

INSPECTION REPORT

BUTTSBURY INFANT SCHOOL

Billericay

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115276

Headteacher: Mrs Sue Phelps

Reporting inspector: Mrs Karen Finney
23163

Dates of inspection: 12 – 15 June 2000

Inspection number: 186998

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	4 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Perry Street Billericay Essex
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Burnell
Date of previous inspection:	12 – 15 February 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Karen Finney	Registered inspector	Information technology	How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements
		Religious education	How well are pupils or students taught?
		English as an additional language	How well is the school led and managed?
			Staffing
			What should the school do to improve further?
Anthony West	Lay inspector		Attendance
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
			Accommodation
Nina Bee	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered?
		Art	Assessment
		Design and technology	
		Special educational needs	
Anne Dancer	Team inspector	Under fives	Financial efficiency
		Mathematics	Resources
		Music	
Maurice Leyland	Team inspector	Science	How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
		Geography	
		History	
		Physical education	
		Equal opportunities	

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Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This school is a large infant school for boys and girls aged between four and seven years. It has 343 pupils on roll, including twenty eight children aged under five in the reception classes. Pupils' attainment on entry is variable from year to year but overall it is broadly average.

Most pupils come from very favourable socio-economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals (3.5 per cent) is well below the national average. The majority of pupils are from a white ethnic background. Nine pupils have English as an additional language, including five pupils at an early stage of language acquisition. Twenty six pupils (7.6 per cent) are on the special educational needs register, which is well below the national average. Most of these pupils only have minor special learning needs and are at Stage 1 on the register. Two pupils have statements of special educational need, a proportion below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Buttsbury Infant School is an effective school. It is popular with parents and has a very good reputation in the local community. The quality of the school's links with parents and the community have recently been recognised in the Schools' Curriculum Award for 'Progress Through Partnership'. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards coming to school and most work hard. The standards achieved by pupils by the time they leave are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and very good in the reception classes. The school is well led and managed and governors are actively involved. Taking into account the school's effectiveness, the socio-economic background of pupils and high unit costs, the school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above the national average by the end of Key Stage 1.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and very good for children under five and in the reception classes.
- Pupils are very positive about coming to school and their behaviour is very good. This contributes to the high standards they achieve.
- The school has very good links with the community which contribute to a rich and interesting curriculum.
- There is very good additional support for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and they achieve well, particularly in literacy.
- Pupils with English as an additional language are very well supported by additional help and by the quality of teaching in literacy. They make very good progress in their acquisition of language skills.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to develop personal and social skills.
- There are very good procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- The school has very effective links with parents and most parents have very positive views about the school.
- The headteacher and senior staff provide strong leadership focused on motivating staff development and enhancing community links.
- School administration and financial management are very efficient.
- The quality of the school's accommodation, particularly the outdoor environment, contributes substantially to pupils' personal and environmental education.

What could be improved

- Standards in information technology are below the expected level for pupils by the end of Key Stage 1.
- Higher achieving pupils are not always achieving as well as they could, particularly in science.
- The time spent on teaching in Key Stage 1 is below that in most other infant schools and insufficient for the teaching of information technology skills and religious education.
- The arrangements for monitoring and supporting the quality of teaching and the curriculum are not sufficiently rigorous or focused on what the school needs to do to improve.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been a substantial improvement in the standards achieved in English and mathematics compared with those reported at the last inspection in February 1996. There has also been a good improvement in science, art and music standards. Standards in information technology are below national expectations and not as good as previously reported. The quality of teaching has improved considerably and most teaching is now good or very good. In relation to the key issues for improvement the school has made sound progress overall. Lesson plans include more clearly defined learning objectives as a result of joint planning between teachers and monitoring by senior staff. Higher attaining pupils are better catered for in general, although work is still not challenging enough in a minority of lessons, particularly science. The school has extended the role of co-ordinators, by giving them time to observe teaching and look at pupils' work during the Autumn and Spring terms. However, this arrangement is not yet sufficiently rigorous or focused enough to have an impact on areas where the school needs to improve.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
reading	A	A	A	C	very high A* well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
writing	A*	A	A	A	
mathematics	A	B	B	C	

Reading and writing test results at the end of Key Stage 1 have remained well above the national average over the last three years. The results in 1999 were well above those achieved in schools with pupils from a similar background in writing, and average when compared with similar schools in reading. Mathematics test results have been above the national average over the last three years and were average when compared with similar schools in 1999. Current standards are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in science are above the national average, although higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should, because they have insufficient opportunity to develop skills and knowledge at the higher levels. Standards in information technology are below national expectations by Year 2, because insufficient time is allocated to teaching the key skills. In religious education pupils achieve standards in line with those set out in the Essex agreed syllabus.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very keen to come to school and most concentrate and work hard in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils have very good relationships with each other and with adults. They show a good sense of personal responsibility.
Attendance	Similar to the national average, although there is no unauthorised absence

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	very good	good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Overall the quality of teaching in the school is good and pupils make good progress in their learning. Twenty seven per cent of lessons observed during the inspection were very good; forty two per cent were good and twenty nine per cent were satisfactory. Only two per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. The teaching of children under five, and those in the reception classes, is very good, largely because of teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the needs of young children. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and science is good overall. Teachers pay good attention to the teaching of basic skills and provide interesting and well resourced activities to stimulate pupils' interest. Learning support assistants provide high quality additional teaching support in most lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils receive very good additional teaching support and this aids their progress, particularly in literacy. Pupils with English as an additional language are very well supported by the good teaching of literacy and they make very good progress in the acquisition of language skills. Overall, pupils are learning well. Learning is less successful where it is not made clear that pupils are expected to listen and to finish their work, or the pace and challenge for higher attaining pupils is not demanding enough.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced with an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. However, too little time is allocated to the teaching of information technology and religious education. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn from outdoor resources and from visits and visitors which make learning interesting. There is a good range of additional activities outside lessons for older pupils in the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There is good additional support for lower attaining pupils and those with specific special educational needs.

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils with English as an additional language are very well supported by the good teaching in literacy and additional literacy support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. Provision for social development is very good. There are particularly good opportunities for pupils to relate to adults from the wider community and these support the very good relationships and positive ethos in the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school demonstrates very good care for the health, safety and general welfare of its pupils. There are some weaknesses in the use of assessment information to inform curriculum planning.

The school receives a high level of support and commitment from parents which contribute substantially to the quality of the school environment and pupils' learning. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting and during the inspection spoke highly of the school, particularly about the quality of the staff.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy headteacher are very proactive in developing staff potential and community links. This has a very positive impact on staff stability, the popularity of the school and its profile in the local community. The role of some co-ordinators is not sufficiently developed to ensure that they have an overview of what needs to be done to raise standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have very good arrangements for getting to know the school through meetings, visits and lesson observations. They contribute substantially to the financial management and quality of accommodation in the school. They are not sufficiently clear about what the school needs to do to improve.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has identified appropriate curriculum areas in its planning for future improvement. However, arrangements for monitoring and supporting the quality of teaching and checking standards in the school are not sufficiently rigorous or focused to ensure teaching and learning improves.
The strategic use of resources	Overall the school makes good use of staffing, resources and accommodation, although the use of new technology is unsatisfactory. The school makes particularly good use of its links with the community and outdoor accommodation to provide interesting activities to support pupils' learning.

There are a very good number of well qualified teachers and learning support assistants for the number of pupils in the school. The indoor and outdoor accommodation is very good. The quantity and quality of resources are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are very happy to come to school and make good progress. • The staff work hard to make learning interesting. • Behaviour is good and the school encourages children to develop personal responsibility. • The quality of leadership and management in the school. • There is a good working partnership with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of activities outside of lessons. • A small minority feels unsatisfied with the arrangements for more able children, homework and information about their child's progress.

Inspection evidence generally supports parents' positive views. The inspection team considers the provision of extra-curricular activities to be good for the oldest pupils in the school. There is insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils in a few lessons, particularly science. There is no specific homework policy to ensure that provision is consistent between classes but parents who spoke to the inspection team before and during the inspection were generally satisfied with the level of homework provided. Inspectors judged pupils' annual reports and arrangements to meet and discuss pupils' progress to be at least satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The school has maintained well above average standards in reading and writing test results over the last three years and above average standards in test results for mathematics. In 1999 writing test results were also well above average when compared to similar schools. In reading and mathematics, test results were average when compared to the results achieved by similar schools. In reading, not as many pupils achieved at least the average level 2, as they did in writing, although the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 was well above the national average. In mathematics, whilst the percentage of pupils achieving Level 2 was very high, the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 was only average. The school accounts for these differences between reading and writing test results by relating them to the introduction of the literacy hour and a reduction in the time for individual reading with pupils; also by the school's provision of an 'extended writing' hour to account for better achievement in writing. However, this does not fully explain the lower achievement of higher attaining pupils in mathematics, and in science teacher assessments, where the percentage of pupils achieving above average levels was below those in similar schools. There was no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
2. Test results for 2000 indicate that the school has maintained high standards in reading, writing and mathematics, with the vast majority of pupils achieving the Level 2 expected, and a good proportion of pupils achieving above this level. The results for reading and writing are more in line with national trends, with a higher percentage of pupils achieving Level 3 in reading than for writing. Teacher assessments in science indicate that the majority of pupils are achieving the level expected by Year 2, although the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 is not as good as for reading, writing and mathematics.
3. These test results broadly reflect inspection findings which are that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above the national average, because of the high proportion of pupils working at average and above average levels. Science standards are above average in that the number of pupils achieving at least an average level is much higher than in most schools. However, a lower proportion of pupils are achieving above average standards when compared with English and mathematics. This suggests that the issue from the last inspection, of higher attaining pupils not achieving their full potential, remains outstanding in science.
4. An analysis of baseline assessment data over the last two years indicates that children's attainment on entry to the reception year is broadly average for their age, except in their personal and social development and speaking skills, which are above average. Most children achieve very well in the reception classes in response to the very good teaching they receive. By the age of five, the majority of children are achieving beyond the 'Desirable Learning Outcomes' for children of this age and working within the early stages of the National Curriculum. It is difficult to make a comparison with standards and achievements reported at the last inspection, because admission arrangements were then different and there are very few references to provision and achievement prior to Key Stage 1 in the previous inspection report.
5. Overall, pupils are achieving well throughout Key Stage 1, although progress is not as good as in their first year of schooling. Pupils achieve particularly well in reading and writing as a result of the good teaching in literacy lessons and the additional literacy support provided for lower attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2. By Year 2 the majority of pupils, including those identified as having special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language, achieve confidence in writing independently and for a range of purposes. Spelling and simple punctuation are generally accurate and handwriting is clear and legible. A good proportion of pupils achieve a higher standard in their written work and begin to write imaginatively and creatively. Pupils also achieve well in their reading as a result of good opportunities for reading a range of texts in literacy lessons and good teaching of specific reading skills, such as comprehension, pace and expression. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed for their age and most pupils, including those with English as an additional language, ask and

answer questions confidently using a good range of vocabulary. The listening skills of a small minority of pupils in Year 2 are not so well developed, because teachers do not always ensure that all pupils are listening and contributing to class discussion.

6. Pupils are achieving well in mathematics as a result of the school's generally successful implementation of the National Numeracy strategy. They achieve better in the reception classes as a result of very good teaching. By Year 2 the majority of pupils achieve standards in line with, or above, those expected for pupils of this age in all aspects of mathematics, although there is limited evidence of the use and application of mathematical skills in information technology.
7. Overall pupils are achieving well in science, particularly in their knowledge and understanding of life and living processes. This is a result of the school's emphasis on this aspect and very good use of outdoor facilities, such as the pond and conservation areas. However, higher attaining pupils are not achieving as well in this subject, because they are not regularly given opportunities to put forward their own ideas, or encouraged to explain and record observations in their own way.
8. Standards in information technology are below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. Although pupils use information technology to support their learning in other subjects, insufficient time is allocated to the direct teaching of information technology skills. The majority of pupils do not achieve the level of expertise expected by Year 2. For example, they cannot save and retrieve work they have done. There is little evidence that pupils in Year 2 are achieving any better than younger pupils in the school and progress overall is unsatisfactory.
9. In religious education pupils achieve standards in line with the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus for pupils in Year 2. They have a sound understanding of special celebrations, people and places related to Christianity and other religions. Their achievement is limited by the below average time spent in the teaching of religious education in Key Stage 1.
10. Pupils achieve a good standard in art, reflected in displays of work around the school. They also achieve a good standard in singing, demonstrated in lessons and assemblies during the inspection.
11. Standards in design and technology, geography, history and physical education are in line with expectations for pupils by the end of Year 2.
12. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress, especially in reading and writing, because of the very good additional literacy support provided by the part-time learning support teacher, and by teachers and learning support assistants in lessons. Very few pupils are not achieving the standard of work expected by the end of the key stage. Pupils with English as an additional language are achieving very well because of the generally good teaching of literacy throughout the school and the very good additional support provided for pupils at an early stage of language acquisition. Pupils quickly learn to speak confidently and understand and use a good range of vocabulary. For example, a pupil in Year 1 identified a 'sandwich' correctly and indicated that the word 'apple' should be put first in a list of words in alphabetical order.
13. Overall, standards are much higher than reported at the last inspection, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics, although test results have been maintained at a similarly high level over the last three years. Standards in information technology are below those reported last time the school was inspected. Parents generally feel that their children achieve well in school, although a small minority feel that the school is not meeting the needs of higher attaining pupils so well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Overall pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good. Pupils have a very positive response to school and they are very keen to attend. Children in the reception classes

settle quickly into school routines and form good relationships with each other and with all the adults who help them in the classroom. They behave very well and are very keen to learn. Their interest and concentration levels are very high and they make good efforts to complete the tasks they are set. Children work very well while the teacher is busy with another group, and organise themselves well in role play, such as when enacting the story of the 'Baby owls' using finger puppets. They share resources amicably and have a very good understanding of the difference between right and wrong.

15. In Key Stage 1, attitudes to work are good in the majority of lessons, but there are occasions when a minority of pupils lose interest and concentration. This happens when the work lacks challenge or when teachers do not make it clear that all pupils are expected to listen and complete their work. In the great majority of lessons the teachers' enthusiasm and good use of resources motivate pupils to participate fully. Pupils listen very carefully to instructions, for example in a science lesson, when the teacher explains clearly how they should compare seedlings which have been grown in the light with those grown in the dark. Older pupils have a great enthusiasm for after-school activities which they are keen to attend. They show great interest when a visiting speaker leads the assembly and applaud other pupils enthusiastically when they take part.
16. Behaviour is very good throughout the school. This is an improvement from the previous inspection when behaviour was reported as being good. There have been no permanent or temporary exclusions over the last twelve years. Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and show respect for other classes by being quiet when they go to the hall for physical education lessons. They are generally courteous to one another, apart from isolated instances at playtime which are dealt with promptly by staff. Pupils show very good concern for the care of resources, such as musical instruments. They show respect for the feelings and opinions of others and for their work, such as when other pupils perform in physical education lessons. This leads to very good relationships between all members of the school community, especially as the staff provide such good role models. The school is proud of the pupils' reputation for good behaviour when they are outside school. Parents who accompany visits keenly endorse this view. Behaviour is generally very good in classes, with the exception of a small minority of lessons when a few pupils have to be reminded not to call out during class discussions.
17. There is very good development of pupils' personal responsibility. Pupils are involved, from a very early age, in the daily routines of the classroom and are very helpful to the teacher and to one another. When asked, pupils willingly assist with chores, such as giving out books or tidying up after art lessons, although opportunities for pupils to show initiative in choosing and getting out their own resources or tidying up after lessons are occasionally limited. Pupils show a good awareness of the need for care and safety when moving physical education apparatus. When new pupils arrive in a class pupils are very good at showing them round the school and helping them to settle in. Pupils play well together on the playground, collaborating happily in playtime activities. They are co-operative with, and respectful to, the lunch-time supervisors in the dining hall and the playground. In the classroom, pupils are very good at making suggestions and giving their opinions. This is because teachers treat their answers with respect and are very aware of the need to develop self-confidence in the pupils. Opportunities such as receiving awards and speaking in assembly are used by the school well to develop pupils' self-esteem.
18. Pupils' attendance at school is satisfactory. Recent records show that attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence for the same period is below the national figure. The school's level of attendance is slightly lower than that noted in the previous inspection. Additional family holidays, illness and medical visits are the predominant reasons for pupil absence. Few pupils are late for school and registrations are carried out efficiently and without fuss.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. Overall the quality of teaching in the school is good. It is better for children under five, and those aged five, in the reception classes where all the teaching observed was at least good and most lessons were very good. There has been a good improvement in the quality of

teaching since the previous inspection when one in eight lessons (12.5 per cent) were judged to be unsatisfactory. Only two per cent of lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory during this inspection and 69 per cent of lessons were good or better. Twenty seven per cent of lessons were very good and forty two per cent were good.

20. The quality of teaching for children under five is very good and they learn very well. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the needs of young children. Literacy and mathematics sessions are very well organised and teachers have very high expectations of what children can achieve and ensure that questioning and tasks are challenging for all children involved. Group activities are well prepared and interesting. This motivates enthusiasm and enables children to learn independently, for example when sorting dominoes into 'doubles' and 'not doubles', whilst the teacher provides focused teaching to another group. Very good use is made of resources, particularly in developing children's language skills, for example through role-play with finger puppets.
21. The teaching of literacy is good overall. It is particularly good for pupils aged five in the reception classes and for younger pupils in Key Stage 1. Additional teaching support for pupils with special educational needs is also very effective and contributes to the good learning progress they make, particularly in reading and writing. Pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress in their use and understanding of English because of the good support they receive from teachers and learning support assistants which promotes confidence and understanding. Additional targeted support for pupils at an early stage of language acquisition, is very effective as a result of the learning support assistant's imaginative techniques for stimulating understanding and use of language, including colour-coding snails in a vivarium to aid colour recognition! Generally teachers are implementing the structure of the literacy hour well. They make good use of a range of interesting texts in class sessions to motivate pupils' interest and develop specific reading and writing skills. For example, some pupils in Year 2 read a non-fiction rap about whales which supports their factual knowledge of whales as well as learning about the structure of different forms of poetry. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to read and re-read texts to develop fluency, accuracy and confidence in reading. Occasionally they do not ensure that all pupils are concentrating and contributing to discussion which limits the progress these pupils make. Questioning and group tasks are usually appropriately challenging. Questioning is particularly effective in one reception class where pupils are challenged to explain what the word glide 'tells you about how a seagull moves'. This type of questioning promotes a very good understanding of a wide range of vocabulary and encourages pupils to use language effectively in their own responses. In this case a pupil replied that it meant a seagull was 'flipping or flying gently'. Group activities are well prepared and interesting. This encourages pupils to get on quickly and to work with good concentration. Occasionally, it is not made clear that pupils are expected to finish the task and a minority take the opportunity for general chat and complete very little written work.
22. The quality of teaching in mathematics was very variable but good overall. In the best lessons mental mathematics sessions are brisk and challenging and teachers ensure that all pupils are focused on what they are expected to learn. Group tasks are generally well organised and pupils are well prepared to work independently enabling the teacher to give focused support to one or two groups. Relationships are well established and pupils feel confident to ask and answer questions. Teaching and learning is less successful where pupils are not sufficiently challenged to do their best and only complete a small amount of work.
23. Science teaching is good overall. Teachers make good use of resources, including the outdoor accommodation, to generate interest and give pupils the practical experiences they need to understand scientific concepts. Questioning is effective to ensure that pupils have understood what they learned previously and can apply this knowledge to new ideas. Pupils are confident in their relationships with adults and peers and this allows them to feel confident in making suggestions and expressing ideas. Most teachers have high expectations of behaviour but occasionally pupils are allowed to call out and this disrupts the flow of the lesson and amount that pupils learn. Higher attaining pupils are not always encouraged to think, plan or record experimental work for themselves and this limits their potential for achieving the higher levels of scientific reasoning and understanding.

24. No teaching of information technology skills was planned or observed during the inspection in Key Stage 1. Teachers are providing sound opportunities for using information technology to support learning in other subjects but this is rarely developing their skills in using information technology. Too little time is allocated to the teaching of specific skills and pupils in Year 2 have not achieved the competence expected for their age.
25. The quality of teaching in religious education lessons was satisfactory, although the overall time allocated to the teaching of religious education is insufficient and this limits the depth of pupils' knowledge and opportunities for pupils to reflect and write about what they have learned. Teachers present themes in an interesting way making good use of the improved resources in the school. Generally teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils behave sensibly but teachers do not always ensure that all pupils are listening during class discussion or that they work hard enough to complete recorded work.
26. The quality of teaching in other lessons is generally good, particularly in art and music. In art lessons there is a clear focus on the teaching and development of knowledge, skills and understanding. In the best lessons pupils are given opportunities to evaluate and suggest improvements to their own and other pupils' work. Teaching in music is well supported by a well structured scheme and the expertise of the co-ordinator. Pupils have good opportunities for singing and playing instruments in lessons and as part of extra-curricular provision for Year 2 pupils.
27. The quality and use of learning support assistants to improve learning is usually very good. They have clearly defined tasks and make useful observations and assessments during class sessions and provide well focused teaching support in group activities. Occasionally, their talents are under-used when they tidy up or prepare resources during lesson time.
28. Weekly planning usually identifies quite clearly what pupils are expected to learn, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This is a satisfactory improvement in relation to the issue from the last inspection as a result of collaborative planning between teachers in each year group. The best planning includes distinct objectives for pupils of differing abilities, including higher attaining pupils, to ensure they are all appropriately challenged and a clear evaluation of what pupils have learned to influence future planning. Occasionally, the theme of the lesson is apparent but it is not clear what specifically pupils are expected to learn by the end of the lesson or how higher attaining pupils will be challenged and learn more.
29. Generally teachers know their pupils well and provide constructive and appropriate feedback and support to promote confidence and ensure they do well. The quality of written marking is variable between classes and subjects. Some work is undated and unmarked and provides little evidence of what pupils have achieved or what they could do to improve. Marking is more useful and promotes better learning where it is clear what pupils have done well and how they could improve next time.
30. Reading and spelling homework is provided regularly and this contributes to pupils' progress in these aspects of English.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

31. Overall the school's curriculum provision is satisfactory. There are a good range of interesting opportunities, including visits and use of the outdoor environment, to stimulate pupils' interest and extend their knowledge. The curriculum is reasonably well balanced and meets statutory requirements. However, the overall time for teaching is well below that in most infant schools and there is insufficient time allocated to the teaching of religious education and information technology. This is having a negative impact on pupils' learning and achievements, particularly in information technology. The curriculum generally provides equality of opportunity and access so that all pupils can make progress, although there is evidence in a few lessons, particularly science, that higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. The provision for higher attaining pupils was an issue for improvement at the last inspection. This issue remains outstanding in a few lessons and remains a concern for a minority of parents.
32. The curriculum for children under five is good. It is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of these young children. A very good range of experiences are planned and provided to ensure children make very good progress in all areas of learning. The planning for children under five links very closely with the National Curriculum programmes of study for higher attaining and older children.
33. The school has good strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The national strategies are well developed within the school's curriculum and the school is maintaining high standards at the end of Key Stage 1. The skills gained by pupils are successfully reinforced in other subject areas, for example by measuring in science and factual writing in history. However, the links with information technology are limited, and there are few opportunities for extending data handling skills or word processing, using computers.
34. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is sound. Issues such as the importance of having a healthy lifestyle and the dangers of smoking and talking to strangers are included in science lessons, assemblies, 'circle time' (class discussion about personal and social issues) and talks by the local policeman.
35. There is good curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs. There are appropriate procedures in place for the identification and assessment of pupils. Individual education plans have been drawn up for all pupils on the register and specific and achievable targets are identified to help teachers and learning support assistants plan for their needs. There is very good additional support for pupils with special educational needs in Years 1 and 2 provided by a part-time teacher. This is particularly focused on developing language and literacy skills.
36. Pupils with English as an additional language have very good access to the curriculum as a result of very good support from teachers and learning support assistants who make sure they understand, and can use, all relevant language.
37. The school has established and maintained very good community links which enrich the curriculum for pupils. For example, a community week involved each class becoming a shop, post office, travel agent or hospital and parents and members of the community came into school to share their experiences of work with the pupils. The school has recently achieved the Schools' Curriculum Award for such events and for its development of the outdoor environment which provides good opportunities for developing pupils' spiritual and scientific awareness.
38. Pupils participate in a very good range of visits out of school which enriches their understanding in a range of curriculum areas. For example, Year 2 pupils visited the Victorian Museum and pupils in Year 1 had a visit to the Railway Museum. Reception classes visited the local park, bakery and library. There is also a good range of visitors into school, including a brass band, cartoonist and pupils who attended the school many years ago.
39. Mutual benefits have been gained from constructive relationships with partner institutions. The

headteacher liaises closely with the local junior school when pupils transfer to Key Stage 2 and there are very good links between the pre-school playgroup and the early years staff. Pupils from the local secondary school participate in drama activities with infant pupils and pupils from both junior and secondary schools participate in an art exhibition in the infant school. The school is well supported by the local education authority's advisory service whose staff provide advice on curriculum development. There are very good links with other schools, through in-service training and as leader of the local consortium for initial teacher training, which help staff to keep up to date with new initiatives and to share and develop curricular expertise.

40. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities for older pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in activities such as folk dancing, sewing, learning to play the recorder, clay work and games. These activities are well supported by the pupils and are open to boys and girls. They make a valuable contribution to extending pupils' learning, particularly in art, music and physical education, as well as providing opportunities for social development beyond school hours.
41. There is good provision for pupils' spiritual development. Assemblies are of good quality and provide opportunities for prayer and reflection. There are also opportunities at the end of the day, for pupils to contemplate and consider quietly their own good fortune and the needs of others, by listening to prayers spoken by the teacher or by pupils. A very good example was seen in Year 2 where one pupil confidently led a prayer based on his own personal reflections. There are also planned and unplanned opportunities for pupils to experience awe and wonder in lessons. For example, when the teacher amazed reception pupils by taking an elephant drum out of a huge box and when pupils in Year 2 listened to whale music before reading about whales. The school has carefully developed many special places where pupils can sit and reflect and appreciate the beauty of nature. For example, there are seats in the pond and conservation area and a 'thinking spot' has been created in memory of Princess Diana.
42. Provision for pupils' moral development is also good. The school behaviour policy, drawn up annually, involves discussion with all members of the school community, including pupils. The statements are regularly reinforced by teachers who are quick to remind pupils in class. Teachers also reinforce good moral behaviour through assemblies which often have a moral theme, or in special assemblies where good deeds are celebrated. Teachers provide good role models for moral conduct and there are clear and high expectations of behaviour in most classes.
43. Provision for pupils' social development is very good and strongly supported by the very good links established with the community and parents. A wide range of visits and visitors help pupils to develop an understanding of themselves in a wider context. Pupils are also encouraged to raise money for charities. Children in the reception classes now have better opportunities for taking responsibility for their own learning. Pupils willingly accept responsibility for taking registers and tidying up and there are good opportunities for pupils to co-operate in lessons.
44. The school makes good provision for pupils' cultural development. There are good opportunities in art and music for pupils to study and develop an understanding of European culture. For example, in music pupils learn about Pavarotti and in art they learn about the work of Claude Monet. There has been a good improvement in the quality and range of multi-cultural resources, identified as a weakness at the last inspection. Visitors and cultural celebrations contribute to pupils' understanding of Chinese New Year and Hinduism, although there are few displays around the school reflecting life in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The school continues to provide a safe, secure and caring environment for its pupils as reported at the last inspection. Members of staff know pupils well and this enables them to provide good and appropriate care and support. The quality of information kept on each pupil is detailed and comprehensive to ensure medical and personal needs are clearly identified and dealt with. External agencies, including the education welfare service, give valuable support to this aspect of the school.
46. The school identifies and deals very effectively with any hazards found on site. Health and safety checks, risk assessments and inspections are regularly undertaken. The school health and safety policy is detailed and the effectiveness of this provision is supported by a high level of expertise amongst members of staff and governors. A sufficient number of staff are qualified to administer first aid and the school's provision of first aid and welfare support are very good. Pupils are well supervised at break and lunch times by members of staff and midday supervisors. As noted in the previous inspection, the governors have a sex education policy in place and pupils receive adequate personal, social and health education to ensure that they have a sound knowledge of their own bodies and how to take care of themselves.
47. Child protection procedures are well understood by staff and guided by the arrangements set out by the local committee for child protection. The deputy headteacher is the designated person responsible for child protection arrangements.
48. The school monitors attendance very well, and has good procedures in place to follow up any absences or lateness. The school fully complies with the statutory requirements for registration and the coding and recording of attendance. The school's personal, social and citizenship policy, 'Codes of Behaviour' and Home-School agreement all ensure pupils and parents have a clear understanding of the school's expectations regarding behaviour. Parents confirm that pupils respond well to the school's systems of rewards and sanctions. The staff and parents verify that there are few cases of poor behaviour, bullying or racial tension in the school.
49. Procedures for assessment and monitoring academic achievement are good in English, mathematics and science. All pupils are regularly tested in these areas and statutory requirements are met. Records of achievement, including samples of work and test results, are maintained for each pupil. This information is analysed and used to predict future levels of attainment and to determine ability groups in lessons. Generally this ensures that work provided is at an appropriate level and that there is good support for pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language. However, this type of analysis is at an early stage of development and the school has not yet used this information to set overall school targets for future achievement or to identify weaknesses in curriculum provision, such as the need to provide more challenging work for higher attaining pupils in science.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. Parents are very proud of the school. Their support and commitment, actively sought by the school, are great strengths and contribute substantially to the quality of the education that pupils receive. The previous report noted that parents were actively involved and considered themselves welcome and appreciated. The school continues to work very well in partnership with parents and this is reflected in the positive views expressed by the majority of parents before and during the inspection.
51. Parents are provided with good information on school activities and forthcoming events through news and information letters. A minority of working parents indicated that this information was occasionally too 'last minute' and that they would like to have more curriculum information sent home. At present detailed information is taped to classroom windows. Parents appreciate the quality of the briefings they have received on the recent introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and other curricular initiatives. There are some minor omissions in the statutory information provided for parents in the prospectus.

52. A substantial minority of parents responding to the parents' questionnaire (20 per cent) expressed dissatisfaction with the provision of activities outside lessons. However, the inspection team judged provision for pupils in Year 2 to be good. There are, however, no additional activities for younger pupils in the school. It is perhaps not clear to parents that all children will benefit from this provision when they reach their final year. A small minority of parents felt that they were not adequately informed about their child's progress (8 per cent of questionnaires) or felt that homework provision was not appropriate (9 per cent of questionnaires). However, parents at the meeting expressed general satisfaction with the level of homework, although there was some confusion about what different classes in the same year group were expected to do. The lack of a specific homework policy may account for this. Annual reports on pupils are detailed and comply fully with statutory requirements. They identify clearly how pupils could improve and parents at the meeting expressed appreciation for this. There are termly meetings to discuss pupils' progress throughout the year. The inspection team felt that these arrangements were at least satisfactory in providing information to parents about their child's progress. In other respects parents were generally very satisfied with the school and particularly appreciated the efforts made by teaching and support staff to make learning interesting and relevant. They were also fulsome in their praise of the induction procedures for new pupils, including home visits, baseline assessments and the support and information they receive when children start school. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs are kept well informed and involved in their child's education. For the pupils who have statements of special educational need, annual reviews are carried out and parents are involved appropriately.
53. The school has developed a home-school agreement, which shows clearly how parents, pupils and the school should work together to achieve high standards of work and behaviour. The school's policy of seeing parents whenever they feel it necessary, works well, and 96 per cent of parents agreed that they felt comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems.
54. The contribution made by parents to children's learning at school and at home is good. Large numbers of parents provide good support to pupils in the classroom and help with school trips, library activities and extra-curricular provision. Parents also help children with reading, spellings and other tasks at home which contribute to pupils' achievements in literacy.
55. Parents contribute generously to school fund raising through the parents' association. This association has organised very popular fund raising and social events involving pupils, parents, staff, the local community and businesses. Parents have invested a great deal of effort and time in the initiation and subsequent maintenance of projects, for example the exciting conservation resources in the school grounds. Recently parents have been instrumental in campaigning for, and providing, a pedestrian crossing outside the school. The parents' association raised a total of eleven thousand pounds to carry out and complete this project.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The headteacher, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and senior staff, provides strong leadership for the school focused on developing staff potential and community links. Staff are actively encouraged to develop professional expertise and confidence through training and opportunities to take professional responsibility, such as by leading in-service training. This has a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning provided by class teachers and learning support assistants who are well qualified and enthusiastic about working in the school. The headteacher also plays a fundamental role in promoting the school locally and nationally through award winning and special events, such as the recent Schools' Curriculum Award (2000), Investors In People Award (1997), Community Week (1999) and by taking a leading role in the School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) project in Billericay. As a result the school has a high profile in the community and this promotes staff stability and confidence, and popularity with parents. The school continues to be over-subscribed and some school initiatives have resulted in additional funding for the school resulting in improved equipment or resources, such as for design and technology equipment.

57. The senior management team, including year group and subject co-ordinators, is well structured and there are clear systems in place for discussing curriculum issues and checking the quality of teachers' planning. The joint planning by teachers in year groups, initiated after the last inspection, has resulted in an improvement in the quality of lesson planning with more specific lesson objectives identified. The school has addressed the issue of developing the role of co-ordinators, identified at the last inspection. Co-ordinators are now released from classroom commitments for one day in both the Autumn and Spring terms. This enables them to observe teaching in three classes and look at samples of work. However, this system is not sufficiently thorough or focussed on areas identified for improvement in the school, to ensure that the quality of teaching is improved and standards are raised. For example, the information technology co-ordinator has not had an opportunity to check or support the teaching of information technology skills throughout the school. The religious education co-ordinator has not observed teaching in this subject, although religious education is identified as a priority for improvement in the school development plan. The sampling of pupils' work carried out by co-ordinators in the Spring term has not identified significant differences in the quality of provision between classes or provided explanations for anomalies in school assessment data, such as the reason for a lower percentage of pupils achieving Level 3 in science.
58. The school plan for development and improvement is well structured and comprehensive in that it identifies personnel, training and financial requirements to meet the school's identified needs for the curriculum, community, finance, resources, premises, staff and training. There is a clear link between curriculum priorities and staff training but it is not clear how some curriculum developments are going to improve the quality of teaching and learning and how their effectiveness will be judged.
59. There is a range of relevant expertise within the governing body, particularly in the field of finance, which contributes to the good financial management of the school budget. There are very good arrangements for governors to get to know the school through the 'Adopt a Governor Scheme' whereby one governor is attached to each class and can follow the progress of the class through the school by making regular visits. This promotes a positive image of governors as helpful and supportive members of the school community. Literacy and numeracy governors have both observed lessons and given feedback to the school and governing body to ensure that governors have a clear overview of the development of these initiatives. Whilst governors have a clear view of the strengths of the school and what makes it effective they are insufficiently clear about what the school needs to do to improve; in particular, the need to use expensive technology equipment more efficiently and raise standards in information technology.
60. The school meets all statutory requirements, with the exception that the school prospectus does not make it clear that parents have a right to withdraw their children from religious education lessons and the alternative provision for such pupils.
61. The headteacher's commitment to staff training and development is reflected in the receipt of the Investors In People Award in 1997 and opportunities for staff, including learning support assistants, to attend courses and obtain qualifications. There is a comprehensive staff handbook to ensure new and existing staff are aware of school policies and procedures. This contributes to the overall smooth running of the school. There is a good number of well qualified and experienced teachers and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum, although teachers' confidence and expertise in the teaching of information technology is limited. The qualifications and experience of learning support assistants are particularly impressive and support staff have a very positive impact on the quality of learning and standards in the school. There is an established system of annual performance review which extends to teachers and learning support assistants. This is used to discuss and identify staff training needs and to set targets for the teacher's development in the future. The school is well placed to set up a performance management system in line with government proposals from September 2000, although the headteacher recognises the need for this to be more closely linked to lesson observations and the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

62. The quality of the school's accommodation is very good. The indoor accommodation, including temporary relocatable classrooms, is bright, cheerful and well maintained. It is enhanced by attractive displays of children's work and photographs. In particular, the school has a very attractive library and computer suite, although the latter is under-used for developing pupils' skills in using information technology. The outdoor accommodation is particularly well developed and well used by the school to promote opportunities for spiritual development and scientific skills and knowledge. For example, the school has created a 'senses pathway', willow domes and a 'thoughtful area' in memory of Princess Diana. Very good use is made of the pond and conservation areas to enhance pupils' understanding of plant and animal life. Parents particularly appreciate the work done by the deputy headteacher in leading voluntary working parties of parents and pupils to develop the conservation area – not to mention the home-made cakes she provides! The playgrounds and play areas are a good size and contribute well to pupils' play and physical education activities.
63. The school has a good level of resources to support teaching and learning, both in school and within the school grounds. Recent purchases linked with the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy have resulted in a very good level of equipment for mathematics. There has been a good improvement in the quality and quantity of multi-cultural resources since the last inspection. All resources are in good condition and stored thoughtfully for easy access. Most resources are readily available in the classrooms. Shared resources in the central store are clearly labelled and an effective record system keeps track of those in use in classrooms. Most resources are very well used, but the high level of computer provision is underused. Computers in the classrooms are used in some lessons to support learning in other subjects, but opportunities are missed, such as in English, and they are not used specifically for teaching information technology skills. There is no timetable for using the computer suite in the library and this very expensive resource is rarely used. This is partly due to maintenance and support agreements which have meant that the system has not been fully functioning for any length of time during the last year.
64. School administration and financial systems are very efficient. Auditors who visited the school recently found the systems and controls to be impressive and made only a very few minor recommendations. Specific grants, and funding to support pupils with special educational needs, and those in the early stages of acquiring English, are used well for their designated purposes. The financial planning cycle is linked closely to the school development plan, which includes an effective five-year plan for building and maintenance to enable the school to avoid major expenditure in any one year. The finance committee track expenditure in detail and monitor planned spending to ensure that best value is obtained from orders and contracts. The school has a much higher allocation of money per pupil than most other schools. A higher proportion of the budget than in most schools is spent on administrative staff, because of the retention of staff appointed when the school had Grant Maintained Status and an increased workload. Expenditure on learning support assistants is also at a high level, particularly in view of the very low proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The school follows the best value principles of consultation and competition in managing the finances of the school very efficiently. However, the best value principles of comparison and challenge are less rigorously applied, for example in considering how other large infant schools with children from comparable backgrounds and with a far tighter budget achieve standards that are similar or even better.
65. The school's use of the new technology is unsatisfactory. The school uses a computerised registration system, but makes little use of e-mail and Internet applications. Senior staff make little use of computers for planning, record keeping and data analysis. The school has recently received a grant from the New Opportunities Fund specifically for training teachers in the use of new technology, both within the classroom and for their own professional development. This training will take place during the next school year.
66. Taking into consideration the overall effectiveness of the school, the very favourable socio-economic circumstances and high school expenditure, it provides sound value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. To maintain the good features of the school and improve the quality of education provided, the headteacher, governing body and staff should:

- Raise standards in information technology at the end of Key Stage 1 by:
 - Ensuring that sufficient time is allocated to the teaching of information technology skills;
 - Ensuring that staff are sufficiently well trained and confident to teach information technology;
 - Making better use of the good level of hardware resources in the school, particularly the library suite;
 - Reviewing maintenance and support agreements for hardware resources to ensure that they are providing the best value for money.

(See paragraphs 8,24,31,61,63,65,121-125)

- Raise achievement for higher attaining pupils, particularly in science, by:
 - Ensuring that teachers consistently plan and provide challenging work for them;
 - Making it clear that pupils are expected to complete their work in good time.

(See paragraphs 2-3,7,23,25,28,31,97-102)

- Review the timetables for each class to ensure that sufficient time is planned and provided for teaching and learning in all subjects, particularly information technology and religious education.

(See paragraphs 8-9,24-25,31,125,137)

- Ensure that the arrangements to monitor and support teaching and learning are sufficiently rigorous and focused on what the school needs to do to improve the quality of education provided and raise standards.

(See paragraphs 57,90,96,102,116,120,125,138)

68. In addition to the main issues for improvement the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Ensure that the school prospectus includes all the information statutorily required.
- Develop the analysis of assessment information to set overall school targets and to identify weaknesses in curriculum provision.

(See paragraphs 49,51,60)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

52

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	27	42	29	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		343
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		26

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	61	59	120

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	53	60	60
	Girls	55	59	57
	Total	108	119	117
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (97)	99 (95)	98 (98)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	58	58	60
	Girls	57	57	56
	Total	115	115	116
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (96)	96 (94)	97 (98)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	223
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	29

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	221.5

Financial information

Financial year	99/00
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	£
Total income	635013
Total expenditure	644167
Expenditure per pupil	1884
Balance brought forward from previous year	23008
Balance carried forward to next year	13854

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	231
Number of questionnaires returned	108

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	34	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	44	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	51	2	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	45	9	0	3
The teaching is good.	60	34	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	49	8	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	36	2	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	44	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	49	44	6	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	73	23	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	43	2	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	44	19	1	15

Other issues raised by parents

- A few parents expressed the view that the schools' provision for higher attaining pupils was not as good as it should be.
- Appreciation was expressed for the work of the learning support assistants and the efforts that teachers made to make lessons interesting.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

69. Children enter the reception classes during the school year in which they have their fifth birthday. Older children start in September, and younger children in January. All children attend part-time for the first half term. Most children have previously attended one of the four local playgroups, and almost all have had some form of pre-school education. A quarter of the children attended the playgroup next to the school. At the time of the inspection there were 28 children still under five, most of whom were in two out of the four reception classes.
70. On entry to the reception classes, children's attainment is broadly average for their age in all areas of learning, except for personal and social development and speaking skills, where it is above average. Most children make very good progress during their under fives education. By the age of five, most children exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes for five year-olds in all areas of learning and are working within the National Curriculum. This is in response to very good teaching that gives children a flying start to school. It is difficult to make direct comparisons with the previous report, because the admission arrangements were different and there are few references in the report to provision and achievement of children prior to Key Stage 1.
71. The curriculum for the under-fives is generally broad, balanced and relevant. The experienced co-ordinator for early years has a very positive influence on teaching and learning in the reception year. She establishes very good links with pre-school groups and parents and ensures that children settle quickly and happily into school. Teachers have implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies very well, and are very inventive in providing relevant activities to complement class-teaching sessions. Teachers make very good use of the good resources and accommodation and plan and evaluate lessons together. They, and their experienced learning support assistants, form a very strong team who work creatively to provide a practical, stimulating experience for the children. Detailed records are kept of children's attainment in all areas of learning, and these are used very effectively to monitor progress and to plan relevant learning experiences that match the needs of the children very closely.

Personal and social development

72. Children start school with a good level of personal and social skills. By the age of five, almost all children exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes in this area. They have very good relationships with each other and with adults. Children care for each other well, making sure that all are included in group activities and play situations and showing concern when they thought the baby owls in their story had been abandoned by their mother. They look after toys and resources very well. They tidy up after working, and make sure that pencil crayons are returned to the central pot so that they do not fall on the floor and break. Children co-operate in taking turns, for example when playing a number game. They adapt their play readily to include newcomers, as in water-play when prized activities such as using the water pump are re-negotiated by the children to give everyone a turn. Children are very well behaved at all times and have a very good attitude to work, always interested in new learning and keen to make links with existing knowledge. They make sure they understand the task they are given and settle down to work until they have completed it, working with a partner or independently as required. They are proud of their knowledge, and talk confidently and easily to visitors about what they are doing. Children change quickly for physical education lessons and are independent in going to the toilet and washing their hands. They understand the consequences of their actions, and are quick to apologise if, by their actions, they have upset anyone or prevented them learning.
73. The quality of teaching and learning of personal and social development is very good. Social training is included at every opportunity so that children learn how to respond appropriately in different situations, to take turns and help to tidy up. Teachers ensure that children make good

progress in the development of initiative and making decisions about their learning, but this aspect is less well developed. This is partly because activities in literacy and numeracy have previously been more teacher-directed than other learning. However, teachers are now being more creative in planning as they become confident with the new ways of working, and are introducing activities such as role-play that encourage initiative while developing the required aspects of learning. Respect for other cultures is promoted satisfactorily, for example when celebrating the Chinese New Year. All adults use praise very well to encourage confidence, and teachers have the gift of making each child feel special and every contribution is valued. As a result, children are confident and happy and learning is fun.

Language and literacy

74. Most children exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes in language and literacy by the age of five. Their achievement is very good, because on entry there are very few children who recognise more than a few letters and some cannot write their name. By the age of five, children listen carefully to stories and explanations by adults and are interested in what other children have to say. They speak confidently and answer questions with a mature vocabulary. They enjoy nursery rhymes and stories involving rhyme and recognise rhyming words such as 'play' and 'away', making up their own pairs of words, such as 'fish' and 'dish'. Children know most of the letters of the alphabet by shape and sound and use this knowledge to read unknown words and to write independently of the teacher. All children are interested in books and know where to find the title page and the names of the author and illustrator. Higher attaining children are already fluent readers, with a good understanding of characters and plot. All children write their names independently, using upper and lower case letters correctly. They are confident to write independently and use a mixture of known words, initial sounds and 'sentence makers' to support their work. Higher attaining children use middle and final sounds when attempting to write unfamiliar words. Most children read their own writing confidently.
75. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Activities that support the literacy hour include good opportunities for pupils to develop their language through talk, as in role-play with finger puppet owls and miniature trees. Every opportunity is taken to develop vocabulary, such as when clarifying the difference between 'sad' and 'worried' in the 'Owl Babies' story. The high expectations, very good relationships and choice of content relevant to the needs of these young children ensure that listening skills are developed well. All children are involved in class discussion, and skilful question and answer sessions challenge and support children of all capabilities so that they learn well. The very few children with special needs receive additional help from the experienced learning support assistants, both in group work and with short sessions of language development designed to meet a specific need. Children whose first language is not English achieve very well in developing speaking and listening skills because all adults and children support their learning at every opportunity. Resources are used very well to enhance language development in all areas of learning. The structure of the literacy hour is very familiar to the children and enables them to work with confidence and maximum effort throughout the lesson. They know that the teacher supports a different group each day, and if it is not their turn they settle quickly to their task, keen to finish because they know that their best efforts will be appreciated and recognised in the sharing time at the end of the lesson.

Mathematics

76. Most children exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes in all aspects of mathematics by the age of five, and their achievement is very good. Children count backwards and forwards confidently to at least twenty. They add one to any number up to ten correctly and know odd and even numbers to ten. They work out totals and number stories for addition to twelve. With support, children identify and write number stories to 10 in the form of an addition sum, for example, $3+7=10$. Higher attaining children successfully investigate different combinations of numbers that total ten. In other aspects of mathematics attainment is also above that expected for their age. Most children can design and repeat a pattern of up to four different coloured beads. They successfully identify and name two-dimensional shapes, including rectangles, and distinguish between these and solid shapes, naming a sphere and cuboid correctly. Children have a good understanding of the concepts of large and small, tall, taller

and tallest and 'holds more' and 'holds less', demonstrating these in their practical activities, for example when comparing the growth of grass they have planted in the classroom. They enjoy a challenge, such as using the computer to 'paint' symmetrically coloured wings on a butterfly.

77. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teaching is very effective in promoting learning because of very well chosen activities and very high expectations of what these children are capable of. Not a moment is wasted as children move from one activity to the next and settle down to work. Teachers take every opportunity to develop language and make links with other subject areas, for example in discussing 'rectangles', the children are asked to suggest the initial letter. In response, children transfer skills from other lessons, noticing that 'it rhymes' when learning a rhyme to help with the identification of shapes. Learning is fun as children play mathematics games in the afternoon, with very good support from parents and learning support assistants. The very few pupils with special educational needs are well supported by a learning support assistant, who works within the classroom on specific tasks to reinforce number concepts. Learning support assistants are also used very effectively to note individual children's knowledge and understanding during the class mental arithmetic practice and direct teaching sessions. This supplements the assessments made in group activities and helps the teacher plan work that is matched closely to individual needs.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

78. By the age of five, most children exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes in this area. They talk confidently about their homes and families and know the main landmarks on their journey to school. Children describe how to find different parts of the school, such as the hall, school office or headteacher's room. They are aware that time can be considered in terms of past, present and future. They understand that some of their teddies are worn because they have been cuddled frequently, and not because they are very old, and that other toys appear new because they have not been played with. Children know that plants need sunshine and water to grow, and that seeds are usually planted in soil and need to be watered before they will shoot. They know that some plants grow more quickly than others, for example, that the grass they have planted has shot up within a few days, but other plants in the classroom have changed little during that time. They know that many of the trees in the conservation area lost their leaves in winter, and that if they use a magnifying glass 'minibeasts' appear much larger. Children have good cutting and sticking skills and experience of a range of materials when 'dressing' teddy shapes. They use the computer with confidence, using the mouse to 'drag and drop' images on the screen accurately. They use headphones as they listen to story tapes, and describe how the 'language master' helps them to hear words 'spoken' as they extend their reading of key words.
79. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. A very good range of activities is planned, and resources within and around the school are used very well to extend general knowledge and teach specific skills. Parents give very good support to some projects, for example, in teaching how to cross the road safely. Photographs show children investigating springtime changes in the conservation area and learning about 'sticky buds' and tadpoles as well as taking part in planting projects. Children are always actively involved in learning and classrooms are full of exciting displays. 'Home corners' are transformed into flower shops or baby clinics to extend learning and capture the imagination. Teachers achieve a good balance of 'learning through discovery' and consolidation through a range of individual and group activities.

Physical development

80. By the age of five, most children exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes in this area. In the classroom, children control pencils well, and manipulate jigsaw pieces, thread beads competently and fix the pieces of construction sets with a good level of skill. In outdoor play, they climb and slide with confidence and manoeuvre wheeled toys with precision. They handle large hollow wooden blocks safely as they build. In the hall, in physical education lessons, children throw and catch bean bags, rings and balls with a good level of accuracy for their age. They work hard and respond well to coaching, as in performing 'rabbit hops', and improve their skills with practice. They demonstrate their skills confidently to show other children and display

good levels of control and co-ordination. Children show a good awareness of space, moving with confidence and avoiding bumping into one another. They have a good awareness of the effects of exercise, knowing why their heart beats more quickly and understanding that this is healthy. They work very well with a partner and are willing to take turns. They listen carefully to instructions to put out the apparatus and are aware of the need for safety rules.

81. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in this area and pupils achieve well. Lessons are very well prepared and the teachers give clear explanations. Teachers include good elements of training for personal and social development in each lesson, and children learn to change quickly and independently, to behave very well and to have consideration for others. The activities are stimulating and the lesson moves at a good pace, achieving a good balance of warming up activities, a varied main section and an effective final cooling down session. Teachers have high expectations of what the children can achieve, and use resources very well to challenge the children and develop skills. Photographs show children balancing on wooden 'stepping stones', crawling with feet on either side of a long rope, and travelling through a plastic tunnel. Photographs support the inspection evidence that pupils concentrate very well, produce maximum effort, achieve at a high level, and enjoy their lessons.

Creative development

82. By the age of five, most children exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes in this area. They know a good range of songs and nursery rhymes that they sing tunefully, and hold a melody in assembly while older pupils sing a descant. They listen to music with enjoyment, and appreciate the skills of children learning to play the cello. They hold and play instruments, such as the triangle, tambourine and drum with good skill. They know the properties of wet and dry sand for building, and have experience of a range of malleable materials, including clay, which they throw onto the table with enthusiasm to drive out air bubbles. Children's paintings are lively with good use of colour. Skills and techniques for painting, collage and many other aspects of picture-making are good, and high standards are achieved. Children negotiate roles with maturity when re-enacting the story of the 'Baby Owls' with finger puppets and creating their own version of the story. In outdoor play, children use their imagination well when building with the large wooden blocks. They enjoy carrying and stacking the blocks to create and develop a 'food machine'. Children respond enthusiastically to opportunities for discovery, as when playing detectives in the conservation area.
83. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers achieve a very good balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. In the outdoor play session, the teacher was skilful in developing the children's own ideas to move them on in their learning and to set new challenges through discussion. The provision of whiteboards and pens stimulate children to communicate through an effective mixture of letters, words, symbols and drawings, and to discuss their 'stories' with each other. Parents and learning support assistants play an important role in this area of learning. In one free choice lesson a parent supported a small group of children at the painting table very skilfully. She encouraged them to be as independent as possible in putting on aprons and clearing away, and also achieved a very good balance between giving the children time to express their individuality through painting, and also engaging them in a mature discussion about their choice of colour and subject matter.

ENGLISH

84. The results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Key stage 1 in 1999 were well above the national average in both reading and writing. The percentages of pupils achieving the average and above average levels in writing were well above average, and results were well above those achieved in similar schools. Whilst the percentage of pupils achieving above average levels in reading was high, the percentage achieving the average Level 2 was only just above average and results were in line with those achieved in similar schools. The school accounts for the better results in writing by relating them to the introduction of a literacy hour and reduced time for individual reading which had a negative impact initially on standards in reading, whilst the introduction of an 'extended writing hour' contributed to better standards in writing. The school has maintained well above national average standards in reading and writing over the last three years with very few pupils achieving below the expected Level 2 by the end of the key stage. There has been no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. The results of tests in 2000 show an improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving the Level 2 expected in reading, although national and similar schools' comparative data is not yet available.
85. Inspection evidence finds standards to be well above average in all aspects of English. This represents a very good improvement in standards from those reported at the last inspection when standards were judged to be sound. Most pupils in Year 2, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, have good speaking and listening skills and achieve well because of the good opportunities for listening and speaking in most lessons. They respond accurately to teachers' questions showing that they have listened carefully and speak confidently and clearly with a good range of appropriate vocabulary. Good examples of this were seen in discussions about 'The Daffodils' by William Wordsworth and 'The Whale Rap' in Year 2 classes. The listening skills of a small minority of pupils in Year 2 are not so well developed because teachers do not always ensure that all pupils listen and participate in class discussion.
86. Reading standards are also well above those expected for pupils by Year 2, with very few pupils not achieving the expected level and a good proportion of higher attaining pupils achieving standards well above this. Most pupils read with confidence from a wide range of texts, including non-fiction. They have a good understanding of what they are reading and read with fluency and good expression. The majority have a clear understanding of different types of writing and describe accurately the main features of 'verse', 'rhyme', 'rap' and 'nonsense poetry' for example. Pupils understand and can use the contents and index in non-fiction books but demonstrate limited understanding of how to use the school library. They have sound research skills and talk confidently about finding information about Victorians and whales, although there is little evidence that they use information technology for this purpose.
87. Standards and pupils' achievements in writing are also very good. As in reading, very few pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, do not achieve the level expected by the end of Year 2, and higher attaining pupils achieve well above this. Most pupils, with the exception of a minority of lower attaining pupils, write in a neat joined style. Neat presentation is generally well promoted by teachers and this contributes to the quality of written work throughout the school. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils write in a range of forms, such as poetry, plays, stories and factual writing, showing well developed spelling and punctuation skills for their age.
88. The quality of teaching in the literacy hour and other English lessons is good overall, which is an improvement from the last inspection. It is better for younger pupils in Key Stage 1, particularly in the reception classes where teaching was consistently very good. Generally teachers are implementing the structure of the literacy hour well and making good use of a good range of texts to stimulate interest and enthusiasm in reading and writing and to teach basic skills effectively. Talented learning support assistants are used well and give very good quality support, particularly with group activities. In the best lessons teachers have very clear and high expectations of what pupils can achieve and resources are so well prepared and organised, that even the youngest pupils can work independently for a sustained period. A particularly good example of this was seen when pupils were being encouraged to discriminate

fiction and non-fiction texts. The pupils continued learning very effectively through their own interest and discussion, using a very good selection of books, including their own class-made books, even when there was no adult intervention. Pupils develop a high level of independence in learning to write, because of the very good organisation and use of resources around the classroom. For example pupils in reception, including those with English as an additional language, are encouraged to use picture dictionaries, word pockets, personal dictionary cards and word and sentence cards to write lists and simple sentences. Occasionally, teachers are not firm enough in expecting all pupils to listen and participate in class discussion or expecting pupils to complete a reasonable amount of written work in groups. A minority of pupils are chatty, restless and do not concentrate. This limits their progress in particular, but also the progress of others when the teacher occasionally has to stop the whole class. Literacy skills are reinforced well in some other subjects, for example through reading and writing in history. The use of information technology is planned in many literacy lessons to develop spelling and sentence construction skills. However, there is very little evidence that it is used regularly by older pupils to develop drafting and editing skills.

89. The additional teaching support provided by the part-time teacher, for pupils with special educational needs in Years 1 and 2, is very good quality and contributes substantially to the good progress these pupils make in literacy skills. There is also very good additional support for a few pupils with English as an additional language. This is also very effective because of the very good relationships established and imaginative use of resources to stimulate confidence and skill in using the English language.
90. The English co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and has worked hard to ensure that there are good quality resources available for supporting teaching within the literacy hour. All teachers have been observed teaching literacy but the ongoing arrangements for monitoring and support are not rigorous enough to ensure that the best practice in the school is shared and weaknesses remedied. Reading and writing assessments are completed regularly and these are used to inform teachers about ability groups, and in the best instances to plan what pupils need to learn next. Pupils' interest and learning is greatly enhanced by visits to and from local theatre groups and recently by a visit from local drama students.

MATHEMATICS

91. Pupils' results in the end of Key Stage 1 National Curriculum tests in 1999 were above the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching the standards expected of most seven year-olds was well above the national average, but the percentage of pupils reaching a higher level was close to the national average. As a result, the mathematics scores overall were at an average level compared with those achieved in similar schools. Teacher assessments matched the test results closely. Mathematics test results have been above the national average over the last three years, but with only average percentages at the higher level of attainment. There is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The percentage of pupils achieving below the expected level is very low. Test results for 2000 show a very good increase in the percentage of pupils working at the higher level, but national averages are not yet available from which comparisons can be made. The inspection evidence is that the attainment of pupils now in Year 2 is well above average, with higher attaining pupils achieving well. This is a very good improvement from the last inspection, where attainment overall was average and higher attaining pupils were sometimes underachieving through being given unchallenging tasks. The improvement in standards of higher attaining pupils is a direct result of the National Numeracy Strategy and better staff expertise and teamwork, supported by relevant planning meeting the needs of pupils of different capabilities very effectively.
92. An analysis of pupils' work shows that by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils achieve a high standard in all areas of mathematics, with very few pupils not consistently reaching the standard expected for their age. In number, most pupils quickly calculate a range of different addition and subtraction sums to reach a given number, for example, 39. All pupils are articulate, using mathematical language to share their thinking and explore a range of options for speedy calculation. Higher attaining pupils use logic well in mental arithmetic when working with money, such as when adding £1.80 and 50 pence. Lower attaining pupils have good

strategies to guess a 'secret' number, asking relevant questions such as, 'Is it odd?', and 'Can you divide it by 5?' to narrow the choice of answers. Workbooks show evidence of a good range of challenges to encourage independence in solving problems. Pupils measure confidently in centimetres, estimate in grams and tell the time in quarter hours. When processing information, they use tallying to record numbers, and draw graphs to show the comparative numbers of pupils with brown and blue eyes. They sort shapes according to the numbers of edges and corners and illustrate symmetry by cutting and folding paper.

93. The quality of teaching is good overall. However, during the inspection there was a wide range in the quality of teaching and learning of pupils from the ages of five to seven, with very good teaching in three of the eight lessons seen, and teaching in one lesson graded unsatisfactory. The work scrutiny and teacher records show that teaching is best for the oldest pupils in the reception classes, who have made very good progress from an average level on entry to the school to a level well above average in June. Progress in Years 1 and 2 varies from class to class according to the expectations of the teachers. However, progress is good overall because of the support given by the National Numeracy Strategy in matching work to the needs of pupils, and the good assessment procedures that give a clear indication of the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Where teaching is very good, teachers have high expectations of the capability of their pupils, and lessons proceed at a brisk pace, with all pupils making maximum effort for the whole lesson, contributing fully to the mental session and getting on with the set tasks independently. For example, in Year 1, pupils using picture cards for shopping were expected to follow written instructions not previously explained, to share the play money equally and to record their work neatly. They make very good gains in learning. Relationships are very good. A pupil in the early stages of acquiring English had the confidence to ask the class what a turnip was, and the teacher and other pupils stopped the lesson to explain this in detail until they were happy that the boy understood. Where teaching is less successful, as in the lesson where teaching was graded unsatisfactory, and for short periods in some other lessons, subject knowledge is less secure, and expectations of work rate and output are not high enough. Pupils are not sufficiently challenged and stimulated to work hard, and it is the pupils and not the teachers who set the agenda and pace for group work, by stopping to chat and being too easily satisfied with a small amount of work. All teachers make good use of the very high level of resources, many purchased recently to support the new curriculum, and all in good condition and easily accessible in each classroom. Learning support assistants are generally used very well to support learning, with some good examples of focused assessments being recorded while the mental mathematics and class teaching sessions take place.
94. There are very few pupils with special needs in mathematics and they are given good help by learning support assistants who work closely with class teachers to provide individual work and teaching where this is needed. This level of planning and provision ensures that good progress is made and pupils achieve well. Pupils for whom English is not their first language make very good progress in their acquisition of language, and good progress overall in learning mathematical concepts. All adults and pupils are very aware of their needs and give good support, particularly when the pupils are working in groups.
95. Numeracy is promoted well across the curriculum, for example, in geography in Year 1, where a traffic survey involved collecting and collating information and producing a range of graphs. Information technology is used in many classes to support work in mathematics. However, although many of the activities are relevant to the pupils' level of attainment, for example, telling the time and creating shapes, they are mainly practice with a low level of supervision from the teacher, and sometimes pupils' time is wasted because they do not know what to do. Few examples were seen of pupils having collected information and entered it into a data-handling package or having used programs that set challenges or have problems to be solved.
96. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and has done much to train and support teachers in this first year of implementing the National Numeracy Strategy. All teachers have attended her demonstration lessons. The well-qualified numeracy governor has observed teaching in a very small number of lessons. The headteacher has monitored planning and standards effectively by teaching every class using the class teacher's planning. However, during this school year, the mathematics co-ordinator has not had the opportunity to assess

teachers' confidence by observing teaching. She has been unable to check that the four teachers in each year group have a consistently high expectation of pupil capability, attitude and work-rate during the group sessions and that mental arithmetic sessions are sufficiently slick and challenge all pupils. This lack of support has led to the inconsistencies of teaching and learning noted during the inspection.

SCIENCE

97. Standards of attainment are above the national average by the end of Key Stage 1, with a great majority of the pupils working at Level 2 of the National Curriculum. The school has an average number of pupils working at above this level. This reflects the results of Teacher Assessments in 1999, where the percentage of pupils achieving the average Level 2 was above the national average but the percentage of pupils working at Level 3 was in line with the national average and below those achieved in similar schools. The results of Teacher Assessments in 2000 indicate that standards this year are broadly comparable with those of 1999 and higher attaining pupils are not achieving as well in science as in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the standard of work in science is above that reported at the last inspection and reflects a good improvement in the subject overall.
98. There are several reasons for the good improvement since the last inspection. The subject has been taught as a separate subject for nearly two years, with clear planning for specific scientific skills throughout Key Stage 1. There are still some useful links with other subjects, such as art and English, as in previous topic lessons, but the programme of study for science is more carefully followed. School planning has also improved, with a much greater emphasis being placed on clear learning objectives for each lesson. Teachers' planning is based on nationally recommended guidelines which ensure appropriate coverage of all aspects of the science curriculum. However, some teachers are still having difficulty planning and providing suitable work to ensure that higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged.
99. A strength of the school is the work done on plants, animals and the local environment. By the end of the key stage, standards are well above average in this area of science. This is reflected in Teacher Assessment results in 1999 and work seen during the inspection. All classes have been involved in growing plants from seeds. Where beans have been sown, a living green canopy forms a background to the pupils' work. It reinforces what the pupils have learned about plants' need for water and light as they water their own plant each day. Some good work was done at home in the last holiday when parents shared the task of watering and measuring the growth of plants each day. Learning is reinforced in art and literacy lessons. For example pupils draw bean plants from observation and 'Jack and the Beanstalk' acts as a stimulus for creative writing. Very good use is made of the schools' outdoor resources, particularly the conservation area, to enrich this aspect of study. For example a Year 2 class learns about blossom and fruit from the apple tree and blackberry bushes.
100. Standards in other aspects of science are above average because of the high proportion of pupils achieving average levels. However, only a small proportion of pupils reach a higher standard because they are rarely given work that encourages them to think for themselves. Teachers do use pupils' ideas for investigations, and pupils get a lot of good experience of practical work, but the whole class then tends to do the same experiment and records the results in the same way. There was a good example in only one Year 2 class lesson of higher attaining pupils being encouraged to think for themselves and developing good investigative skills. The whole class were deciding how to find out how a bean would grow in different materials. Higher attaining pupils were set an appropriately challenging task of finding out if the tests were completely fair. They were required to devise a way of checking each experiment and of recording the results which developed their thinking and recording skills effectively.
101. The quality of teaching is good overall. A particular strength is the good use of questioning to check on previous learning so that pupils develop their ideas and understanding from what they know already. Pupils' answers are given real worth which gives them confidence and encourages them to express opinions and ideas. Most teachers have good pupil management

skills to ensure there is good behaviour in lessons but occasionally pupils are allowed to call out, which disrupts the pace and flow of learning. Pupils respond positively to the enthusiasm of teachers and the majority enjoy lessons. Their work rate and concentration are good, especially in experimental work, which helps them to acquire new knowledge and skills. Teachers are good at teaching the basic skills of science, through the use of helpful posters, with such headings as 'What do we want to find out?' and 'What will we do?' Thus investigations are organised in an orderly scientific way. Teachers use appropriate vocabulary, which encourages pupils to learn proper scientific words from an early age. For example, some Year 1 pupils use the word 'evaporation' confidently and accurately. Lesson planning is good, with clear details of learning objectives and activities. Occasionally, the learning objectives are shared with the pupils. This helps them to understand what they are doing and the teacher and the class can check what they are learning as the lesson progresses. Teachers work hard to ensure that there are suitable resources, for example for planting activities, and pupils are encouraged to record their findings in 'My Cress Book' or 'My Bean Diary'. This good organisation helps the pupils to acquire new skills through direct observation and to record them in an organised way.

102. Teachers in each year group plan together well, sharing their skills and experience. Interesting visits are made to places in the locality, which enhance the curriculum. There are some good links between science and other subjects, for example in measuring growth and recording what has happened to their seeds. However, there is little evidence that information technology is used to reinforce scientific knowledge and understanding. The co-ordinator has had two monitoring days over the last two years. They were used to look at pupils' learning and science in the literacy hour. The co-ordinator monitors planning documents to ensure that the scheme is being followed, but does not have sufficient opportunity to observe how the curriculum is being taught. Science standards have risen and the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. However, little analysis has been carried out of Teacher Assessments or pupils' work to identify why higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well in science and what the school needs to do to improve this.

ART

104. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' achievements in art are above those expected for pupils of this age. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in art. They show increasing accuracy and attention to detail when drawing and painting, and develop good increasing knowledge and understanding of the work of other artists.
105. By Year 2 pupils have good experience and skills in painting, printing, collage, three-dimensional work and observational drawing. They study the work of Seurat and carefully produce their own work in his style. They name other artists they have looked at, in particular Monet, and talk about the impressive 'Poppyfield' paintings that they have recently produced. Other pupils in Year 2 produce interesting collages using foil and pastels, after looking at the work of Rosina Wachtmeister. They demonstrate careful observation and painting skills in pictures of bluebells and cherry blossom. Pupils in Year 1 shape clay into animals and sunflowers. They study the work of Vincent Van Gogh and paint their own 'Sunflower' pictures with careful use of colour. Pupils in the reception classes are given many opportunities to paint imaginatively. They learn to mix colours and create colourful caterpillars. They have good experience of three-dimensional art, for example when they make teddy bear faces out of papier mache.
106. There are some good links with other subjects in art work. For example, pupils produce painted and collage flowers linked with their science work. This supports their knowledge and understanding of the structure of plants and how they are represented artistically. Teachers are also beginning to use art programs on computers to support pupils' learning, although there is limited evidence of progression in skills and competence from reception to Year 2.

107. The teaching of art is good and this is also an improvement since the last inspection. There are now very clear guidelines to support teachers in developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in art. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and plan activities with a clear focus on the development of knowledge, skills and understanding. They question pupils effectively to reinforce their knowledge and understanding of other artists. Teachers and other adults interact well with pupils whilst they are working to promote confidence. In the best lessons teachers encourage pupils to evaluate and consider how to improve their own work and that of other pupils.
108. There are attractive displays of art work throughout the school which demonstrate the progress pupils make and which can be appreciated by all who come into the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

109. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils' achievements in design and technology are in line with those expected for pupils of this age. Judgements are based on two lessons seen, discussions with teachers and pupils and a scrutiny of planning, displays and photographic evidence seen around the school. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress in design and technology.
110. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have developed a sound understanding and skills in the design and making aspect of the subject. They generate ideas during class and group discussions and confidently work at tasks such as designing and making a 'Hickory Dickory' clock. They use a range of techniques, tools and materials to develop their ideas. Pupils assemble and join materials by gluing and sewing as they design and decorate a coat for 'Joseph'. Other pupils in Year 2 use wood to make toys with axles and wheels. Most pupils can draw clearly labelled diagrams to plan their designs but there is limited evidence of pupils evaluating and identifying improvements that could be made to their products.
111. The teaching of design and technology is good, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers plan activities well, giving clear instructions and demonstrations to enable pupils to get on quickly and to develop particular skills. Expectations about behaviour and attitudes to learning are clearly established and pupils respond well by working enthusiastically and sharing equipment sensibly. The better teaching includes opportunities for pupils to evaluate and improve their designs.
112. The co-ordinator oversees planning throughout the school and keeps photographic evidence to ensure that there is a progressive development of skills from year group to year group.

GEOGRAPHY

113. Only two geography lessons were timetabled during the inspection. Judgements are based on an observation of one of these lessons, a scrutiny of pupils' work and discussion with pupils and staff. The standard of pupils' work is in line with expectations for pupils of this age and similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection.
114. Year 2 pupils can identify holiday locations on a map of the world and compare the physical and human geography of Billericay with the fictional Isle of Struay. They are aware of physical and human features of places, such as shops, schools, rivers, mountains and cliffs and the majority can explain how a river is formed. They have clear opinions about different kinds of pollution and can describe ways of getting rid of traffic or noise pollution. Pupils have a good knowledge of the four compass points and can use co-ordinates confidently but have little experience of using local maps. Year 1 pupils have a better knowledge of maps than those in Year 2. They use a local map to show the location of their houses and to trace their route to school. They draw their own maps of the playground, including playground markings, accurately. They are familiar with street furniture, such as zebra crossings, lamp posts, bus stops and road signs, and higher attaining pupils understand the meaning of many common

traffic signs and markings.

115. The teaching in one lesson observed was good. The teacher made good use of resources to ensure pupils understood the dangers of crossing the road and importance of the zebra crossing. However, some pupils were allowed to call out and this limited the opportunity for all pupils to hear and contribute. There are some good links with other subjects in geography. For example pupils in Year 1 have collected data and produced graphs relating to a traffic survey. Others have created a pictogram recording pupils' different methods of transport to school. This enables them to talk with knowledge and from direct experience about different modes of transport and the impact of traffic on their environment. Their visit to the Train Museum was primarily a history visit, but the pupils also learned a great deal about engines as a means of transport.
116. The planning for geography has become more precise since the introduction and use of nationally recommended guidelines, but the development of literacy skills through geography in Year 2 is limited. Whilst the co-ordinator monitors planning, there is no monitoring of teaching to ensure plans are successfully implemented, and that learning is consistent between classes. There are good local visits to support pupils' learning but the school grounds are presently under-used in this subject.

HISTORY

117. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils attain a standard in line with expectations for pupils of this age. This reflects the findings of the previous inspection.
118. Both Year 1 and Year 2 classes have benefited from interesting visits which have developed pupils' skills in finding out about the past. Pupils in Year 1 have visited Mangapps Railway Museum which provided a stimulus for writing and art work, as well as developing pupils' sense of chronology. Pupils in Year 2 have visited the Braintree Museum and through dressing up in Victorian clothes and participating in role play, developed a sound understanding of how different life was in Victorian times. In particular, pupils demonstrated through their writing a secure factual knowledge of life as a maid in Victorian times, although the quality and quantity of written work was very variable between classes.
119. The standard of teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory. Teachers make good use of resources, including visits, photographs and videos, to develop pupils' understanding about every day life in the past. They ask relevant questions to stimulate pupils' thinking and increase their understanding. Occasionally, question and answer sessions go on too long and this leaves little time for pupils to write about what they have learned. However, some teachers are skilful at using historical texts in literacy lessons, and some good examples were seen in Year 2 of pupils' writing about Icarus, Daedalus and King Midas.

120. The amount of time allocated to the teaching and learning of history is variable between classes and this leads to inconsistencies in the quality and quantity of historical writing. There is little time for the co-ordinator to monitor learning and no time at present to monitor teaching to ensure that these inconsistencies are addressed.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

121. Standards in information technology are below national expectations by the end of Key Stage 1 and below those reported at the last inspection. No teaching of information technology was timetabled in Key Stage 1 during the week of the inspection. Judgements are based on an analysis of pupils' recorded work, observations of pupils using information technology in other lessons, and discussions with the subject co-ordinator and pupils.
122. Pupils use information technology appropriately to support their learning in other subjects, although this is not consistent between classes or year groups. For example, pupils in Year 2 use an art program to draw dragons or design coats for 'Joseph'. Some have created simple map plans to support their understanding of geography. In one Year 2 class there were some good examples of word processing about special places. For example, one pupil had recorded thoughts about heaven 'as a place where I'd feel peaceful, without everyone disturbing me'. Overall however, there is little evidence of pupils using word processing skills to enhance their drafting and editing skills.
123. Pupils in Year 2 have used information technology to generate pictures and some to create text and block graphs, but there is no evidence that the majority of pupils have achieved the standard expected in all aspects of the subject. There was no evidence of pupils in Year 2 having covered the control and modelling aspects of the curriculum, although the former is planned for the last few weeks of the term. There was no evidence that pupils were able to save and retrieve their work or access information using the computer. Only one Year 2 class had evidence of pupils using information technology to create block graphs. Overall the quality of work displayed in Year 2 showed very little improvement from that on display in Year 1 or the reception classes.
124. Although some teachers identify when information technology will be used in literacy and numeracy lessons, there is no planned teaching of information technology skills in any Key Stage 1 class. Hardware resources are at least adequate with each class having at least two computers. In addition there is small suite of computers, including one with Internet access, in part of the library. Whilst some teachers are making good use of computers to support other subjects, there is no systematic teaching and assessment of information technology skills to ensure pupils make progress and achieve the expected level of attainment by Year 2.
125. The subject co-ordinator has interest and expertise in the subject and has a substantial influence on the quality of work achieved by pupils in the reception classes. However, there is no clear plan setting out how she will monitor and support the teaching of information technology skills throughout the rest of the school, to ensure pupils make progress from year to year. Information technology has already been identified as a priority for improvement by the school, and staff training has been planned to support teachers' own expertise and the use of information technology in the classroom. The co-ordinator has worked hard to identify appropriate software resources to support different subject areas, to assist teachers in planning the use of information technology to support other subjects. Although hardware resources are more than adequate, their use is very limited because of the lack of planned time for teaching but also because of inadequate maintenance support arrangements which mean equipment is sometimes unusable.

MUSIC

126. The standard of pupils' work in music is above that normally expected for pupils of this age. The standard of singing and performance is very high. This is an improvement since the previous inspection and is a direct result of the consistent use of a structured scheme of work and the support of the experienced subject co-ordinator.
127. Pupils in Year 2 sing 'Good morning to you, Valentine' confidently as a three part round, with very good tone and clear diction. They listen very well to each other and watch the teacher closely to ensure that the volume is consistent between the different parts. They sing favourite songs, such as 'Skeleton Stomp', with enthusiasm and take pride in their performance, while at the same time providing a slick accompaniment on a range of wooden percussion instruments. Pupils respond thoughtfully to new musical experiences, describing their feelings with maturity, such as after listening to quiet music representing the sea. They handle instruments with care and enjoy the challenge of learning new techniques, such as playing hand-held chimes. All pupils in Year 2 are learning to play the descant recorder. More than 20 pupils also attend lunchtime recorder classes, and practise at home. They play confidently and with good tone and technique. They are committed to learning and keen to improve their skills. Pupils throughout the school have a good knowledge of musical instruments and how sound is produced; for example, pupils in Year 1 use the word 'vibrates' when discussing the sound made by an elephant drum. They distinguish between high and low sounds well, and predict accurately that a tenor recorder will make a lower sound than a descant recorder, because there is more space for the air to 'bounce around'. Most pupils in school assembly recognise the sound of a cello in an instrumental piece, and they all listened very well as the two pupils who have individual cello tuition in school played for them. It is not possible to judge standards in composition, because this aspect of the curriculum was not taught during the inspection.
128. The quality of teaching and learning are good. A commercial scheme gives very good support to non-specialist teachers and is used confidently and creatively to provide stimulating and well-balanced lessons. A good range of tuned and non-tuned percussion instruments is used effectively to aid learning. The youngest pupils quickly learn the names of the instruments and how to hold and play them properly. Relationships are very good and teachers and pupils enjoy music lessons. Attitudes are generally very positive and pupils behave very well. In one lesson, however, after a period of very good teaching in which concentration had been intense, pupils became restless and chatty as they moved to another activity. The pace of the lesson slowed because a small minority of pupils did not settle to the new task and were allowed to distract the other pupils. Pupils' musical experience makes a strong contribution to their spiritual, social and cultural development. The effort that all pupils make in achieving a high quality performance in school hymn practice and their enjoyment and pride in the shared experience is impressive. There is a very good commitment by teachers and learning support assistants to ensure that all pupils achieve well. One pupil with a statement of educational needs has excellent support at the lunchtime recorder club. Pupils for whom English is not their first language are helped sensitively to express their feelings when listening to music and they make very good progress. Year 2 pupils take part in an annual music festival with other schools. A third of pupils who left the school last summer chose to continue playing the recorder at the Junior School. All these experiences build strong foundations for the enjoyment of shared performance and listening to music in later life.
129. The enthusiastic co-ordinator has worked hard to support less confident colleagues. She has her own development plan for the subject, based on an audit of resources and staff expertise. She uses the weekly school hymn practice very effectively as a vehicle for demonstrating techniques, assessing achievement, coaching to improve, celebrating success in performance and broadening the musical experience of pupils. She enlists the expertise of staff and members of the community to provide the pupils with good opportunities to see a wide range of instruments being played. In-service training is used effectively to support and develop learning in school. Five learning support assistants attended a course on how to support learning in class. Some of them now teach recorders at lunchtime, following a scheme of work written by the co-ordinator. A course on multi-cultural instruments led to the co-ordinator providing training for staff on teaching and learning linked with a range of drums. Assessment procedures and their use to inform planning are satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

130. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils achieve standards in line with expectations for pupils of this age in gymnastics and dance. The dance lessons seen were of good quality but at present there is no scheme of work for dance to ensure skills are taught systematically throughout the school.
131. There is a generous amount of time allocated to physical education on the timetables. This is organised so that pupils have one outdoor and two indoor sessions per week. This ensures that pupils have opportunities for developing gymnastic, games and dance skills. Resources are in good supply and the very good accommodation is well used by teachers to provide regular lessons and, in addition, voluntary games and country dance clubs for older pupils.
132. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good and pupils learned a range of skills successfully. Pupils in Year 1 made good progress in skipping and in throwing and catching bean bags. They enjoy the challenge of the lesson and respond very positively when asked to skip competitively. Good use of pupil demonstrations encourages the rest of the class to concentrate and work harder to improve. In a Year 2 dance lesson pupils compose their movements with good imagination, changing their movements appropriately to match the mood of the music. The lesson is well organised with time for practice of mood changes before the music is introduced. At this stage the teacher prompts the pupils well to improve their performances, but does not give the pupils an opportunity to comment on their own or each other's work. In another dance lesson pupils learn basic country dance steps and routines well. Pupils develop a good sense of rhythm with opportunities for clapping the routines between each section. The lesson provides good, enjoyable exercise for the pupils, but there are no pauses for the teacher to comment or use demonstrations to encourage progress in skills. In part of a gymnastics lesson seen, pupils demonstrate a good sideways travel up a ramp; a satisfactory one-footed balance and a clear jump from the stool with a polished landing. The class show appreciation for each other with keen applause. Pupils co-operate well when clearing away apparatus sensibly and safely at the end of the session.
133. The co-ordinator has not attended in-service training this year due to other commitments but has kept the resources in good order. Assessment procedures are not yet in place for judging standards and for monitoring progress throughout the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

134. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils achieve standards in line with the expectations for pupils of this age set out in the locally agreed syllabus. The school has maintained the sound standards reported at the last inspection.
135. Judgements are based on three lesson observations (only two Year 2 lessons were timetabled during the inspection period); an analysis of pupils' written work and discussion with Year 2 pupils and the subject co-ordinator.
136. Pupils in Year 2 name special events linked with Christian, Hindu, Sikh and Jewish celebrations such as Harvest, weddings, Diwali, Advent and Hanukah. They recall the main features of some of these events and know that there are differences between weddings celebrated by people with different religious beliefs. They also know that there are special people linked with Christian beliefs, such as Jesus and Moses, and they identify some important stories from the Bible. They know that there are special places where people worship, such as a cathedral. One pupil described this clearly as a 'really big place where you worship God'. They know some key features of a cathedral or church, such as the cross, font, stained glass windows, Bible and aisle, and can describe what they are and their significance.
137. The quality of teaching in three lessons observed was satisfactory which is not as good as

reported at the last inspection. Teachers present themes in an interesting way, making good use of resources where appropriate. For example, in Year 1 the teacher uses a 'What's in the box' activity to motivate interest in the lesson and to develop some appreciation of the importance of being able to see. Teachers in Year 2 use artefacts and posters to introduce the key features of a synagogue, although the use of very small labels in one of these lessons limits pupils' ability to recall the name of these features subsequently. Generally teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils behave sensibly throughout the lesson. However, the expectations that all pupils should listen attentively and complete their recorded work are not always clearly established. A small minority of pupils in Year 2 fidget and talk amongst themselves during class introductions, or complete very little work subsequently to demonstrate that they have a secure knowledge of the main features of a synagogue. Overall, insufficient time is allocated to the teaching of religious education throughout Key Stage 1 and this limits what pupils can learn and achieve.

138. The co-ordinator has developed a well structured scheme of work based on a commercially produced scheme and linked to the locally agreed syllabus, to support teachers in their knowledge, understanding and use of resources for teaching religious education. There has been a good improvement in the quantity and quality of religious artefacts available for teaching about different religions. This has also contributed to pupils' better understanding of different cultures. Although religious education has been identified as a priority for development by the school, the co-ordinator has not had an opportunity this academic year to observe and support teaching to ensure that planning is implemented effectively. Assessment records do not yet record what pupils have learned and there is limited sampling of pupils' work to ensure that standards are as good as they should be throughout the school.