of the accommodation and, when weather is appropriate, sand and water trays are moved outside. Resources are satisfactory and are shared, with Reception children and Early Years children using the outside area. Science resources are adequate and are currently being audited and re-organised for use with the new scheme of work. There are an inadequate number of specialised tools for design and technology. The school continues to make good use of visits and visitors to enrich pupils' learning experiences.

The efficiency of the school

74. The overall efficiency of the school is very good. The school manages its finances very well. Financial planning supports priorities in the school development plan and these priorities are costed, expenditure closely monitored and value for money reviewed. Members of the governing body are very actively involved in the life of the school. They take a leading role in the school's strategic management and are fully involved in the formulation of the school's development plan. The finance committee, which has specific terms of reference, approves the budget and maintains an overview of spending. Regular finance committee meetings are held and detailed information is given to the governing body.
75. Very good financial management is complemented by excellent school administration. The headteacher and the office manager keep firm control of day-to-day finances. The school is very effective in securing value for money for its purchases. The office staff support the headteacher very well in ensuring that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Parents are high in their praise of the efficient and friendly support of these members of staff. All other staff, including lunchtime assistants, kitchen staff, cleaners and maintenance staff, make positive contributions to ensure that the school is a conducive place for learning.
76. There is a high financial commitment to staffing which is generally deployed effectively. However, teaching assistants do not always use their time efficiently enough to support pupils' learning, particularly in the whole class sessions in literacy and numeracy lessons. The development of learning resources and accommodation is considered strategically and they are used to the maximum of their potential. Funds for pupils with special educational needs are clearly designated and pupils receive good support.
77. The school gives good value for money. This judgement takes into account pupils' personal circumstances and prior attainment, the quality of education provided, pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development, improvement since the last inspection and the outcomes of education in terms of standards achieved. It also takes into account the unit cost of education, which is average for a school of this type.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

78. The Early Years children are those who are four years old on or after September 1st in the academic year. The older half of the cohort have the opportunity of attending school full-time from September and form the 'Reception' class. The younger half have the opportunity of attending part-time from September, working towards full-time attendance during the autumn term. They form the 'Early Years' class. All the children are full-time by January. During the inspection, all the children were under five.
79. The early years curriculum is based appropriately on the six areas of learning. Children learn in a way which is suitable for their age. Those who have special educational needs enjoy the full curriculum with extra adult support when necessary. As the children leave Early Years and Reception, the learning experiences they have received lead them naturally into the National Curriculum.
80. Children's personal and social skills are good. They have friendly relationships with each other and with the adults who work with them. They speak politely to visitors. They clearly enjoy coming to school and develop good attitudes to learning. New entrants settle in happily and the 'godparents' system works well; a particularly enjoyable event, for both 'godparent' and 'godchild', being the Easter Egg hunt. The children show that they can work on their own or in groups, sharing materials and equipment. On entering the classroom at the beginning of the day they record for themselves, with coloured tags, whether they will want a hot school lunch or will eat sandwiches. Most can manage to undress and dress themselves when changing for physical education and dance lessons. At the end of each session, children take responsibility for tidying away equipment and do this quickly and competently. They know the difference between right and wrong and behave well. Teaching and progress are good because expectations for pupils to develop independence are high.
81. Language and literacy standards are, overall, at the level expected for the children by the time they are five. The skills of speaking and listening are developing well and children in both classes speak to adults and one another very readily. They develop their language skills through good interaction with adults. During 'circle time' children describe the things which make them smile. They enjoy listening to stories and can remember the sequence of what happened when acting out a favourite story. In both classes, children enjoy books and handle them with care. From an early age, they understand that print carries a meaning. Many of the older children are able to follow the text of a story in a Big Book. They have a good grasp of letter sounds and can recognise and match individual words. This is the result of good teaching and the Early Reading Research programme which is followed regularly. Some are able to read a small book unaided and to answer questions about the story. In both classes, children enjoy looking at books. Writing is developing rather more slowly than the other aspects of language. Many pupils initially have difficulty controlling pencils. Younger children make their first attempts at writing with increasing control and older children write about a picture they have drawn or write other accounts of what they have been doing, sometimes copying under the teachers' writing or attempting their own. However, compared with other areas of language, the teaching of writing is less structured and there are fewer opportunities for this aspect of their work to develop. Children enjoy stories and singing rhymes and sometimes this helps with mathematics. In their language and literacy development, overall, children make good progress as a result of the enthusiastic teaching they receive.
82. Children make good progress in their mathematical development and standards of attainment are at the level expected for age. Overall teaching is good and children learn through the structured practical experiences provided. Most children recognise, write and count numbers up to ten and some are able to go beyond this number. Children in both classes successfully compare and sort

objects by size and colour and older children sort two-dimensional shapes, naming them correctly and counting the number of sides. Children add and subtract confidently, sometimes in singing rhymes. When painting, they recognise and recreate patterns with mathematical shapes.

83. Children develop a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They are increasing their understanding of how to use computers. Many children successfully use the keyboard to move through the pages of a program. They have been thinking about their homes and families and different family members. When looking at the world around them they have studied autumn leaves with their changing colours and have considered different seeds and nuts. When using their outdoor area, with its painted road, crossings and traffic lights, the children can describe the different features and what traffic lights do. In this wide-ranging area of their work the children are making sound progress, but there is scope for more investigative work where children can pose questions and observe carefully. Overall teaching is satisfactory and the curriculum is enriched by regular visits and visitors.
84. Children's creative development is at the expected level, overall, but in dance they reach very good standards as they listen and move imaginatively to music. In other areas of work, children show a growing control when using a paint brush and pencils and produce bright and colourful pictures. They use their mathematical knowledge when they make pictures from shapes of coloured paper. They use tools with care, choose materials and successfully assemble and secure them when they produce colourful greetings cards. All the children enjoy singing. They listen well to music and accompany their singing with a range of percussion instruments. In doing so, they know that, sometimes, they need the music to be soft or loud. Teaching is very good in dance where children benefit from specialist teaching and is good elsewhere. The progress they make is good.
85. The physical development of most children is good. With a few exceptions, children handle tools competently and confidently and are developing their fine motor control satisfactorily. They move confidently around the hall during physical education and dance lessons, with an increasing awareness of space and of the different movements they can make with their bodies. Nearly all can travel forwards and sideways with different speeds and in different ways, curling and stretching and stopping quickly with control. They can balance and hold a pose. Pupils have planned opportunities to develop their physical skills outside, using riding toys and climbing apparatus. In all of these ways, children are successfully developing increasing control and co-ordination. Teaching is good and teachers make good use of demonstration to improve children's performance. They are making good progress.

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

86. Pupils' attainment in English is below national averages in Key Stage 1 and in line with the national average by the end of Key Stage 2. This judgement is broadly reflected in the 1999 national test results, where, in Key Stage 1, writing was below and reading was well below average. In Key Stage 2, pupils achieved the national average. A higher percentage of pupils achieved level 4 than in the previous year and a similar percentage achieved the higher level 5 result.
87. In the previous inspection in 1996, the standards of attainment were judged to be above national expectations in both key stages. Therefore, in comparison with the previous inspection, standards have not been maintained. However, in Key Stage 1 in reading, there are clear signs that the involvement with a university in trials of a structured reading programme is having a beneficial affect and standards had risen to above average in 1998. Also, in both key stages, the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy is having a beneficial affect on pupils' standards.

88. By the time pupils leave the school, most are achieving above average in speaking and listening and a significant number are well above. This is a clear improvement on the judgement in the previous report, where standards were judged satisfactory. By the age of seven, standards of speaking are clearly above average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, listen very carefully to their teachers and one another. They listen to stories and instructions well and settle to their group activities with a clear understanding of what is required. Their speech is good and they talk knowledgeably about their work to the teacher and one another. By eleven years old, standards in conversation, discussion and answering questions are good. All pupils pay very close attention, particularly to the introductory sessions during the literacy hours. They discuss newspaper headlines and consider various literary devices to gain the reader's attention very effectively. Their discussions are mature and sensible. Pupils with special educational needs clearly benefit from the small group work situations with classroom assistants. These pupils listen and give answers with good concentration and confidence. This is also evident in Key Stage 1.
89. There is satisfactory progress, overall, in the standards of pupils' reading skills, although this is less consistent in Key Stage 1 and more consistent in Key Stage 2. In Year 1, the average and lower attainers know initial sounds to words and use picture clues to work out new words. They read with a satisfactory level of fluency. The higher attainers are well above average and read with good fluency and understanding. In Year 2, at the end of the key stage, the average readers are mainly accurate, although they do not all read consistently with fluency and expression. The lower attaining readers read at a similar level to average readers and they have a satisfactory understanding of their simple texts. Pupils take reading scheme books home. However, there is insufficient breadth to pupils' reading and teachers' comments are not sufficiently diagnostic to help parents and address areas of weakness. This means that pupils' progress throughout Key Stage 1 is inconsistent and there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining readers. In Key Stage 2, by Year 6, pupils' reading is in line with national expectations. Above average pupils read with good expression and are fluent, competent readers. They can talk knowledgeably about literature, libraries and their reading interests. Average and lower attaining readers can read accurately, although with limited expression and they have a satisfactory understanding of their chosen texts. However, in some Key Stage 2 classes, pupils' books are changed infrequently and this affects their attitude towards reading. Younger readers in Year 3 are mainly accurate, although their reading lacks fluency. Some average and above average readers are reading very similar books in Key Stage 2 and this affects the rates of progress of some readers. Although there are a variety of records of pupils' reading, these assessments are not sufficiently diagnostic in order to show teachers and pupils the areas for development. Many of the records are too general, although they have encouraging remarks.
90. The quality of pupils' writing is satisfactory and pupils achieve average standards in Key Stage 2. However, in Key Stage 1, many pupils are below average in the quality of handwriting, spelling and descriptive detail in their written work. There is not a consistent handwriting policy in practice throughout the school. Pupils in Key Stage 1 do not form all their letters accurately and most have not developed a neat, joined style by the end of Year 2. In Year 2, pupils write accurate sentences with mainly satisfactory simple punctuation. They answer comprehension questions satisfactorily and some of their stories are of an average standard. In Year 1 there are insufficient opportunities for regular writing, although pupils can spell simple words accurately. The level of pupils' work identified by teachers as average is clearly below the national average in both Years 1 and 2. In Key Stage 2, pupils construct imaginative stories from the War Office during World War 2 in response to a television programme. They can write in past and present tenses. By the end of the key stage, pupils compose their own newspaper headlines and write effective articles. From the scrutiny of work, pupils write with satisfactory detail about books such as 'The Borrowers'. There is a satisfactory range of writing, overall, although there is insufficient evidence of pupils' extended writing. Pupils with special educational needs can sort sentences accurately into chronological order and their factual writing is of a better standard than their descriptive work.

91. All pupils, including those with special educational needs make broadly satisfactory progress overall. However, although pupils' progress is satisfactory in writing in Key Stage 2, they make unsatisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. Younger pupils are not developing a neat, joined, cursive style of handwriting. The lack of opportunities for pupils to write regularly in other curriculum areas is adversely affecting pupils' progress in narrative and descriptive writing. In reading, pupils make satisfactory progress and read a range of texts. Therefore, pupils' progress in literacy is satisfactory, overall. All pupils make very good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills.
92. The attitude and response of all pupils is consistently good, pupils are extremely attentive and clearly enjoy their English and literacy sessions. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 enjoy their discussions about the moral and ethical issues surrounding newspaper headlines. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to support teachers and classroom assistants in their small group work.
93. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, overall, although it is noticeably different in quality and range between the two key stages. All teaching observed was satisfactory in Key Stage 1 with a mix of strengths and weaknesses. However, the teaching in Key Stage 2 is at least satisfactory and one third is very good or excellent. Lessons are well planned with a range of activities and pupils are managed well. In Key Stage 1, the introductions to the literacy hour sessions are satisfactory, but the rest of the lesson sometimes lacks pace. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support group tasks, but are not always used efficiently during class introductions. Teachers use the Big Books appropriately and question pupils well. Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations for the quality of pupils' writing and presentation. In the group work, dictionaries and word books are not always used to full advantage. The quality of marking is encouraging, but does not help pupils to improve. In Key Stage 2, teachers successfully encourage pupils to become involved in the introductions to literacy lessons through effective questioning. In Year 6, there are very detailed lesson plans, excellent encouraging relationships, very effective questioning and very good classroom organisation for pupils to consider the effect of various newspaper headlines. In Year 3, pupils are well managed with high expectations and the tasks to follow up a spy children's television programme are well matched to the range of pupils' abilities.
94. The subject is effectively co-ordinated and results are regularly analysed. As a consequence, the school has become involved with a national University to analyse and support pupils' reading with specific learning strategies. There are a satisfactory range of resources, although information technology and the newly sited library are under-used in supporting pupils' learning.

Mathematics

95. At the time of the previous inspection, standards were above national expectations at the end of both key stages. End of key stage assessments for pupils aged seven in 1999 show attainment to be below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. Although the number of pupils attaining the expected level (Level 2) has increased since the 1998 tests, the number of pupils attaining the higher level (Level 3) has decreased. The results of national tests for pupils aged eleven in 1999 show that standards of attainment are just below the national average and well below average for similar schools. The 1999 results in both key stages, relate to pupils who entered the school with well below average attainment and a well above average number had special educational needs. Inspection evidence indicates that standards of attainment, although improving, are still below average at the end of Key Stage 1, but are now in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. The school is working hard to improve standards, has produced targets and an action plan to this end and has successfully implemented the National Numeracy Strategy. These initiatives, including a greater emphasis on mental mathematics, are having a positive impact on standards, particularly in Key Stage 2. Girls

achieve higher standards than boys in Key Stage 2 tests. The school is aware of this and is working hard towards a solution.

96. By the end of Key Stage 1, the majority of pupils use mathematics as an integral part of classroom activities. They recognise and use simple patterns and relationships as, for example, when defining an object's position in a series using appropriate terms such as first, seventh and tenth. Higher attaining pupils discuss their work using familiar mathematical language, but a significant number of other pupils lack confidence in this respect. Pupils throughout the key stage are developing confident mental calculation skills. They add and subtract numbers up to 20, count in twos, fives and tens and most understand place value to 100. Higher attaining pupils count in tens beyond 100, can quickly add 59 and 10 mentally and are beginning to identify and use halves and quarters. Pupils of average ability count sets of objects reliably and use mental recall of addition and subtraction facts to 10. Pupils of below average ability count, order, add and subtract numbers when solving problems involving up to 10 objects. Most pupils have a sound understanding of two- and three-dimensional geometric shapes. They use correct names for shapes, such as rectangles, triangles and squares and identify them, using their properties. The majority of pupils measure and order objects using direct comparison and know the days of the week and the months of the year. Higher attaining pupils use standard units, such as metres and centimetres to measure length. Most pupils sort objects and classify them, demonstrating the criteria they have used.
97. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a good understanding of number work, which is central to the requirements of the National Curriculum and the National Numeracy Strategy. They describe number patterns and relationships, including multiple and factor. The majority of pupils show an understanding of place value of numbers up to 1,000. Higher attaining pupils use their understanding of place value to multiply whole numbers and decimals by 10, 100 and 1,000. Most pupils develop a good knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages. Lower attaining pupils develop a sound understanding of equivalent fractions and know that three quarters is equal to 6 eighths. Pupils throughout the key stage are less confident in developing their own strategies for solving problems and in using these strategies both within mathematics itself and in other practical contexts. Most Year 5 and Year 6 pupils use and interpret co-ordinates in the first quadrant and draw common two-dimensional shapes and orders of rotational symmetry. Higher attaining pupils, have an understanding of congruency and have a good knowledge of language associated with angles. Lower attaining pupils find the perimeters and areas of shapes by counting squares and other pupils go further and develop an understanding of the use of formulae. Although pupils use data handling within mathematics and develop an understanding of mode and median, the practical use of data handling across the curriculum is underdeveloped.
98. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment in mathematics and they make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when they are supported in lessons. Pupils of below average and average ability are generally challenged in lessons but pupils of above average ability often work below the level of their capabilities, particularly when they set their own pace of working within group tasks. This results in time being wasted when pupils are not challenged, and where expectations of what they can do are low. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in Key Stage 2, because of the high quality teaching they receive and the interest this generates. Setting arrangements are effective in providing for pupils of differing attainment. At this key stage, pupils' very good attitudes have a positive impact on the progress they are making.
99. Pupils throughout Key Stage 1 have good attitudes to mathematics. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have very good attitudes and for many, mathematics is their favourite subject. Pupils throughout the school concentrate well for sustained periods of time when the work challenges their interest. Relationships are very good and pupils work well together. They listen attentively to class teachers and to each other and appreciate each other's efforts. Insufficient emphasis is placed on

the presentation of work throughout the school, with the result that pupils' work is not always written in an organised way and misconceptions cannot be quickly identified.

100. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. It ranges from unsatisfactory to good in Key Stage 1 and from satisfactory to very good in Key Stage 2. Teachers throughout the school have good knowledge of the subject, planning of lessons is good and learning intentions are clear. In the good and very good lessons, teachers have high expectations, lessons move at a brisk pace and teachers make effective use of intervention strategies to further challenge pupils when they are engaged on tasks. Very good examples of this were seen in Year 4 lessons where pupils were very successfully making sensible estimates and testing them, using standard measures of length. In these lessons, very positive relationships have been established which results in raising pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Teaching has shortcomings where teachers' expectations of pupils' work and presentation are too low and where insufficient use is made of more rigorous teaching to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly in the case of higher attaining pupils. These lessons are not sufficiently well structured and the pace of working is too easily determined by pupils themselves. Throughout the school, marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and comments are rarely made on the content and quality of the work to help pupils develop their written work. However, in most lessons, teachers give good oral feedback as pupils work. Teachers place appropriate emphasis on developing the correct mathematical vocabulary and this makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy skills. Homework is well used to consolidate work done in the classroom and to encourage personal study.
101. The subject co-ordinators have worked hard to implement the National Numeracy Strategy and they have been successful in this. They have a clear vision for the future development of the subject and, to this end, have produced a development plan which contains clear and achievable targets. Resources are adequate for present needs, are well managed and are efficiently used. Teaching assistants are not always used to full advantage. The accommodation places limitations on opportunities to use and apply mathematics, but teachers make efficient use of the available space. Assessment procedures are good and assessment information is generally well used in planning work for pupils of differing attainment, except for the higher attainers in Key Stage 1.

Science

102. In 1996, at the time of the last inspection, standards of attainment were found to be broadly in line with the national average at the end of both key stages. The end of Key Stage 1 assessments in 1999 show attainment to be below the national average and well below the average of similar schools. The percentage of pupils of pupils attaining the expected level (level 2) has increased since the last inspection and the percentage attaining the higher level 3 has fallen. The results of eleven year olds in the 1999 national tests were below the national average and well below those of similar schools. In 1999, the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected level 4 had increased considerably, although only a very small percentage of pupils achieved the higher level (level 5). The group of pupils tested in Key Stage 1 in 1999 entered school with below average attainment and contained a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs. Inspection evidence indicates that standards of attainment are improving, but are still below average in Key Stage 1 and are in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. Several factors contribute to the improvements seen during the inspection and are attributed to the changes made to raise standards, implemented in September. A new detailed scheme of work has been introduced which is based on national guidance and is supportive of planning for differing abilities. Science is now taught as a separate subject rather than as part of a topic theme. In Key Stage 2, the staff successfully exchange classes for science lessons in order to share expertise.
103. In Key Stage 1, pupils are able to use their senses to compare living things in the school grounds and find out how much light is needed to see various objects in a class experiment. However, there was little evidence in the scrutiny of work to show that pupils could record what they had

found out from their investigations and this was cited as a strong feature of the work at the time of the last inspection. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of living things and can name the external parts of a plant and the human body. From their observations around the school grounds pupils know that plants and animals are found in the local environment and recognise similarities and differences between them. They have less knowledge of simple properties of materials and ways in which they can be changed by heating, bending and squashing. Pupils know that everyday appliances use electricity and know sources of light and sound. They have only a superficial knowledge of forces and sound as a result of the coverage given to these areas in the previous cycle of topics.

104. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have satisfactory investigative skills and were observed investigating a rocket launch. Pupils can recognise the need for a fair test, describe the way they performed their task and form a hypothesis. They can predict what will happen when they vary one factor. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of living things and can name and locate the main organs of the human body and flowering plants. They can write about the skeleton and muscles and have good factual recall of information and vocabulary. They can name a variety of materials and know how the properties of materials make them suitable for particular uses. Pupils can sort materials as solids, liquids and gases. They have a good understanding of the properties of light and can draw ray diagrams to show how periscopes work. Pupils in Year 6, who were studying the Earth and beyond, knew how time could be measured using the solar system and had learnt a lot of interesting facts about the universe as a result of personal research.
105. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. They develop their observation skills through practical work, although, in some of the lessons observed pupils were not active enough. Pupils gain satisfactory knowledge and understanding and are able to use the scientific vocabulary they learn in their oral explanations. The expectations for pupils to use their literacy skills to record for themselves in written or pictorial form are not high enough. Completed work and worksheets are kept in folders with other work and it is difficult for pupils and teachers to see the progress being made. Standards of presentation are also variable as a result. In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress and their investigative skills develop because of the structured approach used in all classes. Pupils use their literacy skills well to record for themselves in a variety of ways. Pupils investigating the properties of different liquids in Year 4 were able to record their results in a table. In Year 6, some pupils drew graphs to show how well different surfaces reflected light. Another group of pupils in Year 5 used descriptive labels to explain how light was split into colours when it passed through a prism. There were good examples of pupils using the Internet and electronic encyclopedias to research information. Computers are regularly used by pupils in class to record data and draw graphs. In Year 4, pupils used their numeracy skills to accurately measure body parts and presented their results in bar charts. There was less evidence of pupils recording their reasoning and recording what changes could be made to make an experiment more successful. Standards of presentation improve and written work is well organised. Pupils can see the progress they are making and try to improve their work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and are given tasks which are carefully matched to their ability. These pupils are often well supported by teaching assistants during their practical work. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and good progress in Key Stage 2 where there is planned challenge and higher expectations within lessons.
106. Pupils in both key stages listen carefully to their teacher and to the contributions of other pupils in the whole class sessions. They answer questions thoughtfully and make good use of the subject vocabulary. Behaviour is generally very good and is excellent in the practical sessions where they work in very cramped conditions. They show good concentration in spite of the noise intrusion from classes working in adjacent bays. Pupils handle equipment with care and are mindful of safety issues. Pupils show very good co-operation when working with partners and groups and are careful to ensure that all share the task.

107. Overall, the quality of teaching observed was good and shows improvement since the last inspection where it was described as variable. In Key Stage 1 teaching was satisfactory, overall, and a quarter of the teaching observed was good. In Key Stage 2, over half of the teaching observed was good and one very good lesson was seen. All lessons are carefully planned to the new scheme of work and have clear learning objectives, which are shared with the pupils. Many staff have good subject knowledge and regularly exchange classes to share expertise within the phase. Explanations are clear and informative. Staff use as wide a variety of methods and organisational strategies as the limited space will allow. Pupils are very well managed. Teaching assistants and adult helpers are used well in lessons and are clear as to what is required. There is often a good review of the learning at the end of the session with groups reporting back to the class. In Key Stage 2, expectations of higher attaining pupils and of written work are higher than in Key Stage 1. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and varies from examples of excellent to unsatisfactory practice. Assessment procedures are good and show improvement since the last inspection. Teachers record assessments made in lessons and these are used to plan following lessons and structure tasks to meet pupils' needs. Assessments are regularly made against National Curriculum levels and are used as a basis for teacher assessments.
108. The subject is well managed and led by the co-ordinators and they have a clear development plan for the subject. The policy and new scheme of work meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The co-ordinator is fully involved in a monitoring programme and is released from class on a regular basis to follow it. The monitoring has identified areas for improvement, for example, progression and continuity of learning which were difficult to achieve through a topic approach. The co-ordinators are confident that changes made to the scheme of work and the organisational changes will result in improving standards. Resources are adequate and are being re-organised for the new scheme of work. Information technology is used well to support learning.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Information and communications technology

109. The attainment of pupils is in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection where 'standards were below average in some important aspects at Key Stage 2' and was a key issue for improvement. The improvement is due to the appointment of staff with expertise in information technology, improved resources through involvement in the National Grid for Learning programme and a new scheme of work based on national guidance. A strength is the timetabled provision for whole class sessions which take place in the computer suite and are taught by the staff with expertise. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop and extend their knowledge in their own classroom and by joining one of the computer clubs. Arrangements are made for pupils who do not have access to computers at home to make use of school facilities early in the morning.
110. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils confidently use the keyboard and the mouse to give commands and type text directly onto the screen. They know how to use the mouse to scroll down the page, highlight text, use the delete key and print their work. They draw good pictures to illustrate parts of stories they have read, using a painting program. Pupils are able to select from the menu brushes and pencils of appropriate thickness, select and change colours, edit and fill in colour. They draw firework designs and can add poetry in text boxes. They do simple block graphs on eye colour. Pupils can write a program to guide a programmable toy through a lego maze. They search and find information about animals from a CD ROM to support their topic work. Pupils learn to operate and control communication equipment such as cassette recorders.
111. By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils independently use information technology throughout their work. They use word processing to write stories, reports and record work in many curriculum areas, choosing appropriate fonts and styles. They write poems and centre them on the page. They

import pictures and clipart into text, altering the size to suit the page and layout. Pupils use a desktop publishing program to create newspapers. They collect data from their science experiments and graveyard surveys and use it to create bar charts, piecharts and line graphs. They keep their work in their own file, retrieving it as necessary. They understand the 'a', 'c' and 'd' drives. They create circles, squares, hexagons and octagons using Logo. Pupils use a mixture of these shapes and angles to make their own designs. They are beginning to use a spreadsheet to calculate complex totals. They use CD ROM and Internet regularly for research in much of their work. Pupils send and retrieve e-mail. They are developing a good technical vocabulary. Older pupils use a scanner and digital camera and have created a web-site which is regularly updated.

112. In the whole class lessons, pupils make very good progress in learning new skills and programs. They make good progress over time in developing their skills and applying their skills to other areas of the curriculum by regularly using the computers in class. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have made very good progress since the completion of the computer suite last January and have made up much of the lost ground. Year 5 and 6 pupils confidently use the computer as a tool for learning.
113. When pupils use the computers, they work well in pairs or independently. They show care for equipment and help each other. They are interested in their work and keen to learn. Pupils from Year R to Year 6 display confidence and purpose in their use of the computer. They take pride in work, which is completed well and talk confidently about what they have done. The pupils' behaviour is very good.
114. Teaching is good, overall, at both key stages. Teachers delivering the whole class lessons have a clear understanding of the programmes of study and high expectations. New skills are specifically identified and taught to the whole class, but good learning experiences to develop these particular skills are not always planned into following class work. All teachers have developed their knowledge by the sharing of expertise within the school. Teachers display appropriate knowledge of the potential use of the equipment in their own classrooms, but some accept that more training is needed. Additional staff training is planned next term which is to be funded by the 'New Opportunities' lottery grant. Assessment is an area for development, although a portfolio of leveled exemplars is being collected.
115. The scheme of work is detailed to ensure a broad and consistent programme of teaching and learning and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Resources are good. The computer suite is used well for whole class lessons, but is small and cramped, especially when used by older pupils. Parents have funded the upgrading of classroom computers which are in regular use. The school is building up a good selection of software, although there is no control program that includes sensing. The subject is developing well across the curriculum, particularly in numeracy and art. Links with music have yet to be established.
116. The subject is very well managed by two co-ordinators, one of whom has recently joined the school. The Key Stage 2 co-ordinator has been responsible for setting up the computer suite, raising the profile of the subject within the curriculum and developing staff expertise. The co-ordinators have a clear plan for the future development of the subject.

Religious education

117. Standards of attainment in religious education are in line with the level expected by the local agreed syllabus at the end of Key Stage 1 and are above expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. At the time of the last inspection, standards of attainment were above those expected for pupils at the end of both key stages. Teachers are well supported by the school's scheme of work which is closely linked to the local agreed syllabus and there is good coverage. Throughout the school, pupils are increasing their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other faiths.

118. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils know a range of Bible stories and describe some important events in the life of Jesus. Their awareness of personal relationships is well developed and they understand the importance of sharing, helping others and being kind. Pupils know that they are members of different communities such as the family, school and other groups such as clubs and societies and that the success of these communities depends on the behaviour and contribution of every member. They show an encouraging understanding that people are different, yet have the same physical and emotional needs, and that everyone is special.
119. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can relate some of the concepts of different faiths to their own experiences and go beyond this to discover more about religious beliefs, ideas and structures. They have a growing knowledge and understanding of the symbolic titles associated with Jesus such as, the Good Shepherd, Bread of Life, Water of Life and the Light of the World. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils are beginning to discuss the Christian view of Jesus using clues provided by the four Gospel writers. They know facts about other main faiths in Britain such as Judaism and Hinduism and that each has a supreme Being, a Holy Centre and key leaders, such as Moses and Krishna. Pupils also know that each faith has a holy text, such as the Torah and the Bible and that each gives rules and examples for living. They develop a good understanding that religions share some common features; for example, the role of festivals and the importance of giving as well as receiving are well understood.
120. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and good progress in Key Stage 2. Pupils make very good progress at the end of Key Stage 2 where the teaching is of a very high quality. As they become older, they develop the maturity to apply to their own lives the meaning of stories such as that of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. Their insight into self and others is deepened and they are developing a good understanding of the religious beliefs, attitudes and activities of other people in developing their own beliefs and values. Pupils show no signs of intolerance towards those whose beliefs differ from their own. Good behaviour and positive relationships contribute to pupils' progress and reflect their attainment in the subject.
121. Pupils' response in lessons is mostly very good, particularly where good teaching motivates them. The majority of pupils throughout the school show real interest and listen attentively to teachers and to each other. A particularly good example of this was seen in a Year 5 lesson where pupils were considering good and evil through the story of Ramayana. Pupils work well together and show confidence when speaking to the class as a whole. The very good relationships that exist give pupils confidence when speaking to an audience.
122. Teaching observed during the week of inspection was satisfactory, overall, in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Teaching at the end of Key Stage 2 is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The very good teaching is characterised by secure knowledge of the subject and the use of a variety of appropriate teaching strategies which challenge pupils' interest and encourage discussion through rigorous, planned questioning. A very good example of this was seen in a Year 6 lesson where pupils were being effectively led in researching the Gospels for clues about the life and character of Jesus. Special features of the teaching are the sincerity and sensitivity with which teachers approach Christianity, other faiths and the issues raised in lessons. Teaching is used well to reinforce moral values and provide recognition of pupils' own value as individuals.
123. The subject co-ordinator has a very good knowledge of the subject and effectively promotes religious education throughout the school. The importance of equality of opportunity and the need to encourage respect for and understanding of other faiths is emphasised appropriately in lessons. The teaching of religious education is supported and enhanced by assemblies, visiting speakers and acts of worship. There is a good range of stimulating artefacts to promote knowledge and understanding of this area of the curriculum. The subject makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Art

124. The quality of art on display, much of which is from pupils who attend the art club, is well above that expected for pupils of a similar age and much of the Year 6 work is outstanding. This judgement is a clear improvement on that made in the previous inspection. However, during the week of inspection, the high quality art on display in the shared areas was less evident in classrooms, where the quality of art is in line with national expectations.
125. In Key Stage 1, pupils create effective three-dimensional mini beasts as part of a habitat collage. There are good examples of chalk and crayon drawings. Pupils produce satisfactory paintings after a visit to a local museum. There are some good quality Van Gogh style paintings on display and in Year 2 pupils are familiar with the use of information technology art packages to produce pictures and creative letters. During the inspection, pupils made plasticine divas for candles and pupils in Year 1 displayed satisfactory skills in their close observational drawings. In Key Stage 2, pupils are very aware of famous artists and use the internet successfully to find out about Mondrian and create their own mathematical shape pictures. Younger pupils in Year 3 know how to use papier-mâché to create a bowl. However, a clear strength is the quantity of high quality painting in the style of various artists. These include Monet's seascapes and images from Van Gogh. There is evidence of high quality work on a sea theme which is representative of pupils working with a variety of media throughout the school. The high quality Egyptian work includes life sized three-dimensional sarcophagus and artefacts. There are also extremely effective life sized papier-mâché human figures in a Year 3 classroom.
126. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and very good progress in Key Stage 2. The pupils involved with the art club clearly make excellent progress. All pupils are clearly used to working with a variety of media in two and three dimensions. For example, in a Year 6 class pupils use textiles creatively and make very good progress with their fabric work.
127. The attitude of all pupils is consistently good. They work sensibly and take a pride in their work. They are very willing to discuss what they hope to achieve and obviously take an active interest in the high quality work on display around the school.
128. The quality of teaching is good, overall, although in Key Stage 1 from lessons observed, it is satisfactory. Teachers have a good subject knowledge and are very encouraging, although they do not consistently demonstrate and explain skills. All teachers are well prepared with a range of resources which are used effectively. In Year 6, use of the Internet and text books is very effective in extending pupils' learning about Mondrian. From the high quality work on display and from discussion with the subject co-ordinator, it is clear that the teaching of pupils in the art club is having an extremely beneficial effect on the standards achieved by them.
129. The subject is well co-ordinated and the co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge which has been used effectively to raise standards. There is a good range of resources.

Design and technology

130. The quality of work observed in lessons, on display and in a scrutiny of previous work and photographs indicates that pupils achieve broadly in line with that expected for pupils of a similar age at both key stages. This is a similar judgement to the previous inspection, although there is less evidence of standards above. However, in Year 6, the Tudor model houses and hand stitched artefacts are above expectations.
131. Progress is satisfactory, overall. In Key Stage 1 pupils satisfactorily create their own birthday cards, using different resources. They create diva holders for their candles of average quality.

However, although the quality of making is satisfactory, the standard of designing is much less well developed. This has been identified by the co-ordinator as a result of monitoring. There are some good examples of baby bear houses using recycled materials and satisfactory wheeled vehicles using various packagings for the chassis. In Key Stage 2, pupils create and evaluate their designs of Tudor houses and clearly use their plans effectively in the making process. In Year 6, pupils use textiles and materials effectively and have good skills in sewing and weaving. However, their designing skills are less well developed. In Year 4, pupils use wood and wire netting satisfactorily. Pupils make good progress in joining and in learning about construction.

132. Pupils' attitudes are good. They are very attentive and use tools and materials conscientiously. Year 1 pupils settle very quickly to their task of creating a design for their lamps. Year 5 and 6 pupils co-operate very well together and concentrate quietly throughout the whole session.
133. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good in Key Stage 1 and very good in Key Stage 2. This judgement is based primarily on observing pupils being supported well during lessons with their making skills. Teachers explain well and recap effectively on previous learning. All teachers in these practical sessions use classroom helpers and parent volunteers very efficiently to support small groups of pupils. In Year 6 the very good quality lesson plans ensure a high quality structure and organisation to the session. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and ensure very productive working environments.
134. The subject is satisfactorily co-ordinated and there is an adequate range of resources.

Geography

135. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 1 as geography was not being taught during the inspection. Lessons were observed at Key Stage 2. Judgements are based on lessons, a scrutiny of work done previously, discussions with pupils, displays of work around the school and a study of teachers' plans.
136. Standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 are what would be expected of most pupils of this age. Standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 are also at the expected level for age. This reflects judgements made in the previous inspection.
137. Key Stage 1 pupils have made a study of the school grounds, having thought beforehand what they might see. They noted natural features: that the area is not completely flat, that there are trees and flowers growing there and that it is possible to see into some rooms. They then drew pictures, recording what they had seen, noting the natural features and those made by people. Pupils have looked at a map of the British Isles and successfully identified England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Essex. Older Key Stage 1 pupils have considered travel further afield, by studying a map of the world and deciding what form of transport would be necessary to travel over the seas.
138. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils use their knowledge, understanding and skills of enquiry to study a range of places, comparing and contrasting them with the local area. Visits have been made to Overstrand in Norfolk and to nearby coastal areas. Pupils have studied a wide selection of maps. Further afield, they have considered life in an Indian village and compared this with their own village. The theme of 'Water' has allowed pupils to learn about the water cycle, to consider its importance in many locations and how water is made accessible. Following a study of the school's water systems, older pupils were set the task of designing and costing a method for transporting water from the area of the school gate into the classroom. In an enjoyable exercise in devising methods, from bringing buckets full of water from home, to pulley systems or hose pipes, groups drew on existing knowledge and shared experiences as they tried to solve the problem.

139. At both key stages, pupils make satisfactory progress in the subject, overall, and good progress in problem-solving. Younger pupils are learning to describe the features which give a place its character and can identify what they like and what they would like to change in the environment. Older pupils learn to appreciate the importance of location in studying places, use a selection of resources and develop a range of skills. Both girls and boys progress equally well. Pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress because they are well supported in class.
140. Pupils enjoy the subject. They are attentive in lessons and have a very positive attitude to their work. They work well and sensibly alone or as a group. They relate well to their teachers and to one another.
141. The teaching is good. Lessons are well prepared and planning is good. Teachers have carefully assessed what pupils know and need to learn as they plan the next lessons. They make very good use of questioning strategies to make pupils think in detail. They give good support to individuals during the lessons. Classes are very well managed. Teachers expect pupils to behave well and to work hard, and they do.
142. The curriculum is interesting and has benefited from the scheme of work suggested by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. It is being incorporated into the school's existing programme of work. The school is suitably resourced to teach the existing curriculum, with sufficient reference books, atlases, maps and globes, videos and CD-ROMs. Good use is made of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The school also makes good use of the immediate area for studies and places further afield when pupils go on residential visits and engage in fieldwork. Pupils' progress is assessed at the end of lessons and after completion of a unit of work. Samples of work are also retained.
143. The subject is well co-ordinated by two subject managers. They do not have release from class but see teachers' plans of work and collect together samples of work which show attainment at different levels and give them an indication of how well pupils are progressing in the subject. A strength of the subject is the way pupils are using different resources to learn about places and are coming together to solve the kind of problems that people in some parts of the world have to tackle.
144. Since the last inspection, lesson planning has improved. Aims are clearer. The activities chosen are linked to these aims and help pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. There are also, now, sufficient reference books for pupils and teachers to use.

History

145. No lessons were observed in Key Stage 1 as history is not taught in the autumn term. Two lessons were observed in Key Stage 2. Judgements are based on the lessons, on a scrutiny of work done previously, displays of work in classrooms and around the school and a study of teachers' plans.
146. Evidence shows that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is at the standard expected for their age. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is above the standard expected. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were judged to be average.
147. Pupils in both key stages compare life in the past and the present through a study of particular evidence and have knowledge of famous people in history. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have studied old photographs of children in school, have seen what the classrooms were like and noted the

clothes children wore and they have comparisons with the present day. They have studied different forms of transport across the ages and have correctly placed them in order, from the oldest to the newest. As part of a lively topic on Fireworks, pupils have heard the story of Guy Fawkes. In Key Stage 2 pupils have learned about World War 2, have looked at photographs of the effects of the Blitz, interviewed people who lived at that time and have visited Braintree Museum to see a typical classroom. Older pupils have studied Tudor England in some detail and have used a range of sources to understand the arguments for and against Henry VIII's divorce and the split from Rome. In doing so they have formed their own opinions.

148. Pupils at Key Stage 1 make sound progress as they learn to use time lines and understand something of historical enquiry. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress. The topics are well planned and resourced and pupils have opportunities to use an increasing range of sources of evidence. Pupils successfully use reference books, photographs and CD-ROMs. They study portraits and clothes and make visits, such as the day at Kentwell Hall, a Tudor mansion. Pupils note the characteristic features of the periods studied and learn more through their own personal research. In some instances, this research is very well presented, drawing the eye and asking to be read, but sometimes the standard of presentation does not reflect the good standard of the content.
149. Pupils enjoy history. They are interested, engage well with the lessons and show a very positive response. Pupils work well together and particularly enjoyed acting out the role of Evacuation Officers in June 1940. Pupils who have special educational needs progress as well as their peers because they are well supported in the classroom by teachers and classroom assistants.
150. The teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers use methods which capture their pupils' imagination as well as providing them with information. They have appropriate expectations that their pupils will understand and achieve. Teachers carefully assess progress and activities planned help pupils to move on in their knowledge and understanding. The well chosen and good quality resources also help pupils to develop the skills of historical enquiry and interpretation of evidence. Opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills are missed.
151. The subject is well co-ordinated by two subject managers, one for each key stage. They have ensured an interesting curriculum with resources to support it. They have developed a challenging programme of work based on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's scheme. They have improved pupils' skills. Neither subject manager has release from class to observe teaching, but they know what is being taught by seeing teachers' plans. Throughout the school, work is carefully assessed through a sampling of pupils' work and by an evaluation, at the end of a unit of work, of how well each pupil has done.
152. There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection in the level of resourcing, in lesson planning and the assessment of pupils' progress.

Music

153. Pupils make very good progress in performing, composing, listening and appraising as they move through the school. The progress of many pupils, including the higher attainers, is strengthened by participating in the wide variety of additional musical activities offered. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and they develop self-esteem by successfully taking part in music lessons, choir and music making activities. Music is a valuable part of the school's provision and plays an important part in the life of the school. The musical opportunities which are provided for pupils are highly praised and appreciated by parents. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn to play the keyboard, violin, guitar and woodwind instruments from peripatetic staff and lessons are funded by parents. There are very good opportunities within the school to learn to play the recorder from Year 2 upwards. Older pupils

can learn to play the treble recorder. The school band skilfully accompanies the hymns and often provide music at the start and end of assemblies.

154. The school offers a rich, broad and balanced curriculum, which builds systematically on what pupils know and understand. Good links are made where possible with other areas of the curriculum. For example, during the inspection, Year 1 pupils developed their language work to describe firework sounds and create mini-firework compositions using untuned percussion instruments. Links were made in Year 6 with a study of the solar system and the music they appraised. Music is used successfully to create an effective atmosphere for the collective act of worship.
155. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils sing in tune with good phrasing, timing and volume when performing the 'Bonfire Song' in class lessons. They are keen to evaluate, refine and improve their performance during the lesson. Pupils know the words to a good number of songs and hymns which they sing with confidence, an awareness of pulse and of each other. In listening to music, pupils can describe and compare sounds and pieces of music in simple terms and develop a musical vocabulary. They know the names of and can identify many untuned percussion instruments which they use to accompany the 'Bonfire' song. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment meets the expectations for their age, with a significant number of pupils exceeding national expectations.
156. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils read notation and understand, use and respond to musical terms. They have developed the power of their singing and their ability to blend their voices in parts to make a good choral sound. The lessons observed were part of a unit of work on listening and appraising. Pupils listen very well. In Year 3 pupils can recognise the music from other cultures, suggest the country of origin and the kind of instruments used. They can perform an African song and use instruments and body percussion to keep the rhythm. Pupils can clap four beat rhythms in two parts. Year 6 pupils can follow loud and soft patterns and use musical terms such as 'forte' and 'dynamics' when describing pre-recorded music. They can vividly describe the pictures that the music of 'Mars' and 'The War of the Worlds' makes in their imagination. Standards are high and many exceed expectations for their age.
157. Pupils' attitudes to music are very positive, they are enthusiastic and confident performers. They show interest and musical discipline in their work. They behave well in lessons. They concentrate well, listen attentively, appreciate the efforts of others and contribute eagerly. Some very good examples of the positive relationships were seen in all the lessons observed where pupils were working very well together.
158. Teaching of music is very good throughout the school. This judgement is based on observations of lessons and other musical activities. The part-time specialist teaches music to all classes in the school. Four whole class lessons were observed during the inspection as well as recorder groups, the choir and school band rehearsal. The careful lesson planning and very high expectations enable pupils to make very good progress, gain confidence and enjoy their lessons. Time and resources are used very effectively and a good variety of activities and tasks are used which enable the lessons to move at a good pace. The school has several staff, including the headteacher, who have musical expertise and contribute significantly to the high standards achieved. A talented parent helps with the choir and accompanies musical productions.
159. The subject is conscientiously and enthusiastically managed by the headteacher and part-time music specialist. There is good liaison with the local authority's peripatetic staff who effectively support the school in its efforts to achieve high standards. There is a detailed scheme of work and a set of learning objectives against which each pupil is assessed. New assessment procedures for Year 2 and Year 6 are being developed. Resources are good, instruments are sufficient for class lessons and there is a wide range, including some from other cultures. As yet, little use is made of information technology in music. Pupils are given excellent opportunities to perform to

parents, governors and in concerts in the local community. The high standards observed in the previous inspection have been maintained. Music is a strength of the school.

Physical education

160. At the end of both key stages, all pupils achieve broadly in line with that expected for pupils of a similar age and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress, overall. This judgement is a decline on that reported in the previous inspection in 1996, when pupils were judged above expectations and making good progress. However, in swimming, pupils achieve above national expectations and, in dance, the quality of creative movements is clearly above average.
161. At the end of Key Stage 2 in gymnastics, pupils can produce sequenced movements on the floor and apparatus and their finishing positions are satisfactory. They are less secure in the quality of their balances, although their movements along the low apparatus are average. In Key Stage 2, in games lessons, pupils in Year 3 know how to dribble and pass a ball in hockey. Their dribbling skills are better than their passing, as their level of accuracy is not secure. However, during the session, pupils make good progress and become more accurate and proficient. In dance in Year 6, pupils move well in time to the music and their individual and group creative dances are of a good standard. Pupils imaginatively create their own hakkas and perform these very well to traditional New Zealand music. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 keep in time to a rhythm while using a parachute indoors and their movements are satisfactory.
162. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress, overall, although their progress in Key Stage 1 is inconsistent and when gymnastic activities lack challenge, pupils make unsatisfactory progress. In Key Stage 2, during the early morning dance club, pupils make very good progress in their creative dances. When using the parachute, pupils' co-operative skills develop well.
163. Pupils' attitudes are consistently good and, during dance, pupils' responses are very good. During games, pupils' attention remains well focused even when playing hockey outside in the cold weather. In gymnastics, pupils make satisfactory progress in the quality of their movements and finishing positions, although the development of balances is unsatisfactory.
164. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at the end of Key Stage 2. However, in the two lessons observed at Key Stage 1, one was unsatisfactory as expectations for pupils' movements were not sufficiently high and subject knowledge was insecure. Teachers use pupils' examples well to demonstrate good movements. All teachers have satisfactory control and good awareness of health and safety issues. Classroom assistants are used effectively in gymnastics and games sessions. In dance lessons and also during parachute games, the enthusiasm of the teacher is clearly infectious and motivates pupils to produce a good performance. During a games session outside in the cold weather, the teacher motivated pupils well to concentrate on their hockey skills. Teachers have good subject knowledge and organise time and resources effectively.

Swimming

165. *The inspection of this school included a focused view of swimming which is reported below.*
166. The standards achieved by the majority of pupils in swimming at the end of Key Stage 2 are good. Most pupils are able to swim at least 25 metres competently and unaided and many exceed this. They show good levels of confidence as they enthusiastically enter the water using a variety of dives and jumps. All have good knowledge of water safety issues and are aware of the need

for care near water which they learn to enter and leave safely. They understand the importance of being able to survive in the water through the development of swimming skills. This is particularly appropriate given the nature of the surrounding countryside and the school's proximity to tidal waters. Pupils develop the quality of their strokes well as they concentrate on synchronising breathing and arm movements in front crawl or the correct use of arms and legs in backstroke.

167. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. From the time that they commence swimming in Reception until they leave in Year 6 they consistently extend the distance that they are able to swim, increase their confidence and competence and improve their survival skills and the quality of their style.
168. Teaching is good in the majority of sessions observed and very good in the remainder. Instructors make good use of praise to encourage and reward pupils. They move skills forward at a good pace and with suitable levels of support and encouragement. Good attention is paid to coaching points as pupils are taught to enter the water safely or the finer points of a particular stroke. Care is taken to ensure that all pupils, including the less skilful, are fully supported within the small groups and through the good use of suitable swim aids and the learner pool. Sessions are well planned to build on pupils' existing skills and to develop and extend them as they work towards various awards. These include personal survival as well as distance and style. Pupils gain obvious enjoyment from their swimming. They talk enthusiastically about the progress they are making and are knowledgeable about the award system and the next stages.
169. The timetable ensures that every year pupils receive a half-termly block of focused swimming instruction as part of the physical education curriculum. This together with the small teaching groups created by the high level of staffing ensures that pupils make good consistent progress year on year and attain a good level of competence. Pupils travel to the well equipped civic pool in Colchester with its learner pool, large main pool and separate diving area for their half hour sessions. Although this means that pupils are away from school for the majority of a morning session the school takes care to balance the allocation of swimming time against the rest of the curriculum, whilst reflecting its importance as a life saving skill.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

170. The inspection was carried out by a team of six inspectors, which included a lay inspector. During the 5 days of classroom observations which involved 25 inspector days, 91 lessons, including parts of lessons, were inspected, totalling 68 hours. There was a focused inspection of swimming at Key Stage 2. The total includes sampling pupils' work. Time was also spent interviewing staff with management responsibilities and talking to pupils.
171. Inspectors gathered evidence from a wide range of sources, which included classroom observations, discussions with children in class and also in small groups and hearing a representative sample of readers from each year group.
172. Discussions were held with the headteacher, chair of governors, finance and curriculum governors, SEN governor, Literacy and Numeracy and parent governors, PTA representatives and members of teaching staff, non teaching and support staff for pupils with special educational needs. Inspectors attended extra-curricular activities and a parents' meeting.
173. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, which included the school management plan, curriculum plans, school policies, the schemes of work, financial information, teachers' plans and pupils' records. Information from a questionnaire sent to parents, which 48 per cent returned, was analysed. A meeting was held with parents, of whom 35 attended.

174. DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR – Y6	357	4	67	36

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (YR – Y6)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	15.60
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	22.88

Education support staff (YR – Y6)

Total number of education support staff:	9
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	148.0
Average class size:	28.0

Financial data

Financial year:	1999
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	£
Total Income	590399
Total Expenditure	596275
Expenditure per pupil	1594.32
Balance brought forward from previous year	14396
Balance carried forward to next year	8520

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

256

Number of questionnaires returned:

121

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	36	58	2	2	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	39	48	6	6	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	16	49	25	4	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	25	64	5	4	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	24	55	11	6	2
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	26	60	10	2	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	26	56	12	4	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	28	55	9	4	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	31	55	10	2	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	31	52	12	2	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	51	44	2	2	0

Other issues raised by parents

- A lack of extra-curricular activities for some year groups.
- The school regards pupils as individuals, although it is large.