

INSPECTION REPORT

Fairhouse Community Infant School
Basildon

LEA area: Essex

Unique Reference Number: 114905

Headteacher: Mrs Gena White

Reporting inspector: Mrs Lesley Robins - 5848

Dates of inspection: 8 to 11 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707304

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

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Information about the school

Type of school:	Infant
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Margaret Marck
Date of the previous inspection:	May 1996

Information about the inspection team

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs Lesley Robins, Registered Inspector	English, mathematics, music, physical education , religious education	Special educational needs, Equality of opportunity, Under-fives, Attainment and progress, Teaching, The curriculum and assessment, Leadership and management
Mr Brian Wilkinson, Team Inspector	Science, design and technology, information technology, history, geography, art.	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development, Pupils= spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, Staffing, accommodation and learning resources, The efficiency of the school
Mr Dan Regan, Lay inspector		Attendance, Support, guidance and pupils= welfare, Partnership with parents and the community

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WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Fairhouse is an improving school.
C. The 1999 test results in mathematics and science were much better than in 1998.
C. There is a well planned curriculum for these young children and good systems for assessing their progress.
C. The school cares very well for its children, making sure they are safe and nurturing them as individuals.
C. There is good provision for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
C. The teaching assistants work very well with the teachers, making a significant contribution to the children's learning.
C. There is a loyal and professional staff, comprising the whole school community.
C. There is very good leadership from the head teacher, with good support from the senior managers, and the governors
C. Equality of opportunity for the children is very good.
C. Parents receive a very good range of information from the school.
C. There is a purposeful, distinctive ethos, and a high quality learning environment where the children's self-esteem is promoted well.
C. Standards in art are good.

WHERE THE SCHOOL HAS WEAKNESSES

Standards are not good enough in reading and writing.
I. The children's presentation of their work is too often unsatisfactory.
II. There is an inconsistent approach to homework.
III. In religious education, there are weaknesses in the progress the children make in learning about other religions

There are many strengths in the school, and they outweigh the weaknesses. These main areas of weakness, together with other minor weaknesses identified in the main report, will form the basis of the governor's post-OfSTED action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

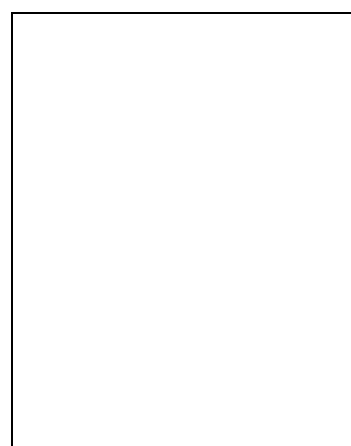
The school has dealt effectively with the four key issues for action identified in the 1996 inspection. There is now a clear curriculum framework, supported by schemes of work for all subjects. Assessment information is being used well by the teachers to give children the right level of work. The school is improving the standards being achieved by the higher attaining

children. Baseline assessment is used well in the reception class and through the school to put the children into ability groups and to track their progress. There is now adequate accommodation and improved provision for the children under five. Nearly all of the minor weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been rectified. Improvement is being brought about through good leadership from the head teacher, who is well supported by the governors, and through the hard work and commitment of the staff. Thus, the school is in a good position to continue improving.

STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-olds in 1999 based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools
Reading	E	E
Writing	E	E
Mathematics	D	C



These tables show that in 1999, the school's results in reading and writing were well below national averages and the averages for similar schools. In mathematics, the school's results were below the national average, but in line with the average standards in similar schools. Although still low in reading and writing, the 1999 results are a little better than they were in 1998. The mathematics standards in these tests show significant improvement from 1998. In the 1999 teacher assessments in science, more children achieved the average standard expected than they did in 1998. More children are beginning to achieve above average standards in these tests and assessments.

In the inspection, standards for the five-year-olds are mostly below what is expected for their age, but they make good progress from a low starting point. For the seven-year-olds, standards in reading and writing are weaker than in the other subjects. The children's phonic skills are not good and they need to develop sooner a range of strategies to help them with their reading and writing. They need to improve their spelling, handwriting and presentation of their work. In mathematics, attainment just meets the average standard expected, and the children make sound progress in their basic numeracy skills. Standards in science are below average but the children make satisfactory progress. The children's attainment in information technology and religious education are broadly in line with what is expected for their age, but the children make unsatisfactory progress in learning about other religions. In the other subjects of the curriculum,

the children make mostly satisfactory progress. In art, they make good progress, achieving good standards for their age.

QUALITY OF TEACHING

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

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

Teaching is at least satisfactory in 90 per cent of lessons seen. It is good in 40 per cent of lessons, but unsatisfactory in 10 per cent of lessons. Standards in teaching have been maintained since the last inspection, and in some aspects have improved.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Overall, the children's behaviour is good. Occasional in-attentiveness is mainly linked to minor weaknesses in teaching. The children get on well with each other and with all the adults in the school.
Attendance	Attendance is good and has improved since the last inspection.
Ethos*	There is a very good, positive ethos, with a good sense of pride in the school and its children. Teamwork is good. All the adults want the best for the children.
Leadership and management	The governors are supportive and informed. The head teacher provides strong, supportive leadership. The senior teachers in the school are developing their roles well. They and the core subject co-ordinators need to be able to visit classrooms for themselves now, to support teaching quality.
Curriculum	The children under five benefit from a good balance of direct teaching and play activities. For the infants, there is a well-planned and interesting curriculum, with appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. There are good systems for assessing the children's progress.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision for children with special needs is good, and they mostly make satisfactory progress.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural	The school makes good provision for the children's personal development. Religious education, assemblies and Circle Time are all helping children to

development	think about the right and wrong way to behave and how to relate to each other. Art, music, and English promote the childrens cultural development well.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The school is well staffed with teachers and teaching assistants, and all the adults working in the school contribute to its good ethos. The schools accommodation is good, and has been improved since the last inspection. Learning resources are well provided.
Value for money	Standards in reading and writing need to improve. They are improving in mathematics and science. The children make broadly satisfactory progress, teaching is sound, there is good provision for the childrens personal development, a good curriculum and good assessment, and good support for the children=s well being. This is an improving school, ably led. Overall, these factors make for good value for money.

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

THE PARENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<p>IV. The school encourages parents to become involved in the life of the school</p> <p>V. The school informs parents about what is taught.</p> <p>VI. The children like school.</p> <p>VII. The school helps the children achieve good standards in their work</p>	<p>The school's complaints.</p> <p>The school's children=s progress</p> <p>There is</p>

The inspectors broadly endorse the parents' positive views, although they judge that standards in reading and writing are not yet high enough. With regard to the concerns raised by some parents, the inspectors find that the head teacher and staff are very approachable for parents to discuss their concerns. Previous issues raised by parents in questionnaires have been addressed, such as more information about what is taught. There are good opportunities for parents to find out about their children=s progress. The inspectors do think, however, that the school should agree and make clear policy and practice for homework.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The head teacher and staff, supported by the governors, should:

i) Improve standards in the pupils reading and writing by -

- XI. developing a more structured and systematic approach to the teaching of reading;
(*Paragraphs 12, 115*)
- XII. establishing a more rigorous approach to the teaching of phonics;
(*Paragraph 108*)
- XIII. making more explicit to the children the strategies they can use to help them with their reading and writing;
(*Paragraphs 106, 108*)
- XIV. reminding children to use their phonic knowledge when reading and writing;
(*Paragraph 108*)
- XV. encouraging the use of dictionaries and word lists for writing;
(*Paragraphs 109, 113*)
- XVI. reinforcing knowledge of spelling rules;
(*Paragraph 113*)
- XVII. insisting with the older or higher attaining pupils that simple words are spelled accurately;
(*Paragraphs 109, 113*)
- XVIII. encouraging accuracy in the use of punctuation by the older or higher attaining pupils;
(*Paragraphs 109, 113*)
- XIX. writing more evaluative comments on the pupils' written work;
(*Paragraph 53*)
- XX. giving more specific guidance to parents, in the home-school contact books, on how to help their children's reading;
(*Paragraphs 42, 66, 114*)
- XXI. making more explicit in the pupils' annual reports for their parents ways in which individual pupils can improve their reading and writing;
(*Paragraphs 42, 50, 68*)

ii) Improve the standards of the pupils' presentation of the work by -

- XXII. agreeing standards of presentation of work;
(*Paragraph 23*)
- XXIII. making clear to the pupils expectations for the presentation of their work;
(*Paragraph 110*)
- XXIV. encouraging accuracy and high standards wherever possible;
(*Paragraph 36*)
- XXV. not accepting work that is not of the pupils' best.
(*Paragraph 110*)

iii) Develop a clear and consistent approach to homework, by -

- XXVI. building on the existing strengths in homework systems;
- XXVII. agreeing on whole school policy and practice;
(*Paragraphs 42, 66*)
- XXVIII. communicating the policy clearly to parents;
(*Paragraphs 42, 66*)

XXIX. using the school's monitoring and evaluation systems to check that homework is consistent through the school and is having a positive effect on the pupils' progress. (*Paragraph 76*)

iv) Improve the progress pupils make in learning about religions, by -

XXX. Auditing teachers' knowledge and expertise in teaching this aspect of religious education; (*Paragraph 33*)

XXXI. Securing training to meet those needs (*Paragraph 33*)

XXXII. Identifying more clearly in the scheme of work the religions to be covered and what the children are to learn about them (*Paragraphs 16, 58, 143, 149*)

XXXIII. Providing additional guidance to staff where appropriate (*Paragraph 146*)

There are other minor weaknesses identified in the inspection report, and the governors should consider including them in their post-OfSTED action plan. They are as follows:

XXXIV. The pupils have insufficiently well developed independent study skills. (*Paragraph 24*)

XXXV. There is occasional lack of pace and challenge in mathematics lessons. (*Paragraphs 34, 38, 122, 124 and 125*)

XXXVI. Some of the school's draft paperwork is insufficiently explicit about the role of senior managers in maintaining and raising standards. (*Paragraph 76*)

XXXVII. The core subject co-ordinators do not yet visit classrooms to see the quality of teaching for themselves. (*Paragraphs 76, 127, 149*)

XXXVIII. The school has no written policy to show how it would deal with any incidents of bullying or racial harassment should they arise. (*Paragraph 62*)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Fairhouse Infant School is located in Basildon, in an area of relative social disadvantage, and draws most of its pupils from the surrounding council-owned housing. There are 147 pupils on the school roll, with equal numbers of boys and girls. At the time of the inspection, 11 children in the one reception class of 22 were under five. The school roll will increase to approximately 191 by the summer term 2000, with the admission of 44 more reception aged children. This expected total for the summer term is less than it was at the time of the previous inspection, in May 1996, when the number of pupils was 217.

2. The current proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals of 23 per cent is above the national average. There are few pupils from other ethnic groups. The attainment of the children on entry to school is well below the average standard expected. A significant number of them have poor language and literacy skills and under-developed learning skills when they join the reception class. The school has identified 58 pupils as having a special educational need (SEN), representing nearly 40 per cent of the school roll and this is high, although there are no pupils with statements of SEN. However, 49 of these pupils are on Stage One of the SEN Code of Practice, and the school expects that some of these children will not stay on the SEN register for long.

3. The school expresses its aims in the Fairhouse Vision®, and they encompass: working together; a safe, secure environment; acknowledgement and valuing all; ensuring children's entitlement to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding; high expectations for all; and equality of opportunity for all. This overall vision statement is supported by an impressive set of objectives for the parents, children, staff, governors, and the wider community.

4. The school's current priorities on its school development plan, (SDP), are for standards to be raised in information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, and early years, and the appendix to the school's literacy action plan shows a focus on raising standards in reading and writing. The main issues being dealt with to support these priorities are the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and attainment; differentiation; planning and assessment.

5. Although not statutorily required to, the governing body, with advice from the head teacher, sets targets for the pupils' attainment in the end of Key Stage One (KS1) National Curriculum (NC) tests. The targets this year are for 73 per cent of pupils to achieve average standards (Level 2) in reading and writing and for 78 per cent of pupils to achieve the average standard in mathematics. These targets are appropriately challenging.

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	34	36	70

National Curriculum	Test/Task Results	Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or Above	Boys	18	20	28
	Girls	26	28	30
	Total	44	48	58
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	65 (64)	68 (65)	84 (60)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87(84)

Teacher	Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or Above	Boys	25	27	28
	Girls	27	29	33
	Total	52	56	61
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	75 (60)	80 (68)	87 (72)
	National	82 (81)	86(85)	87 (86)

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed
through absence for the latest complete
reporting year: (1997-98)

		%
Authorised Absence	School	5.9
	National comparative data	5.7
Unauthorised Absence	School	1.7
	National comparative data	0.5

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	0
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	5
Satisfactory or better	90

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress

6. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests and assessments for seven-year-olds, the school's results, in terms of the proportions of pupils achieving at least average standards (level 2), were well below the national averages in reading and writing, and below the national averages in mathematics and science. The proportions of pupils achieving above average standards (level 3) were below the national averages for reading, writing and science, but were close to the national average in mathematics.

7. Compared to similar schools, the Fairhouse results in reading and writing were also well below, but in mathematics and science, they were in line with the average for similar schools. The proportions of pupils achieving above average standards (level 3) were below those for similar schools for writing, were broadly in line for reading and mathematics and were above the average for similar schools in science.

8. The school's 1999 results show a significant improvement in standards in mathematics and science from those for 1998. The school's results in English were better than those for 1998, but reading and writing remain the weaker areas in the pupils' attainment. The school sets appropriately challenging targets for the children's attainment in reading, writing, and mathematics in the end of key stage National Curriculum tests.

9. Overall, the girls do better in reading and writing than the boys. There are no significant differences in the attainments of boys and girls in the other subjects of the curriculum.

10. Standards for the **children under five** are below national expectations in language and literacy and mathematics, but broadly in line with national expectations in their knowledge and understanding of the world, and in their physical and creative development. Given the low starting point for many children when they join the reception class, they make good progress overall.

11. In language and literacy, the children's listening skills are generally good for their age. They make steady progress in their speaking skills, but most have very limited vocabulary, and struggle to express their ideas. They show good attitudes to books, and are developing their understanding of story structure, but their knowledge of letters and sounds is also limited. Some make good attempts to write and a few nearly write their name accurately. In mathematics, the children under five can recognise some numerals and are learning to count accurately. They have some good early scientific skills and are beginning to be able to recognise similarities and differences, in smells for example. They use construction kits and

technology quite well. The children attain some good standards in their creative development, specifically in their painting and modelling.

12. By the age of seven, pupils' attainment in **English** is below average. Pupils make broadly satisfactory progress in their speaking and listening and in aspects of reading and writing, but progress in knowledge and skills in phonics, spelling and punctuation is unsatisfactory. From a low base, the pupils make steady gains in their vocabulary, learning technical terms in different subjects, for example, but many continue to struggle to express ideas and thoughts. This adversely affects the progress they are able to make, not just in English, but also in subjects such as mathematics, where they have difficulty explaining their mental strategies. The pupils have very good attitudes to reading and writing and they do try hard, but they do not apply sufficiently well a range of strategies, including phonics, when they read. In their writing, the pupils successfully write for a range of purposes and this is a strength. However, spelling, punctuation and the presentation of their work are unsatisfactory.

13. In **mathematics**, the pupils' attainment is below average. However by the end of the key stage, a fair proportion of pupils attain the average level expected and a few exceed this level, so that overall progress is satisfactory. They have a competent grasp of basic number facts, and satisfactory knowledge of two and three-dimensional shapes. Their skills in logical thinking and seeing patterns in numbers are beginning to improve, but they are less skilled in explaining their mental strategies and in interpreting data.

14. In **science**, the pupils' attainment is below average, but they make broadly satisfactory progress. By the end of the key stage, they have reasonable understanding, for their age, of the nature of scientific investigation. They know some facts about how sound travels, and have some understanding of physical changes, such as heating and cooling. Their skills in recording their findings are less well developed.

15. Standards in **information technology** are broadly average by the end of the key stage, and the pupils make satisfactory progress. They gain understanding in whole class information technology sessions and consolidate skills and learning when they use computers in lessons. With help, most pupils are competent in using a basic range of applications on the computer, such as positioning, deleting, and printing text.

16. Standards in **religious education** are broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, and the pupils make good progress in learning from religion, developing concepts of right and wrong and personal reflection. Their knowledge about religions, particularly religions other than Christianity, is less secure and progress is unsatisfactory.

17. The pupils with **special educational needs** make broadly satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them in Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Through clear learning programmes and well-organised support from the teaching assistants, they are enabled to make satisfactory progress in most lessons. Their progress in basic reading and writing skills is less satisfactory because of overall weaknesses in providing for this aspect of the pupils' learning, not because of any specific weaknesses in special educational provision.

18. Since the last inspection, there is evidence that the higher attaining pupils are making better progress, because there are gradual increases in the numbers of pupils attaining the above average level 3 in National Curriculum tests and assessments. In the autumn term, these pupils receive well-focused support from the support teacher, enabling them to make appropriate progress in most lessons.

19. In the other subjects of the curriculum, the pupils make satisfactory progress, gaining knowledge and skills across the range of subjects. They make good progress in art and can produce high quality two and three-dimensional work.

20. The school is gradually improving its standards, and has in the past year, been particularly successful in raising standards in mathematics and science. Improvement in English has been slower and standards in reading and writing are comparatively low. The school recognises the need to improve standards in these areas. The proportion of satisfactory teaching is broadly similar to that found in the previous inspection, with improvements in the teaching of the under-fives and in providing for higher attaining pupils. Overall, despite staffing changes, previous strengths in the school in standards and quality, such as good provision for pupils' personal development have been maintained and some aspects have improved.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

21. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall and their personal development is satisfactory. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour in the reception class and in years 1 and 2 are a strong feature of the school, and assists the progress made by the pupils. There is a good focus on work and the pupils soon establish good, positive attitudes. This is broadly similar to what was found in the last inspection.

22. The children under five settle well each day during class registration and have quickly learned to make productive use of the time, looking at books or talking quietly to one another in readiness for the start of the lessons. They show good attitudes to books and reading. In lessons, the children are confident and willing to contribute to the teacher-led discussions. When participating in a variety of practical activities indoors and outside, they play well with a minimum need for supervision. They are learning to co-operate well in their play and group tasks. For example, a boy and a girl worked very successfully together making a construction with building bricks, which later they shared with the whole class. When minor disputes do arise, the children respond well to adult encouragement to share. The children are developing good levels of independence in their play, choosing activities and selecting the materials they need, such as tape for book making.

23. The majority of pupils in years 1 and 2, including those with special educational needs, show much interest in their school and work. They settle down to work during the morning and afternoon registrations, which provide a calm and orderly start to lessons. They quickly apply themselves to tasks, responding quite well to questions with brief but appropriate answers.

However, their presentational skills are often poor, and saved only by their teachers care to provide good quality resources for ensuring that work is kept orderly and accorded value.

24.The pupils= powers of concentration are broadly average, given their age and level of attainment, but their attention can easily waver. Many pupils, including the higher attaining pupils, have a limited capacity for personal, independent study. For example, they show insufficient initiative in using visual aids, such as word lists and other materials, including dictionaries, to help them with their learning. The teachers do not sufficiently reinforce these skills with the pupils.

25.The pupils behave well in and around the school. In the previous inspection, the school emphasis on and the provision for, ensuring good behaviour was a strength and this is still the case. Many of the pupils are brought into the school grounds by their parents, thus providing a smooth handover to waiting teachers and teaching assistants. Behaviour in assemblies is very good. At these times, the pupils are attentive and disciplined. They are mostly very responsive, being sensitive to the atmosphere and expectations established in assemblies. Throughout the day, pupils are closely supervised when moving between specialist rooms and at lunch and break times, and so standards of discipline are good at these times. Pupils know these routines and co-operate well, ensuring that no valuable time is wasted overcoming pupils= behaviour difficulties. Where there is mild restlessness midway through lessons, the pupils respond well to a light reprimand by their teachers. There have been no exclusions of pupils in the last year.

26.The pupils are friendly, and enjoy opportunities for fun and laughter when situations allow. They show good respect for property belonging to the school or their peers, and there is noticeably very little litter around the school site. They are trustworthy, performing errands and monitor duties such as those with the daily and dinner registers that are undertaken on a rota basis. There is no evidence of any bullying or harassment in the school.

27.Relationships between pupils and with teachers and their assistants are generally good. Teachers are vigilant to ensure that pupils work well in pairs and in larger groups. The pupils also respond well to any opportunities to respect other pupils feelings, values and beliefs, as exemplified in their responses to the recent festival of Diwali, referred to in several lessons through the week. The pupils listen quite well to each other and readily show a sense of wonderment when they see or learn something, which surprises them. The pupilspersonal development is satisfactory but reflects their intellectual immaturity. They participate satisfactorily in the weekly >sharing assemblies= when they can celebrate each others achievements.

Attendance

28.Attendance is good overall and the great majority of pupils arrive punctually for the start of the school day. Analysis of registers indicates a current attendance rate of approximately 94 per cent, and this is at the national average. This analysis also showed that unauthorised absence is now negligible, having been reduced from 1.7 per cent to 0.2 per cent and this is an

improvement from the last inspection. These figures show an improvement on those for the last reporting year, 1997-98.

29. Registers are taken quickly and efficiently, with minimum disruption to the start of lessons.

All teachers follow the procedures for registration, including closing the registers at 9.05 am. The school closely monitors attendance and punctuality. The parents co-operate in ensuring that their children attend school regularly and punctually. Parents of any pupil with an attendance or punctuality problem are invited to discuss the matter with the school. The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) is involved if necessary.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

30. The quality of teaching in the school is satisfactory, with some clear strengths and a few weaknesses. During the inspection, teaching was at least satisfactory in nine out of every ten lessons seen. It was good or very good in about four of every ten lessons seen. The previous inspection found teaching to be sound or better in 86 per cent of lessons and good in 37 per cent. These statistics indicate that, despite staffing changes, quality in teaching has been maintained. This inspection has found that previous strengths in the teaching have been sustained and that some aspects have been improved.

31. One key strength in the teaching is the consistency of classroom organisation, so that all rooms are attractive, well-organised and inviting to young children. Overall approaches to teaching and learning are consistent from class to class. Teachers are giving due attention to implementing the school policy A Quality Teaching at Fairhouse Infants. This consistency reflects well on the leadership of the head teacher and the commitment and professionalism of the staff. Most importantly, it ensures continuity of learning experiences for the pupils, so that when they do change teachers they do not have to spend time adjusting to a very different approach or different systems.

32. Teaching for the under fives is predominantly good, with particular strengths in the teaching of language and literacy, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Expertise in early years education is mostly good, and expectations of these young children both in terms of their learning and behaviour are high so that they make good progress from a low starting point. Learning is well organised and play activities well provided and well resourced. Overall provision for the under fives, including the teaching, has improved since the last inspection, with sound developments in policy and practice.

33. The teachers mostly have sound knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach, demonstrated, for example, in their use of technical vocabulary in English and science and in some technical competence in physical education. Confidence and expertise are a little weaker in religious education. Teaching in English, in mathematics, and science is satisfactory overall, with clear strengths and a few weaknesses in each subject. Teaching in the other subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory, and it is good in art.

34. The teachers are giving conscientious attention to the teaching of the literacy hour and the daily mathematics lesson. The expectations of the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy are very demanding on the pupils at Fairhouse, but the teachers recognise the importance of helping them to meet these high standards. They are understandably anxious to reinforce learning with the pupils, but this is occasionally at the expense of pace and challenge, so that the rate of learning slows and pupils tend to become less attentive and motivated. For example, there is sometimes a lack of urgency and briskness in the oral and mental starter sessions at the beginning of mathematics lessons. Also, for a few teachers, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are a new demand and so the teaching of the literacy hour and the daily mathematics lesson occasionally lacks pace.

35. As a whole group, however, the staff of the school have high aspirations for their children's achievements. They want them to do well, and so high expectations are seen in most lessons, characterised by open ended questioning and encouragement to the children to be imaginative, to think of ideas, to wonder why. Often, the teachers use challenging vocabulary with the pupils, such as the words *A magnetic field*, *A publisher*, and *A setting*, used in year 1 lessons. Sometimes, the pupils are asked to do relatively difficult tasks, as seen in an information technology lesson, for example, when the pupils were learning to use the keyboard functions to change font and size, to delete and align, to save, retrieve and print their text.

36. A weakness in this aspect of the teaching, however, is that teachers do not expect sufficiently high standards of the pupils' presentation of their written work, with the result that it is too often untidy and poorly presented.

37. Questioning is generally a strength in the teaching. Across the range of subjects, questions are used well to help the pupils recall facts, develop their understanding and vocabulary and express ideas. In a literacy hour, for example, the teacher made sure the pupils understood the terms *A plot*, *A character* and *A event* through whole class discussion. The teachers have a range of effective approaches to support their pupils' learning and to engage their interest, from whole class teaching to very practical activities. They sometimes very appropriately give the pupils facts, telling them about the Bible for example, and at other times they demonstrate a skill clearly, such as letter formation in English, or a *A star jump* in physical education. Worksheets are often well designed to help pupils meet the objectives of lessons, such as in a geography lesson, when the pupils drew the route from London to Edinburgh on a simple map of the UK and identified compass directions. Group activities following through the objectives of lessons are often interesting for the pupils and appropriate to their levels of maturity and learning needs. Dictating their own version of the story of *A Goldilocks and the Three Bears* into a cassette recorder was very relevant for young year 1 pupils, addressing their need to develop understanding of story sequence and to improve their speaking skills.

38. Just occasionally, opportunities are lost to capitalise on pupils' responses to move their thinking on. For example, in a mathematics lesson, a suggestion from one boy that the class try counting in tens to 1,000 was not taken up. In a science lesson, the teacher did not build on the

children's interest and excitement when looking at magnets to develop straight away their skills of hypothesis. The teachers do not always take enough opportunities to involve individual pupils in the whole class sessions, so that pace and interest are occasionally lost. For example, opportunities were lost for pupils to record sums or symbols on the whiteboard instead of the teacher doing this all the time.

39.Planning for lessons is good. The teachers are clear about what they want the pupils to learn and regularly show in their planning different activities or expectations for pupils of differing prior attainment, so that most pupils, including those with special educational needs, can make satisfactory progress. The evidence from recent National Curriculum test results is that more pupils are beginning to achieve above average standards (level 3), which indicates that high attaining pupils are making the progress they should. This match of task or expectation with the pupils' current attainment is consistently shown for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and often for other subjects such as religious education, geography and physical education. As some teachers are new to the school, they occasionally provide work that is too easy or too hard for the pupils. Overall, though, this aspect of the teaching has clearly improved since the last inspection.

40.In the great majority of lessons, the teachers manage the pupils' behaviour well. They are appropriately firm with unacceptable behaviour and give praise for good behaviour where it is due. Classroom routines are well established and adults and children relate well to each other. Resources for learning are very well organised in all classrooms and are well prepared for individual lessons, so that time is not lost on management.

41.A significant strength in the teaching is the very effective teamwork between the teachers and the teaching assistants. The teaching assistants have clear written plans for their work with groups or individuals and they regularly assess the progress the pupils have made. They participate fully in lessons, contributing to whole class discussions, modelling appropriate behaviour to the pupils, or helping individual pupils to give answers or to remain attentive in the whole class group. Their support for pupils with differing prior attainment, including those with special educational needs, often helps the pupils make appropriate progress in lessons and ensures equality of access to learning for them. The teachers make good use of the assessment notes from the assistants and those that they themselves make on their weekly plans to inform their teaching, and this helps the pupils' progress too. The use of assessments to inform teaching and planning has improved since the 1996 inspection.

42.Most pupils take home a selection of books to share with, or read to, their parents or carers. Some pupils forget to bring their books back so they are changed less frequently than the expected time of once a week. The arrangements for changing books differ slightly between teachers. This form of homework is helpful to pupils, but comments in the home-school contact books often lack specific indications to parents as to how to move their children on in their reading. Sometimes, the teachers give the pupils something to find out about at home and this too is a potentially useful strategy. Overall, however, there is an inconsistency of approach between teachers and no clear written expectation of the frequency and type of homework to be provided.

The curriculum and assessment

43. This aspect of the work of the school has improved since the 1996 inspection, which identified three key issues relating to curriculum and assessment, namely, to:

- C. A continue to develop the whole-school curriculum framework and schemes of work in a shorter timescale;
- C. ensure that consistent use is made of assessment information in planning differentiated tasks which are challenging to more able and average pupils as well as those with special educational needs; and
- C. use the recently introduced baseline assessment to inform the development of policy and practice for rising fives@

These issues have all been effectively addressed.

1. There is now a curriculum framework, comprising curriculum maps for each year group, supported by schemes of work, in the form of objectives in each subject for each year group. Planning for the children under five is well based on the Desirable Learning Outcomes (DLOs) defined by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The curriculum map for year 1 helpfully shows links between the Desirable Learning Outcomes and the subjects of the National Curriculum. The year 2 curriculum map appropriately becomes more subject based. This curriculum structure now provides a sound framework for ensuring continuity and progression in the pupils' learning. It is supported by medium term plans structured into blocked units of work. These are very helpful to teachers, saving them a lot of time and ensuring progressive coverage of the curriculum from term to term and year to year.

2. Teachers now make consistent use of assessment information not just to provide work at an appropriate level for pupils of differing attainment, but also to set targets for individual pupils in reading, writing and numeracy. Indications from National Curriculum test results and from lesson observations are that the attainment and progress of the higher attaining pupils have begun to improve. There has been an improvement in the past year in the proportions of pupils attaining at least average standards in the National Curriculum tests, which also indicates that more average attaining pupils are beginning to make the progress they should.

3. Policy and practice for the rising fives has improved overall since the last inspection. The adults in the current reception class work successfully to address the weaknesses in the children's attainment identified in baseline assessment. The previous inspection also noted that there were too few opportunities for the reception aged children to learn through play and exploration, and this weakness is no longer evident. The children in the reception class now enjoy good opportunities to play and explore within a wide range of age appropriate activities.

4. The curriculum for the infants remains broad, balanced, and relevant, with appropriate emphasis on literacy, numeracy and the pupils' personal development. Statutory requirements, including those for daily collective worship, are met. There are no extra-curricular activities,

but this is not unusual for an infant school. The school very successfully secures equality of access and opportunity for pupils, through careful planning and very effective deployment of support teachers and assistants. Pupils with special educational needs are successfully included in teaching and learning activities and enabled to make progress. This term, one teacher who does not currently have class responsibility works in lessons supporting the higher attaining pupils.

5. Although there are weaknesses in the school's provision for the development of the pupils' reading and writing skills, overall the Fairhouse curriculum provides a good framework for pupils' learning, establishing sound foundations for their continued progress in the junior school.

6. Provision for the pupils with special educational needs is good, and they mostly make satisfactory progress. Individual Education Plans for pupils at Stages 2 and 3 of the Code of Practice show clear identification of their difficulties, specific targets and good learning programmes. The teaching assistants attached to each class mainly provide support for special educational needs pupils. Review dates are identified, although at the time of the inspection, reviews planned for the first part of the autumn term had not taken place. The special educational needs co-ordinator is new to the school and has updated the special educational needs register for this term.

7. The school has a good range of assessment systems, which begin with a pre-school profile, *A Journeying Together* completed by parents and shared with teachers. Teachers' assessments from weekly plans for literacy, mathematics and science are used to update records every half-term using standardised pro-formas linked to National Curriculum levels. Annotated samples of work show key points of progress made by pupils. The annual reports to parents are detailed and meet statutory requirements, but are sometimes not clear enough on specific strengths and weaknesses and targets for improvement for individual pupils. However, many parents write positive comments on their children's reports. It is noteworthy too, that from the reception class onwards, the pupils themselves make simple self-assessments, identifying what they do well and what they want to get better at.

8. In the short term and day by day, teachers and assistants make regular evaluative assessment notes on their daily and weekly plans for all subjects, which help them know what to teach next. Sometimes the teachers give pupils simple assessment tasks such as identifying odd and even numbers, and this is a quick, efficient way of checking attainment and progress for the class.

9. At a strategic level, the senior management team (SMT) analyses National Curriculum test and assessment results to know where improvement is needed. In mathematics for example, a focus on mathematical language and on attainment target 1, supported by appropriate in-service training for teachers, led to improved standards in the 1999 mathematics tests. The recently established tracking of a sample of pupils of differing attainment, and regular scrutiny of work samples is helping the school to monitor progress and moderate assessment judgements across year groups.

10.The previous inspection also noted that the school had no marking policy and again this weakness has been rectified. There is now a response policy that defines sound aims and purposes and gives clear guidance on marking pupils' work. However, the policy is insufficiently explicit on the use of marking to help pupils know how to improve their work. Although teachers do mark their pupils' work regularly and in accordance with the policy, they make few formative comments of this kind.

Pupils= spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

11.The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was identified in the last inspection as a strength of the school, and the same is true this time. The school has a strong and distinctive ethos, which makes a clear and positive contribution to the pupils' personal development.

12.There is good spiritual provision supported by daily and well-planned year assemblies that follow themes planned for each term. The themes link well with religious festivals associated with the major world religions and with the cross-curricular topic themes for the term. There is good follow up to the assembly themes in later lessons in a variety of subjects, thereby reinforcing what has been discussed and learned. The assemblies include appropriate references to Bible accounts, worship, and invite pupils to reflect on and consider whether they agree with the sentiments expressed by the teacher. In addition there is a weekly singing assembly and a 'sharing assembly' to which parents are invited. The regular use of music around assembly times promotes a calming atmosphere and develops pupils' appreciation of music.

13.Other spiritual provision includes religious education lessons and 'circle time' held weekly for each class. Circle time sessions are well used to encourage personal reflection. In one religious education lesson, the pupils spontaneously sang 'Kumbaya, my Lord' quite sweetly. The pupils say a brief grace with the midday supervisor before they go to lunch and they have written simple prayers for themselves. These and opportunities in science, information technology, geography and history, provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect on what they learn and the feelings they have.

14.The school's values: 'We take care of each other and our school' permeate the provision for moral and social education. As in the last inspection, there is good provision for the pupils' moral and social development, as the parents' comments endorse. Teachers make successful use of religious education lessons to reinforce moral values and to promote understanding of right and wrong. The pupils are provided with high levels of care and this is reflected in their conduct towards one another. The long established approach to positive behaviour management in the school involves teachers and teaching assistants adhering to a consistent framework which promotes good behaviour. Teachers' expectations for good discipline and behaviour are high and are met by the pupils for the great majority of the time.

15.The provision for the pupils' cultural education is good and, unlike in the previous

inspection, is beginning to promote a greater awareness of other cultures. However, this awareness of other cultures, although improved, is not sufficiently well supported in religious education where the pupils' progress in learning about other religions is unsatisfactory. This was a weakness identified in the previous inspection. Nevertheless, within the school there is overt recognition that there is a minority of pupils from other ethnic and religious groups. The pupils learn about celebrations in other cultures, such as Diwali. The resources in the school such as books, toys and musical instruments include a multi-cultural dimension, and this reflects an improvement since the last inspection. Art makes a particularly good contribution to the pupils' cultural development. They study the work of other artists from Europe, America and have recently looked at African tribal masks in the context of some design work. Last year, the pupils made log sculptures, inspired by the work of a visiting artist. The pupils are achieving good standards of artistic response in their own work. They listen to music at the beginning and end of assembly time.

Support, guidance and pupils = welfare

16. This aspect is a significant strength of the school. There are good procedures for monitoring academic progress, personal development, behaviour and attendance. There are effective measures in place to promote and monitor discipline and good behaviour. Child protection procedures are properly in place, with the head teacher as the named person and appropriately trained staff. There are good procedures for promoting the health, safety and general wellbeing of the pupils.

17. The teachers regularly update their pupils' records and, with the teaching assistants, frequently assess how well the children are doing and the quality of their responses to the teaching.

18. Effective systems for monitoring attendance and following up absences include: telephoning parents on the first day of absence; monitoring of the logbook recording reasons for absence; and letters to parents where necessary. The result of this work has been a significant reduction in the percentage of unauthorised absence.

19. The school puts good emphasis on the pupils' personal development, allocating teaching time for circle time in each class, when the pupils benefit from good opportunities to discuss events and reflect on thoughts and feelings. The pupils develop sensitive emotional response. The one, simple but effective rule 'We take care of each other and our school' works very successfully. This value of caring is consistently reinforced, with praise and encouragement for the pupils so that they develop good standards of behaviour. However, the school has no explicit written policy to show how it would deal with any incidents of bullying or racial harassment, should they arise.

20. The school's care and concern for its pupils begins at the start of the day, when the caretaker, a teacher and the head teacher greet the children and their parents at the school gate. During the school day, all the adults show due concern for the pupils. They are very caring when a pupil has a minor accident or is unwell. The pupils are very well supervised at

lunchtimes and playtimes. At the end of the day, the class teachers make sure that each child's parent or carer is there to receive their child, and take this opportunity to tell parents about any minor incident during the course of the day.

63. Partnership with parents and the community

21. The last inspection judged relationships with parents to be excellent, and overall, partnership with parents remains a strength. In particular, the range of information provided to parents and the opportunities for them to discuss their children's progress are very good. Parents are encouraged to help in the school and their support for fund raising and general activities is much appreciated.

22. Early contact is made with parents before their children start school. Pre-school visits, which include borrowing books from the pre-school library, help to make children and parents confident about the start to formal schooling. Parents of children in the reception class take their children into the class at the beginning of the day so they can see them safely settled and can have a brief word with the teacher if they need to.

23. All pupils have opportunities to borrow books to take home and share with their parents. Home-school contact books are used for maintaining a dialogue between home and school about pupils' progress in reading. Although this is potentially a very effective system, some pupils or parents forget to bring back their book bags regularly. The system for changing books is not completely clear to parents. The comments written by teachers are supportive and encouraging, but often not as helpful as they could be in helping parents know how to support their children's reading. Although teachers do sometimes give pupils interesting tasks to do at home, there is no clear policy and programme for homework, and the parents would welcome a more consistent approach.

24. Every term, each class teacher writes to the parents of the pupils in the class, telling them about the topics their children will be studying and suggesting ways in which they can help their children's learning within that topic. Maths workshops also help the parent know about the curriculum at the school. There are frequent newsletters to parents written in a friendly manner providing them with an excellent range of information. The parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting said they thought the newsletters were brilliant and 90 per cent of parents who completed questionnaires said they were given a clear understanding of what is taught.

25. The school provides good opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress with the teacher, through termly formal meetings and informal weekly drop-ins when they can look at their children's work and talk with the teachers. The annual reports to parents are very detailed and carefully written, although they are often insufficiently explicit about individual strengths and weaknesses and targets for improvement. Nevertheless, the inspectors judge that overall the school's systems for keeping parents informed about their children's progress are good. Parents of children who are in stages 2 or 3 of the school's SEN register are appropriately informed about their children's needs and progress towards targets in their

Individual Education Plans. Notably, copies of the notes of review meetings are given to parents.

26. A minority of the parents who returned questionnaires did not feel that the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress. Inspectors judge that these parents can be reassured on this matter.

27. The school has a well-established system of sending its own questionnaires to parents to gain their views of strengths and weaknesses in the quality of education in the school. Responses to these questionnaires have been predominantly positive, and where parents have identified areas for improvement, the school has addressed these. For example, in a questionnaire in April 1999, 20 per cent of parents indicated that they wanted to know more about the curriculum and what is taught. As a result, the school has put in place 10 minute discussions about an aspect of the curriculum at the end of class assemblies, to which parents are invited, in addition to the information already provided and which is described above.

28. Approximately 19 per cent of the parents who returned questionnaires said they thought the school was not easy to approach with questions or complaints. The inspection team gave careful consideration to this issue and having evaluated the school's partnership with parents, find no real justification for this concern.

29. The school has a variety of contacts in the wider community and many letters are on the school file from organisations that have worked with and for the school. Contacts with these organisations have proved to be of great benefit in many ways including teacher training and co-operation with other schools for mutual benefit. The school's membership of the Education Action Zone is beginning to provide a network of support. Events such as a Hindu parent coming to talk about Diwali and the school sending harvest gifts to the community raise the profile of the school in the local community and begin to promote in the pupils a sense of local belonging and citizenship.

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and Management

30. The previous inspection found the overall management of the school to be good with some very good features and this is still the case, so these earlier strengths have been maintained. The few weaknesses in leadership and management, found in the 1996 inspection, such as insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching, have been effectively addressed. The four key issues for action arising from the 1996 inspection have all been effectively implemented. The supportive, informed leadership of the governing body and the strong leadership of the head teacher has brought about these improvements.

31. The school is successfully maintaining its Investors in People status.

32. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties. The governors are aware of the school's

strengths. They appreciate that standards in reading and writing need to improve. The Achievements Evening shared by governors, teachers and parents show strategic vision and a strong sense of pride in the school. The pages in the supporting document showing the achievements that the pupils have recognised in their year groups are a real strength. There is a policy for governor visits to the school, which sets out clear guidelines and includes a pro-forma for written reports to the whole governing body. Governors have begun making curriculum-focused visits and are finding them informative. There is a clear committee structure with appropriate systems for reporting to the whole governing body.

33. The head teacher provides very strong, supportive leadership. She has a clear philosophy that guides her work. She sets high and rigorous expectations for the teachers, which she helps them meet by securing good in-service training, by giving advice and guidance and by valuing their professionalism and hard work. She currently takes a leading role in monitoring the quality of teaching, sharing the outcomes of her evaluations with the senior management team. The subject co-ordinators have done successful work in developing the curriculum for their subjects, in managing resources and giving support and guidance to their colleagues. The head teacher recognises that it is important that the roles at least of the core subject co-ordinators, (English, mathematics, science, IT and RE), be extended to undertaking classroom observations of teaching and learning in their subjects for themselves. The senior management team is developing its role well and providing good support to the head teacher. It is noteworthy that the new staff have quickly established their management roles in the school. They have a secure grasp of school policies and have expectations for their implementation. A minor weakness is that the draft papers defining the work of the senior management team and the roles of subject co-ordinators do not make explicit their role in maintaining and raising standards.

34. The result of this good leadership and management is that the school's aims, values and policies are a living reality in the school. The school's ethos is strong and positive, with a good focus on achievement and shared aspirations for the pupils, and a strong sense of teamwork. The pupils are benefiting from a high quality learning environment, where they are valued as individuals, and their self-esteem is high.

35. The school development plan provides an overview of three years' development from 1998 to 2001, and is structured around preparation, development and maintenance. This effective approach helps to ensure that strengths are maintained and appropriate priorities identified and supported. The three-year plan is supported by a more detailed plan for the current year, with appropriate headings including success criteria and costings. The governors receive regular reports on progress with the school development plan.

36. The Fairhouse vision statement, policy and planning framework, and management systems being implemented, together with the strong leadership and good teamwork in the school put Fairhouse in a good position to continue improving.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

37.The school is adequately staffed with appropriately qualified teachers, two of whom were trained abroad and are on temporary contracts. One teacher, currently supporting higher attaining pupils, will teach reception pupils when the January intake of under fives is admitted. The levels of support staff are good. There are seven part time teaching assistants and a part time information technology technician, as well as administrative, caretaking staff and midday assistants.

38.The last inspection identified teaching staff recruitment as an issue. Appointing a replacement deputy head teacher has been difficult. Consequently, the decision has been made to establish a senior management team comprising the head teacher and three senior teachers. Two senior teachers and the two teachers on temporary contracts were new this term and replaced five teachers who left last term for a variety of personal reasons, rather than due to difficulties at the school.

39.Despite such a high proportion of teachers being new this term, the leadership of the head teacher and the effective induction methods have assisted new staff very quickly and efficiently to manage their classes. The teachers between them have an appropriate range of subject expertise. The head teacher serves as the staff development manager. There is a well-established training cycle for all teaching and non-teaching staff. Weekly meetings for teachers and assistants provide staff training programmes and regular information updates. Appraisal arrangements are addressed systematically, but have been understandably dislocated by the recent staff changes.

40.There are appointed co-ordinators among the six permanent staff for all subject areas including the under fives and special educational needs. Two teachers have between three and five subjects or areas each, which they are discharging valiantly though this is a heavy load. The teaching assistants and information technology technician are very effective in their roles with teachers providing clear guidance and objectives for lessons, and assistants being able to undertake some pupil assessments and record keeping. Midday assistants ensure that lunchtimes in the dining room are very well behaved occasions. The assistants also assist in providing excellent >safe haven= educational activities for pupils to participate in ahead of afternoon lessons.

41.The accommodation is excellent, being of high quality, of adequate size and in a good state of repair. Excellent use is made of pupils' work on display, to celebrate the pupils' achievements and to provide a very attractive physical environment. Summer term reception children are no longer accommodated in the dining area, as was criticised in the last inspection. New relocatable accommodation has ensured that all classes have purpose built classrooms. Surplus accommodation in the autumn term and spring terms is used for some group work, for the parents to work in, and for pre-school visits by parents and children. Good attention has been given to the entrance foyer and grounds to make the school an attractive and inviting place to be. Sculptures, ecology areas, shrubs, planted areas and seats provide variety and there is no litter or damage evident. The school is very clean and well maintained by the caretaking and cleaning staff. Although the playground area is small, the staggered use for lower and upper infants at break times, and the high degree of supervision ensure that pupils

can play safely. There is an adequate playing field shared with the adjoining junior school.

42.The learning resources overall are of good quality and quantity. The reported shortfalls in the last inspection in geography, history and religious education have been made good. Resources for the under fives are good, and provide well for children's progress in the six areas of learning for children under five. Further good stocks in the area off the hall and in each classroom complement the books in the small library. All subjects have appropriate resources, including those to support the literacy and numeracy lessons, and investigative and experimental work in mathematics and science. The classrooms have been provided with information technology links to enable all classes to access the National Grid for Learning. Good use is being made of digital photography to make an interesting record of pupils' work across the curriculum.

The efficiency of the school

43.The school is efficiently run and provides good value for money. The finance committee of the governing body has good oversight of the budget and, under the guidance and direction of the head teacher, ensures that careful financial planning supports educational developments in the school. The funds for supporting pupils with special educational needs are efficiently deployed; class teachers and support staff ensure that those pupils who need it are given appropriate support. The funds allocated for expenditure on pupils are relatively high compared with national comparisons.

44.The high turnover of teaching staff in the last two years is offset to some extent by the relatively stable number of teaching assistants. Nevertheless, the difficulty of recruiting new staff has resulted in some staff having limited experience of either teaching particular age groups or in areas of curriculum leadership, though this is having only limited impact on the quality of education provided.

45.There is evidence of careful financial planning linked to the cycle of the effective school development plan. Careful costings are made when making plans and a prudent surplus is retained each year, earmarked this time to meet the agency fees for the temporary teachers. The minutes of the governing body are well recorded and clearly identify governors' approval for decisions made. The governors have ensured that the curriculum has adequate resources and there is excellently maintained accommodation and grounds.

46.The systems of financial management are good. The full time and part time administrative assistants ensure that all monies arising from the school fund, school uniform sales and school dinners are correctly managed. Orders for books, stationery and equipment, are effectively controlled and the school's computerised general account and expenditure statements are regularly updated through the on-line link with the local education authority's financial services department. The chair of the governors' finance committee and the head teacher receive monthly updates on the budget.

47.The school was last audited in May 1995. The school's financial regulations were

extensive, reconciliations were carried out promptly and accurately and school meal registers and incomes were accurate and well maintained. Some minor issues regarding non-order invoices, copy orders and expenditure codes were in need of attention, and these have since been addressed by the school's administrative staff.

48. Standards in English, mathematics and science are below national averages although, given the low standards of pupils' attainment on entry to the reception class, their progress overall is broadly satisfactory. There are indications that standards are improving, notably in mathematics and science, but they are still comparatively low in reading and writing. Attainment and progress in information technology are broadly satisfactory. There is some weakness in the pupils' progress in religious education. The pupils' progress in the other subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory, and good in art. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with clear strengths and a few weaknesses. The school has other strengths in its ethos, the provision of support, guidance and welfare of pupils, partnership with parents and in the attitudes and behaviour of pupils. Although expenditure costs are relatively high, on the basis that this is an improving school, ably led, the school can be said to be providing good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

Areas of learning for children under five

49. At the time of the inspection, there was just one reception class of 22 children who were admitted to the school in September. Of these children, 11 were five-years-old in September, October or early November and the other 11 will have had their fifth birthdays by Christmas 1999. The school will be admitting approximately 44 reception age children over the next two terms. Children join the school at the beginning of the term of their fifth birthday, so there are three admission points during the year. The school has no nursery class.

50. Baseline assessment scores for this and previous years show the children's attainment on entry to the reception class to be well below average. In particular, a significant number of children have impoverished language skills and under developed social and learning skills.

51. By the age of five, the children's attainment falls below the expected average standards, but they make sound progress from the low starting point of most children. The school had not yet formally identified the children with special educational needs in the reception class at the time of the inspection, but the teacher and the teaching assistant give good support to all the children.

52. In **language and literacy**, most children's attainment at five is below national expectations, but they make good progress in the light of their prior attainment. The children's listening skills are generally good. They can listen to short stories and enjoy them, and are attentive in whole class sessions, which are appropriately short to suit their stage of development. Many of them are eager to answer the teacher's questions, but most find expressing their ideas difficult.

Their vocabulary is slowly increasing. High attaining children are just beginning to be able to give very simple accounts of storybooks they have looked at, with support from their teacher, and show good attitudes to reading. All the children readily go to the book corner at the beginning of the day to share books while others arrive. They look at books together in a very friendly way and sometimes pretend to read books to each other. They handle books appropriately and most know where the book starts and which way round to hold it. About half the children know a very few initial sounds and most try to write their name. One or two high attaining children can nearly write their name accurately. Quite a few children make attempts to write, understanding what writing is for, and are keen to tell the adults what their writing says. The children are successfully developing a range of strategies for reading, slowly building up their knowledge of initial sounds and are developing their understanding of story structure.

53. The children's attainment in **mathematics** by the age of five is below national expectations but they make sound progress in the light of their prior attainment. Some children can nearly recognise numerals to five and others to ten, but most are relatively insecure and do not yet count accurately. However, they enjoy counting activities and some join in with number rhymes and songs. They have made simple graphs as a class, such as one recording eye colours.

54. In their **knowledge and understanding of the world**, the children's attainment by the age of five broadly meets the national expectation and they make good progress in their scientific learning.

55. Within the topic of *Myself*, the children have considered sight and smell. In a science session with their teacher they were interested to investigate and try to identify different smells when blindfolded. The children developed some good vocabulary in this session. Several were able to talk confidently about their home and family experiences and one or two were able to recall strong smelling medicines or use the word *deodorant* in the early part of the teacher-led discussion. When investigating a range of *unknown* smells under the supervision of their teacher, the children could recognise a few features and similarities about smells, though their descriptive vocabulary was limited.

56. The children play with and explore the nature of water and sand, developing their observational skills quite well. They benefit from appropriate opportunities to look at natural objects such as leaves and fir cones on interactive displays.

57. Some can use the cassette tape recorder and others, when using the computer, can click on an icon with the mouse to select the colour they want in a painting program. They use tools such as scissors and sellotape with developing dexterity. The under fives experience an appropriate choice of building and construction apparatus and kits to enable them to make three-dimensional representations of their ideas and try them out.

58. The children have some early awareness of changes in their own lives, having looked at, and discussed photographs of themselves as babies and now.

59. In their **creative development**, the children attain some good standards in their artwork, with overall attainment meeting the national expectation. The children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning. They have made lovely attempts at self-portraits and have made leaf imprints in clay. In an art lesson, the children showed great interest in a series of prints their teacher showed them and were quite eager to say what they thought about them. They confidently mix their own colours when painting and have made autumn collage pictures. They use a range of materials including pencils and chalks. They are beginning to join in with simple action songs and are learning to keep a steady beat with simple percussion instruments.

60. During the inspection, there was relatively limited evidence to judge the range and extent of the children's attainment in their **physical development**. However, they do benefit from regular opportunities for boisterous outdoor play when they use a range of wheeled toys confidently.

61. Teaching for the children under five is good overall, with particular strengths in the teaching of language and literacy and in promoting the children's early scientific skills. The teacher and her assistant have high expectations of the children's potential achievements and of their competence as independent learners, with the result that the children make at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their learning and development. Questioning in group and

class discussions extends the children's learning and helps their language skills. Regular encouragement and praise promote their confidence. There is a helpful balance of direct teaching and good opportunities for play. The provision of structured play and practical tasks to help the children's learning is much improved since the last inspection. Learning is well planned for and there are regular observational assessments. Relationships are good. The reception class provides an attractive, lively, well-organised learning environment for these young children. Physical provision has been enhanced since the last inspection by the development of an outdoor play area, with ready access for the reception children.

English, mathematics and science

104. English

62. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests the school's results were well below both the national averages and those for similar schools, in terms of the proportions of pupils attaining at least the average standard of level 2 in reading and writing. The proportions of pupils attaining the above average level 3 in reading were below the national average but in line with the average for similar schools. In writing, only one pupil attained the above average level 3. These 1999 results, although low, are a slight improvement on those for 1998. The reading results have moved from 64 per cent at level 2 and 15 per cent at level 3 in reading to 65 per cent at level 2 and 23 per cent at level 3. In writing, the results have gone from 65 per cent level 2 to 68 per cent level 2. Overall, the girls do better at reading and writing than the boys.

63. During the inspection standards of attainment by the end of the key stage shown in lessons and in work samples were found to be below the national average. Progress overall in English is just satisfactory, but there are weaknesses in the development of the pupils' reading and writing skills.

64. In speaking and listening, standards are below average, but the pupils make broadly satisfactory progress in the light of their previous, low attainment. The majority of pupils have poor language skills when they are admitted to the school. By the end of the key stage, the pupils are, for the most part, attentive in class and group discussions. They listen to others and when working independently can discuss their work together, when using the computer or recording answers to sums as a group, for example. The pupils often struggle to express their ideas and thoughts, and the teachers work hard to develop their pupils' speaking skills, giving them time to make responses in lessons across the curriculum. They focus, in particular, on developing the pupils' vocabulary, which is very limited for most of them. As a result, the pupils make steady gains in vocabulary and gradually increase their speaking skills in a range of contexts.

65. Standards in reading are below average. The great majority of pupils develop good attitudes to reading, learn about a range of texts, and develop understanding of story structure, knowing about terms such as *A character*, *A theme*, *A plot* and *A setting*, for example. Prediction skills have improved since the last inspection. This knowledge and understanding reflects the sound progress made by pupils in these aspects of reading. However, most, in particular the average and low attaining pupils, make unsatisfactory progress in learning about

and applying a range of reading strategies, including the use of phonics. By the end of the key stage, the high attaining pupils read, quite fluently, fiction and non-fiction texts. Some are more secure than others are on their phonic knowledge and applying it. A few are beginning to read with some expression. They can talk about the books they read, in simple terms, and are just beginning to be able to express their preferences in reading. The average attaining pupils recognise simple words, and can talk about key events and characters, but most are insecure in their knowledge and application of phonics. They are insufficiently aware of the various strategies they can use to help them with their reading. The low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs try hard with their reading. They approximate to the text, knowing what the book is about, but have limited strategies for reading.

66. Standards in writing are below average. However, the pupils do successfully write for a range of purposes and this is an improvement since the last inspection. By the end of the key stage, the pupils can write in a wide range of contexts such as writing about the story of The Good Samaritan, about Roald Dahl books, descriptions of three dimensional shapes, and describing their work in technology. This extensive writing across many subjects of the curriculum is a real strength in the English curriculum at the school. The pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, show very good attitudes to writing, being prepared to 'Have a go', and make good progress in understanding the purposes of writing, and this too, is a strength. However, most pupils make unsatisfactory progress in applying phonic knowledge and dictionary skills in their writing. By the end of the key stage, although the pupils make good attempts to express their ideas, they too often spell simple words inaccurately and do not easily remember to use what they have been taught in literacy lessons. The pupils do not make sufficient progress in knowing about, and using capital letters and full stops.

67. Standards in handwriting are below average, and the pupils' presentation of their written work is often unsatisfactory. However, they do have fairly regular practice in handwriting and have begun making satisfactory progress in developing a cursive script. Joined up writing is being introduced from the reception class onwards and the teachers consistently model joined up writing to the pupils. These strategies are beginning to have a positive impact on standards of handwriting, but the teachers too often accept work that is poorly presented.

68. The pupils respond well in English lessons, because their teachers make the work interesting and motivating for their pupils, often using humour and imparting enthusiasm. The pupils are nearly always attentive, showing high levels of interest in the big book texts used in literacy hours. The school has worked very successfully to provide a wide range of these texts that will appeal to the pupils. Sometimes, the pupils are excited by the activities in the literacy hour. In one lesson, for example, the pupils really enjoyed identifying rhyming words, stimulated by the sense of fun engendered by their teacher. The pupils move sensibly into their independent group activities, generally applying themselves well to the tasks. They tidy up responsibly and listen and contribute well in the plenary sessions. The pupils know about the expected routine of the literacy hour and cope well with it.

69. Teaching in English is satisfactory overall, with many significant strengths, and

improvements since the last inspection, but a few key weaknesses. Provision for pupils of differing attainment, including challenge for the higher attaining pupils, has improved since the last inspection, as has provision for a range of writing, and the use of assessments to inform teaching.

70. Subject expertise is sound. A minority of teachers are still developing their confidence in teaching the literacy hour. All the teachers fully understand the objectives of the National Literacy Strategy and are conscientiously working towards these demanding standards for their pupils. They plan their literacy sessions well, with clear learning objectives, but sometimes do not make these objectives sufficiently explicit to the pupils. It is noticeable that when objectives are made very clear to the pupils, they make better progress. In one year 2 lesson, for example, the teacher set out clearly that the pupils were going to develop their understanding of *Aplot*, and the guided reading session focused well on this objective, which was revisited at the end of the lesson, with the result that good progress was made. Sometimes, teachers establish a good sense of anticipation and challenge in the work. For example, in one lesson, the teacher noted that the work was going to be *A tricky*, and encouraged the pupils to *Be thinkers*. Independent group work is well organised, with teaching assistants well deployed to support groups, and different tasks for pupils of differing attainment. Resources, such as flip charts, group readers, cassette recorders, computers and writing materials are well organised and generally well used, but the teachers do not sufficiently encourage the pupils to use resources such as spelling lists and dictionaries to help them with their writing. Initial sounds and spelling patterns are taught in the literacy hours, but the teachers do not sufficiently reinforce their use when the pupils are reading and writing.

71. Assessment and record keeping are good overall. The teachers regularly make assessment notes on their weekly literacy plans. Whole class sessions are often used by teachers or assistants to observe and record the pupils' responses. The staff praise and encourage the pupils, so that they feel a sense of success. The teachers and assistants make notes of pupils' progress against the objectives for the guided reading groups and helpfully copy these into individual pupils' profiles. However, the home-school contact records for reading are, in many cases, insufficiently explicit on how individual pupils can improve their reading skills. The previous inspection noted the absence of a marking policy and this has now been rectified. The pupils' work is marked regularly but the teachers give insufficient guidance to the pupils on how to improve their work and this aspect of marking is not made sufficiently explicit in the school's response policy. Teachers assess the National Curriculum levels their pupils are achieving and set targets for improvement, identifying, for example, which pupils can be moved from level 1 to level 2c in reading.

72. The last inspection identified the need to complete the scheme of work for English and this has been done, but of course some of this work has been superseded by the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. However, the school's range of policies for all aspects of the English curriculum are sound, showing clear aims and objectives and skills to be taught in each year group, with some helpful guidance, on identifying opportunities for promoting speaking and listening, for example. The subject co-ordinator has successfully built on the work of the previous co-ordinator, reviewing and developing these policies and she supports her colleagues

well. The school uses a range of reading scheme books, put into ability bands and ordered on trolleys in every classroom. The pupils mostly select for themselves a book from the appropriate level, and whilst this approach encourages their interest in books, it sometimes means that there is insufficiently steady progression in their reading.

73.Overall provision for English in the school is good, with books richly provided. The small central fiction library is well used by every class, so that the pupils develop enjoyment and appreciation of books. There is a well-organised non-fiction library. Every classroom has an attractive book corner or reading area and a listening area. There is good emphasis on the written word, so that the pupils work in high quality literacy environments. The teachers also provide imaginative role-play areas, linked to current topics, such as a Travel Agents and a AD.I.Y@ store, although these were not seen much in use during the inspection.

74.The school has set ambitious targets for the pupils reading and writing in the National Curriculum tests this year. Currently about 50 per cent of pupils might be expected to attain the average standard of level 2, but the school is aiming for 73 per cent of pupils to achieve this standard.

Mathematics

75. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the school's results in mathematics were below the national average for the proportion of pupils attaining the average standard, (level 2), but were in line with the national average for the proportion of pupils attaining the above average standard of level 3. When compared to similar schools, the Fairhouse results were in line with the average for pupils attaining level 2 and above the average for pupils attaining level 3. These results show a significant improvement on those for 1998, with the proportion of level 2s rising from 60 per cent to 84 per cent, and the proportion of level 3s rising from 7 per cent to 19 per cent.

76. During the inspection, standards in lessons and in work samples were found to be just meeting average standards by the end of the key stage. Overall, the pupils, including those with special educational needs, make broadly satisfactory progress through the key stage, in the light of their prior attainment, which is comparatively low. Standards are better in Number and Algebra and in Shape, Space and Measures (Attainment Targets 2 and 3) than they are in Using and Applying Mathematics and Handling Data (Attainment Targets 1 and 4).

77. By the end of the key stage, the pupils have satisfactory command of the basics of the four rules of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They have developed their understanding of number patterns such as those for 2 and 3. By the end of the key stage, the high attaining pupils know about odd and even numbers, can manage their five-times table, and can record addition and subtraction sums to 20, using vertical addition. They can order numbers up to 100 and can do simple addition using coins. They can manage 3 digit sums. The average attaining pupils can count in 2s and 5s, can do simple addition with coins, and deal quite well with simple addition and subtraction number chains. The low attainers know their number bonds to 10, can recognise some numbers to 100, and know about even numbers. The pupils with special educational needs understand how to add three digits, but do yet accurately record those calculations.

78. The pupils have satisfactory knowledge of two (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) shapes, and by the end of the key stage can describe their properties in simple terms. They have successfully used information technology programs to make pictures with 2D shapes. They are aware of non-standard measures and can estimate length, and some can accurately measure in centimetres. They have learned to tell the time using both digital and analogue clocks. The pupils have made simple bar charts, such as those showing the temperature of the classroom each hour, but show less well developed understanding of how to interpret such data. Their skills in discussing their own work using mathematical language and in explaining mental strategies are less secure. Their ability to understand and use symbols such as those for 'Greater than' and 'Less than' are also a little insecure. The last inspection found that insufficient attention was given to development of mental agility skills and oral work. With the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, this has now improved, but the pupils' mental mathematics skills are still not strong. There is also now better provision for pupils to develop their logical thinking and to look for patterns in number, with the result that these skills and understandings are beginning to improve.

79.Overall, the pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress through the key stage, although progress does vary a little in lessons. The pupils make sound progress in their counting skills from a low base at the beginning of year 1. They improve their knowledge and skills in addition and subtraction. Slower progress is linked to some weaknesses in the teaching. For example, in one lesson, the concept of the middle number in a sequence was not well explained, with the result that the pupils made insufficient progress in their understanding. In another lesson, the tasks given to pupils consolidated their knowledge, but did not extend it as much as possible. The high attaining pupils very easily recorded their three-times table answers and the low attaining pupils did not extend their two-times table work beyond 10. However, the pupils are introduced to what are for them quite difficult concepts such as the links between multiplication and cumulative addition. The pupils are enabled to develop their understanding of number patterns, linking them to simple multiplication and division. Maths Workshop lessons provide effective opportunities for pupils to apply logical thinking, reinforce their understanding of concepts such as place value and consolidate their skills in counting backwards and forwards.

80.The pupils' response in mathematics lessons is satisfactory. They enjoy counting aloud in the whole class group. They approach their mathematics tasks energetically, if occasionally rather noisily. They are generally keen to try and answer questions in the whole class sessions, and most concentrate quite well in their group activities. The pupils do occasionally become restless or inattentive, and this is mostly when the pace of whole class oral sessions is rather slow, when there is a little too much repetition in group work, or when, very occasionally, the teacher's explanations have been unclear. The year 2 pupils enjoy the activities in the weekly mathematics workshop lessons. When required to do so, the pupils can work in co-operative groups quite successfully. For example, in a year 2 lesson, a trio of high attainers successfully completed their three-times table recording work and then began playing with mathematics equipment together.

81.The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory. Weaknesses in the teaching identified in the last inspection were slow pace in some lessons, a lack of clarity in learning objectives, and insufficient opportunities for oral discussion. To a great extent, these weaknesses have been overcome, although pace is still sometimes slow.

82.The teachers have sound subject expertise and are working hard to implement the National Numeracy Strategy. As yet, they are not, understandably, fully confident with the teaching of the daily mathematics lesson, and some lessons seen lacked pace, notably in the introductions. Sometimes, the oral and mental starter to the mathematics lesson is not clearly defined for the pupils and lacks the fast pace expected by the National Numeracy Strategy.

83.Teachers tend to use a fairly limited range of strategies for pupils to give their answers, and do not sufficiently involve the pupils in recording answers for themselves on the whiteboard or flipchart. Pace is better when, for example, the pupils all hold up the answer on their fingers, so the teacher can quickly see the range of correct and incorrect responses. Most of the daily mathematics lessons seen lasted a little longer than is intended in the National Numeracy

Strategy. However, for the most part, the teachers give clear questions and explanations that help the pupils' thinking. Planning for the National Numeracy Strategy is generally sound and lessons well prepared, with good opportunities for pupils to practice and consolidate knowledge. Tasks are generally well matched to pupils' prior attainment, but could occasionally be a little more challenging. Resources are well provided and readily accessible to help the pupils with their mathematical tasks. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support the learning of the lower attaining or special educational needs pupils. The teachers are successful in identifying where pupils have made appropriate progress and where they are experiencing difficulties. Ongoing assessment in lessons and at the end of the week is helpfully informing the teaching, and records are effectively updated each half term.

84. The subject co-ordinator is successfully supporting her colleagues in implementing the National Numeracy Strategy, and has given demonstration lessons. She is aware of where standards are improving and works within the senior management team and with her colleagues to set targets for continued improvement. As yet, she has not observed mathematics lessons for herself and this would be beneficial to the ongoing development of teaching and learning in mathematics in the school. Resources are well provided and organised both centrally and in classrooms. Each class has a well-defined, attractive mathematics area where equipment is kept tidily and clearly labelled.

Science

85. The pupils' attainment in science in the 1999 end of key stage 1 teacher assessments was below the national averages for the proportions of pupils attaining level 2 and 3, though an improvement on last year. Compared with similar schools, however, the 1999 results in science were in line with the averages for level 2 and 3 attained by those schools. This indicates that the pupils made broadly satisfactory progress in the light of their prior attainment.

86. The standards of attainment in lessons and in work displayed indicate that the majority of pupils in year 2 are approaching similar standards this year.

87. By the end of the key stage, the pupils have developed their understanding of what it means to be a scientist when planning an investigation. With support, they competently carry out investigations, such as the comparative testing of the differences between the materials used in a coin and a plastic building brick. Others have some knowledge of how sound travels and the effect on the pupils' ability to hear. They have learned about how musical sounds are made and how the sound is affected by the design of an instrument. Younger pupils are developing their knowledge of the effect of heating and cooling on familiar materials, making predictions about what might happen. They have looked at the effect of a magnet on some materials, establishing basic concepts and have tried to explain what is happening.

88. Pupils' activities in lessons, teachers' planning and work on display confirm that pupils are attaining a breadth of knowledge, skills and understanding in all the National Curriculum areas of science, though standards of attainment are low. Progress, however, is broadly satisfactory with pupils, including those with special educational needs, developing an appropriate range of

scientific terms and vocabulary and beginning to show their appreciation for the significance of careful observation and fair testing. Their recall of connected work covered in recent lessons indicates that they are making some progress and consolidating their learning.

89. The pupils' attitudes in science are good. They respond appropriately to teacher-led activities undertaken in lessons and participate as well as they can when questioned by their teacher in whole class discussions. Their concentration is stimulated by first hand practical activity as when observing a guitar string and a drum skin vibrating, though the pupils need much careful explanation from their teachers and do not readily question or seek clarification themselves. Most pupils work energetically and keenly, although a minority let their attention drift. The pupils in year 1, particularly, are at an early stage of development in their writing and drawing and this makes it difficult for them to make clear records of their work. Nevertheless, they exhibit a strong sense of pride in the work they produce. Relationships between pupils are generally good, especially when collaborating in pairs either sharing resources or undertaking investigations.

90. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. A good feature is the regular use of whole class, stimulating and open-ended questioning, with pupils sitting on the carpet, and clear recording of pupils' answers on a flip chart by the teacher. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of science is good. They have sound expectations as to the quality and range of work pupils should be able to produce. The teachers, however, do not always sufficiently encourage pupils to express their ideas orally. For older pupils, teachers do not provide enough structured opportunity to develop hypotheses and predictions. A brainstorming ideas is a good starting point but does not then lead the pupils into structuring their thinking sufficiently. The pupils' finished work is carefully presented in pupils' samples of work, and exhibited in high quality displays in classrooms and around the school. The teachers make satisfactory use of the time and resources available within lessons. The teachers' lesson planning, assessment, and the management of the pupils are good. Their teaching methods and organisation are satisfactory.

91. The scheme of work for science clearly identifies strands and learning objectives, with a clear line of progression from the reception class to the end of the key stage. She is actively involved in monitoring the planning and learning in science and has been instrumental in helping raise standards in science.

92. In the last inspection, standards were found to be in line with national averages but were below at level 3 and higher. Standards at the higher level have improved in recent years. The issues raised in the last inspection report have been addressed. The management and work of the teaching assistants remains a strength, though they are used less now to support science teaching. There is now a better match of learning activities to pupils' prior standards of attainment through carefully planned group work in each lesson. There is now consistent long term planning between year groups and this is reinforced by regular monitoring by the head teacher and the subject co-ordinator and topic evaluations are undertaken at the end of each term. There is now a suitable scheme of work in place.

Other subjects or courses

Information Technology (IT)

93. The pupils' attainment in information technology is broadly average by the end of the key stage.

94. In years 1 and 2 the pupils become generally familiar with the basic functions of the keyboard, using the shift and backspace keys to make changes to fonts and written text. Under supervision, they can use the mouse to perform basic operations such as selecting from the colour palette, choosing line width and spray tools, size of font, position of text, highlighting, deleting, editing and sending work to the printer. They have experience of the use of e-mail by composing messages as a class activity, which are then sent by their teacher to other classes. The pupils use cassette recorders competently for listening to story tapes.

95.The pupils using computers in lessons are making satisfactory progress, consolidating existing skills and learning new ones. Although relatively few pupils were using computers in lessons during the inspection, there is sufficient evidence of work produced last year and earlier this term to indicate satisfactory progress is being made by most pupils, including those with special educational needs. In teacher-led discussions, pupils demonstrate gains in their understanding about how to apply their information technology skills to new situations across a fairly wide range of curricular subjects.

96.The pupils' attitude when using information technology is good: they respond appropriately to teacher-led activities undertaken in lessons and participate as well as they can when questioned by their teacher in whole class discussions. Their concentration is stimulated by seeing their peers used effectively to demonstrate techniques under the close guidance of their teacher. The pupils need much careful explanation from their teachers and do not readily question or seek clarification themselves. Consequently, in one lesson in year 1, many pupils misunderstood a preparatory task intended to help their understanding of the use of the shift keys before coming to the computer to key in their names using upper and lower case letters. At all times pupils display a creditable sense of pride in the work they produce. Relationships between pupils are good, especially when collaborating in pairs, as in year 2, during shared computer work when four pupils, using two computers, used word processing and spelling practice programs.

97.The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. A good feature is the regular use of whole class teaching using pupils to demonstrate on a computer while the teacher focuses the attention of the class on what is happening; this overcomes the difficulty presented by not having a suite of computers for pupils to learn on simultaneously. However, in lessons where pupils were using the computers in paired activities, teachers or teaching assistants do not intervene sufficiently to ensure that the pupils continue to make progress while they are at the computer. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of computers are satisfactory. They have sound expectations as to the quality and range of work pupils should be able to produce. The pupils' finished work is valued highly by teachers, as evidenced by the very careful attention to its presentation in pupils' samples of work, and in the quality of display in classrooms and around the school. The teachers make effective use of the time and resources available within lessons. Teachers' lesson planning and the management of pupils is good. Their methods and organisation, including procedures for assessment are satisfactory.

98.The school has a very positive vision for information and communication technology, has received funding through the National Grid for Learning, and expects to make a significant contribution to the educational use of information technology within its local Education Action Zone. The policy for information technology has been reviewed and is in draft form. Units from the national schemes of work have helpfully been included in the termly timetable of blocked units for years 1 and 2. There is an effective part time computer technician who has the two-fold role of ensuring the systems are functioning correctly and that teachers and pupils are supported in their acquisition of skills.

99. Although computers were not used for control during the inspection, the school has appropriate resources and is using the national scheme of work, which includes control. Further developments and training in this strand of the information technology curriculum are planned in the School Development Plan.

Religious Education (RE)

100. The previous inspection noted that there were weaknesses in the pupils' knowledge and awareness of other faiths, and although there has been some improvement here, it is still a relative weakness in the pupils' attainment and progress in religious education.

101. Standards in religious education are broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. The pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in Aim 2 of the syllabus, Learning from Religion, but overall progress in Aim 1, Learning about Religion is unsatisfactory.

102. By the end of the key stage, the pupils know about some stories from the Bible, such as The Good Samaritan and The Prodigal Son. Some know more about the structure of the Bible, knowing for example, that there is an Old and New Testament, although they tend to confuse figures such as Jesus and Moses. They have a good sense of personal worth and can identify right and wrong, and moral behaviour. The pupils have some awareness of aspects of other faiths, such as Sikh celebrations, but this awareness is not evident for all the year 2 pupils.

103. In lessons, the pupils make steady gains in their knowledge of Bible stories. They successfully develop their awareness and understanding of moral issues, as their teachers enable them to relate the messages in the Parables to their own lives. However, through the school, gains in knowledge about Christianity and other religions is not consistent from class to class.

104. The pupils show interest and understanding in class discussions arising from hearing a Bible story, and often listen with sensitivity to what other pupils say. In one year 2 lesson, the pupils reflected on values and feelings of anger, sadness and fairness. When given a picture making or writing task, they mostly apply themselves well to the work.

105. The teaching of religious education is satisfactory. Not all teachers are fully confident in teaching the subject, but they plan appropriately for religious education lessons, and generally lead discussions well. A helpful strategy used by teachers is to paraphrase a Bible story to make it accessible to the pupils. In the lessons seen, the teachers successfully draw out moral teaching, by relating concepts to the pupils' lives. They effectively reinforce objectives for moral and personal development in their lessons.

106. A policy and a detailed scheme of work, which describes implicit and explicit objectives, support the subject, and activities linked to the Essex syllabus. The scheme of work does not make clear which religions are to be studied in years 1 and 2, and to what depth, and is quite difficult to follow. Resources for religious education have been improved since the last inspection, with the introduction of artefact boxes for four faiths and some big book texts on

different religions. The religious education co-ordinator has sound subject expertise and is in a position to give helpful guidance to her colleagues.

149.

Art

107.The quality of pupils' artwork is a strength of the school. Although few art lessons were seen during the inspection, the quality of work produced last year and earlier this term indicates that the pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.

108.The pupils in year 1 have completed good observational drawings, including studies of musical instruments, and have drawn imaginary houses using pastels. The pupils have also experienced simple batik techniques and have produced Pudsey Bear padded pictures. The pupils in year 2 have produced sensitive interpretations of characters from the Old Bear stories, harvest pictures in pastel and good observational drawings of bicycles, inspired by the painting 'Les Routiers' by William Roberts. Other well-known artists such as Picasso, Seurat, Rockwell and Mondrian have been successfully used as reference points in the pupils' work.

109.The pupils' attitude to work is good: paintings, prints, drawings and three-dimensional work in textiles and clay, are carefully executed. Younger pupils work carefully in practical activities and clear up sensibly afterwards. In a year 2 lesson where the teacher used a pupil to demonstrate 'painting' on the computer, the whole class watched attentively and individuals commented enthusiastically on the finished work after another pupil, directed by his teacher, designed and printed a picture in the style of Mondrian. In another year 2 lesson, evaluative skills were less well developed. The teacher worked with a small group of pupils encouraging them to evaluate and suggest improvements to some 'press print' pictures they had produced earlier. However, the pupils' limited oral skills, coupled with their reticence, left them not keen to be critical of their own work despite tireless and probing questioning by their teacher.

110.The quality of teaching is good. Although few lessons were seen, there is good subject knowledge and the policy and planning for art is very good, ensuring an appropriate wide range and very good coverage of the art curriculum. The pupils' finished work is valued highly by teachers, as evidenced by the very careful attention to its presentation in pupils' samples of work and in the tasteful and educationally stimulating displays of mounted artwork in classrooms and around the school. This also contributes very effectively to the strong school ethos. Efforts are being made to use information technology, where appropriate, as an alternative drawing and 'painting' medium using 'Colour Magic' and other programs. Assessment is satisfactory, largely undertaken through discussion with pupils during and after they have completed their work.

111.The co-ordinator for art has not been long in this post so opportunities to monitor and evaluate the teaching of art have been limited. However, art in the school is well established, and the organisation and quality of resources for art are good, contributing effectively to the standard of the pupils' work and progress.

112.The last inspection reported favourably on the pupils' work but criticised a lack of focus

and challenge by teachers on occasions, together with a need for a more systematic approach to the development of skills and knowledge. The situation is much better now: lessons are planned with a satisfactory focus and the schemes of work ensure good progression of knowledge and skills.

Design and Technology

113. Very few design and technology lessons were observed but there was abundant evidence of the pupils' work on display, which shows that the pupils make satisfactory progress in the subject.

114. Year 1 pupils have investigated foods such as butter and cheese, simple recipes and witches' spells, and considered the working properties and uses of kitchen utensils and tools. They have considered 'nets' in packaging and design safe containers in which to transport an egg. They have used clay and dough to make cups and saucers and model fruit and vegetables. In year 2, as part of a topic on transport, the pupils have made wooden boats and used computers to draw their designs. They have used technical construction kits to make working model vehicles. They have also constructed excellent model vehicles from cardboard and paper, showing great care and skill.

115. The pupils' attitudes in design and technology are typically good: they respond appropriately to activities undertaken in lessons, their concentration being stimulated by first hand practical activity. Most pupils work energetically and keenly. Relationships between pupils are generally good, especially when sharing resources or clearing up after the lesson.

116. Although there was little observed teaching, the planning and organisation is satisfactory. The teachers have satisfactory expectations as to the quality and range of work pupils should be able to produce. The pupils' finished work is carefully exhibited in high quality displays in classrooms and around the school. The teachers make satisfactory use of resources available in the school to enable pupils to be successful in designing and making. It provides helpful guidance with clear and appropriate aims and objectives, useful assessment information and a sound scheme of work. The national schemes of work are currently being introduced in year 2.

117. The co-ordinator has an appropriate development plan to review and audit the resources for design and technology, to review the subject policy and to introduce the national scheme of work. In the last inspection, design and technology received a satisfactory report and the evidence of this inspection indicates that the situation remains very similar.

160. Geography and History

118. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress in geography and history, including those with special educational needs. Although few lessons were seen during the inspection, there was sufficient evidence of work produced last year and earlier this term to indicate satisfactory progress, though standards of attainment by the majority of pupils are below average.

119. In geography, the pupils in year 1 have thought about their world, the other planets and have made plans and maps. The pupils in year 2 have considered their routes to school and have drawn maps and written directions. Some of this map work has been done using the computer, and the maps show useful reference keys and information. The pupils have undertaken surveys of how other pupils in their class come to school and have produced simple charts and graphs to present their research data. They have learned about the points of the compass and have written instructions to guide a visitor around the school. Much of this work has arisen from their thematic study of transport.

120. In history, the pupils in year 1 have looked at the design of buildings and the pupils in year 2 have made careful comparisons of the past and the present, such as when observing the features shown in pictures of an Edwardian car and its passengers and a modern vehicle. They have also compared old and new kitchens and this study has linked well to other curricular work with food in science and design and technology. In their consideration of the passage of time and their use of time lines, the pupils have developed further their awareness of chronology. Some of this work has been appropriately linked to their first hand investigation of primary evidence.

121. The pupils' attitude to work is satisfactory: they respond appropriately to activities undertaken in lessons and participate as well as they can when questioned by their teacher in whole class discussions. Occasionally, some pupils' concentration wanes and their continued attention depends on the vigilance of their teachers and the degree of stimulus and motivation. The pupils need much careful explanation from their teachers and do not readily question or seek clarification themselves. At all times, though, pupils display a creditable sense of pride in the work they produce. Relationships between pupils are satisfactory.

122. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Although few lessons were seen, there is satisfactory subject knowledge and the planning for geography and history is good. The policies for geography and history summarise the schemes of work. Appropriate attention is paid to ensuring that in group activities all pupils are provided with work matched appropriately to their level of prior attainment: an improvement since the last inspection.

123. Strengths of the teaching include good use of time, open-ended questioning and an appropriate range of resources and activities. Although the teachers' expectations for the quality of work and behaviour of pupils are high, occasionally they do not make their expectation sufficiently clear to the pupils.

124. Homework was appropriately set following a geography lesson in year 2 to enable the pupils to consolidate mapping and drawing activities that had been undertaken during the lesson. The pupils' finished work is valued highly by teachers, as evidenced by the very careful attention to its presentation in pupils' samples of work, and in the quality of display in classrooms and around the school. Assessment is satisfactory, largely undertaken through discussion with pupils during and after they have completed their work.

125. Leadership for geography and history is good. The co-ordinator has reviewed the existing

policies and guidelines for teaching geography and history and monitors teachers' subject planning. Year group objectives, rather than schemes of work, are serving appropriately as a means of planning for progression and continuity of the curriculum. The organisation and quality of resources, unlike in the previous inspection, are good, contributing effectively now to the standard of the pupils' work and progress.

126. The last inspection reported favourably on the pupils' attainment and response to learning but called for completion of the review of the geography policy and schemes of work. This has been done.

Music

127. No music lessons could be seen during the week, because of timetabling difficulties, so no judgements about teaching and learning in this subject can be made. The pupils' progress in the very short singing assemblies was relatively limited. The school's music policy has clear aims and objectives with a helpful scheme of work

170. **Physical Education**

128. In the lessons seen, the pupils made broadly satisfactory progress, enjoyed their lessons and the teaching of physical education was satisfactory.

129. The pupils are aware of safe working and use the hall space competently. They show satisfactory competence in walking, jogging and running round the hall. The pupils respond quite sensitively to stimuli such as music to develop their dance. They are developing more control, when balancing for example, and are beginning to link movements together in a sequence.

130. The pupils concentrate well, responding to their teachers instructions. They can work effectively in pairs and organise themselves sensibly. When the teaching is good, the pupils effectively improve their performance. For example in one dance lesson, the pupils successfully developed expressive movements inspired by a candle flame and sitar music. The younger pupils try hard to develop control in their balancing and sequencing of movements, enjoying the sense of fun engendered by their teacher. Progress is less satisfactory when the pupils work is over directed by the teacher, with insufficient opportunity to develop their own ideas.

131. The teachers make sure that the pupils are dressed appropriately for physical education and maintain the good discipline that is important in these lessons. They plan their physical education lessons well, with appropriate activities for practice of skills and some opportunities for pupils to plan their movements and to evaluate each others performance. Pupils are helped when the teacher demonstrates a skill or involves other pupils in demonstrating a movement.

132. The subject is well supported by a sound written policy with good guidance and a good scheme of work to provide continuity and progression in the pupils learning. Resources are well provided. Physical education equipment is well maintained and stored tidily. The school hall is of a good size and the floor of good condition for physical education. There is an adequate playground for games skills and the pupils share the junior school field.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

133. The inspection of Fairhouse Infant School involved a team of three inspectors, including the lay inspector, led by Mrs Lesley Robins. The team spent a total of nine inspector days in the school and during that time, they:

- C. Analysed a wide range of school documentation;
- C. Had discussions with governors, the head teacher, teachers and support staff;
- C. Analysed responses in 39 questionnaires returned by parents;
- C. Noted the views of 27 parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting;
- C. Made observations of 39 teaching sessions;
- C. Talked with pupils during the course of their lessons, at playtimes and at lunchtimes;
- C. Heard 18 pupils read;
- C. Scrutinised pupils' work and records in a range of samples provided by the school;
- C. Scrutinised work on display;
- C. Attended seven assemblies; and
- C. Observed playtimes and lunchtimes.

C. Data and indicators

PUPIL DATA

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school=s register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR B Y2	147	0	58	34

TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Qualified teachers (YR B Y2)

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

7
19.34 : 1

Education support staff (YR B Y2)

Total number of education support staff
Total aggregate hours worked each week

8
82.5

Average class size:

24.5

FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:

1998/99

	,
Total income	377001
Total expenditure	364409
Expenditure per pupil	1786.32
Balance brought forward from previous year	14280
Balance carried forward to next year	26872

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

147

Number of questionnaires returned:

39

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	18	74	0	5	3
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	18	62	8	3	10
The school handles complaints from parents well	8	51	22	5	14
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	26	64	5	3	3
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	15	56	8	18	3
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	11	74	11	3	3
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lesson	10	51	28	3	8
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	8	63	11	11	8
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	15	54	18	8	5
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	18	56	18	3	5
My child(ren) like(s) school	37	53	5	3	3

Other issues raised by parents

1. Some parents have been understandably concerned about the number of staffing changes in the school. The inspectors have established that teachers have left for legitimate reasons, such as promotion or changes in family circumstances. They judge that the school has good systems for inducting new staff and for ensuring that the transition from one teacher to another is as smooth as possible for the pupils, and that the parents can be reassured on this matter.

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