

INSPECTION REPORT

THE ROBERT DRAKE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Thundersley, Essex

LEA area: 881 Essex

Unique reference number: 115283

Headteacher: Mrs. Susanne Pipe

Reporting inspector: Mrs. Mary Summers
25455

Dates of inspection: 12-15 June 2000

Inspection number: 188573

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior school
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Church Road Thundersley Benfleet Essex
Postcode:	SS7 3HT
Telephone number:	01268 754124
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. Joan Holden
Date of previous inspection:	1 July 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mary Summers	Registered inspector	Art	What sort of school is it?
		Music	The school's results and pupils' achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Joanna Adams	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school working partnership with parents?
Valerie Hobson	Team inspector	Under fives	How well does the school care for its pupils? (support)
		Science	
		Design and technology	
		Religious education	
Edmond Morris	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
		English as an additional language	
		Mathematics	
		Information technology	
		Physical education	
Judith Howell	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		English	
		Geography	
		History	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Robert Drake Primary is an average sized foundation school catering for pupils between four and 11 years of age. There are currently 261 full-time pupils on roll, 127 boys and 134 girls. There are four children in the Reception class who are under five years of age. Four pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and there are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. Eleven per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and 14 per cent are on the school's special educational needs register. These numbers are below average for a school of this size. There is one pupil with a statement of special educational need. When children enter the school, they come from a wide variety of pre-school nurseries and playgroups and most are at broadly average standards for their age. The most recent indicators show that the pupils' socio-economic backgrounds are above the national average. The school had grant maintained status until September 1999.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is very effective in its work and pupils make very good progress because of high quality teaching and a well-organised curriculum. Pupils reach standards which are above average when they leave the school which represents high achievement since they start. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Good quality teaching enables pupils to make effective progress and reach high standards.
- The headteacher, senior staff and governors work very effectively together to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- The school's excellent links with parents encourages them to provide a high level of support for their children and this has a significant effect on the progress they make..
- The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this contributes very well to the very good behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and excellent relationships with one another.
- The school is a very safe and caring environment, where pupils' views are respected and their contributions recognised.

What could be improved

- Standards in the 1999 National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds in English were not high enough.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved greatly since its last inspection in July 1996. Monitoring systems are firmly in place to ensure high quality teaching and to check that the curriculum is being delivered in line with school plans. Assessment procedures are now mainly good and the results are used successfully to plan work which is appropriate for the needs of individual pupils. The school has maintained its extremely positive ethos, expecting high achievement from its pupils within a warm, secure and very supportive atmosphere. As a result, pupils are achieving higher standards by the time they leave the school than they were at the time of the last inspection.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	A	A	D	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	A	D	B	B	
Science	A	B	B	B	

Pupils in Year 6 last year reached above average standards in mathematics and science but below average standards in English. This was due to the relatively small number of pupils who attained high levels in English. The school has addressed this effectively by concentrating on developing pupils' writing skills and, this year, pupils are on course to attain above average standards, with a good percentage attaining at a high level. They are also on course to reach above average standards in mathematics and science. Standards in religious education are above average, as are those in history and music. Standards in information technology, art, design and technology, geography and physical education are average.

Pupils in Year 2 reached standards which were well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing in 1999 and are on course to reach similar standards this year. They achieve above average standards in science, religious education, geography and history and average standards in art, design and technology, music and physical education.

Children aged under five reach above average standards in their language and literacy and mathematics. They reach average standards in all other areas of their learning.

Pupils throughout the school, including higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have great enthusiasm for school. They concentrate very well on their lessons and always try their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave well during their lessons and playtimes and move around the school in an orderly manner.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils work and play together very well, showing high regard for one another. Relationships are excellent and contribute successfully to the good progress that pupils make in the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory, although many absences are due to parents taking their children on holidays during school time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

Overall, the quality of teaching throughout the school is good. During the inspection, 69 lessons or parts of lessons were seen. Of these, four per cent were excellent, 22 per cent were very good, 46 per cent were good and 27 per cent were satisfactory. Only one per cent of lessons was unsatisfactory. Teaching is good in English and mathematics, including literacy and numeracy, science, religious education, geography, history and music and is satisfactory in all other subjects.

Strengths in teaching include teachers' well-planned lessons and their high expectations of their pupils. These ensure that all pupils are challenged to do their best and achieve high standards. Most teachers manage pupils sensitively yet clearly instil high levels of respect and confidence. There is a high proportion of very good and excellent teaching in the older classes in the juniors. Teachers here have excellent questioning skills which they use very well to challenge and extend pupils' thinking. The very small number of weaknesses in other parts of the school are concerned with planning for the development of some areas of children's learning in the Reception class, the management of pupils' behaviour in a very small number of cases and in the introductory parts of some lessons, which are too long.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and the national literacy and numeracy strategies have been implemented very well.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The needs of these pupils are recognised early and they receive appropriate support which enables them to achieve high standards for their capabilities. The management of the very small number of pupils with identified emotional and behavioural problems is particularly sensitive.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is a strength of the school and contributes to pupils' respect for one another and their very good standards of behaviour.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a safe and very caring environment. Pupils' personal and academic development is monitored well and, consequently, any problems are noted quickly.

The school works hard to ensure to encourage parents to be active in their children's education and is very successful in its efforts. The high level of parental support contributes greatly to the good progress of their children.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very effective leadership and a clear commitment towards raising provision and standards. The deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and individual subject managers all perform effective management roles. The school's ethos is very strong and its aims are well met.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are active, well-informed and fulfil their responsibilities very well. They take an active role in monitoring the school's development and in deciding priorities for improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is carried out very effectively by the headteacher, senior staff and governors. Test results are analysed carefully and measures taken quickly to remedy any weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	The school targets the use of its resources very well to improve provision for the pupils. When large projects are planned, the governing body considers a number of different spending options in order to achieve the best value for their money.

The school's staff, accommodation and learning resources support the teaching and learning process well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like coming to school.• Teaching is good which helps their children to make good progress and reach high standards.• The children are very well behaved.• They feel very comfortable approaching the school with any concerns or problems.• The school is well led and managed.• The school works very closely with parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of homework was either too little or too much.• They would like more information about how their children are getting on at school.

The inspection team supports all the positive views of parents and finds that their concerns about homework and information about progress are unfounded.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Analysis of the 1999 National Curriculum tests for seven year olds shows that standards were well above average in reading and writing and were very high in mathematics. A good percentage of pupils attained high levels in the tests in writing and mathematics. The findings of the inspection are that pupils in Year 2 this year are on course to attain higher than average standards in writing this year and well above average standards in reading and mathematics. Standards in literacy and numeracy are well above average for their age. A good number of pupils are on course to attain high levels in reading this year, which is an improvement since 1999. Standards show very good improvement since the previous inspection, when they were average in all subjects, except music, where they were above average. Seven year olds reach above average standards in science, religious education, geography and history and average standards in information technology, art, design and technology, music and physical education.

2. By the end of Year 2, pupils are confident speakers, answering questions in detail and offering their opinions willingly. Most pupils read their books accurately and use a good range of strategies to help them understand new words. Pupils plan and organise their stories well and use a good range of vocabulary to make their work interesting. In mathematics, pupils have a firm grasp of number facts to 20 and many can add larger two digit numbers mentally. In science, pupils make relevant predictions about the results of their experiments and can suggest reasons if the results differ from their predictions. They use computers competently to word process their work and they can program a simple robot to move around the room. Pupils can retell Hindu and Christian stories and show a deep and searching interest into the beliefs of other religions.

3. In art, pupils can print and paint successfully and make simple clay models of fish. They can design and construct a moving vehicle for their work in design and technology, labelling their sketches and identifying the materials they want to use. Work in geography shows above average attainment, for example when they compare the natural and human factors of their own town with those on a Scottish island. Pupils have a good understanding of some of the famous people in history and recognise why certain events, such as the Great Fire of London, happened. Year 2 pupils have average skills in music; they play percussion instruments appropriately and compose simple pieces of music on a "seaside" theme. In physical education, their attainment is average; they use space well during games and dance lessons and most can throw and catch a ball accurately

4. Analysis of the 1999 National Curriculum tests for 11 year old pupils shows that they gained above average standards in mathematics and science but below average standards in English. Although there was a good number of pupils who reached higher levels in mathematics and science, the percentage achieving higher levels in English was low and affected the overall standard gained. Standards had been rising in line with the national trend since 1996 and, when the school analysed the English results last year, they found that pupils were underachieving in writing. Plans were quickly implemented to address this weakness, and the current inspection confirms that pupils in Year 6 this year are on course to reach above average standards in English in the National Curriculum tests. Pupils are also likely to reach above average standards in the tests in mathematics and science this year. The targets set by governors for these pupils to achieve look likely to be exceeded. These findings represent good improvement since the last inspection, when standards in the three subjects were average.

5. Eleven-year-old pupils reach above average standards in religious education, history and music, and average standards in information technology, art, design and technology, geography, history and physical education. Since the last inspection, standards have risen in religious education and history and have been maintained in all other subjects. Overall, this represents good achievement for pupils who enter the school at levels which are broadly average for their age. The inspection finds that there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

6. The strategies implemented by the school to improve standards in English, and in writing in particular, have been very successful and large numbers of pupils are on course to attain higher than average levels this year. By the time pupils leave the school, their literacy skills are above average. They show good skills in poetry writing, with sensitive use of language, and can write reports, stories, film reviews and play scripts with confidence and a good degree of accuracy. They read fluently from a range of texts and express their preferences about their reading material clearly and confidently. Many pupils are reaching higher levels in their reading and can skim and scan text to research information. Their speaking and listening skills are above average. They speak up clearly in discussion and offer their ideas readily, using a wide vocabulary. In mathematics, they know their multiplication tables and can work accurately with numbers up to two decimal places. In science, pupils can construct a fair test and have a good knowledge of the life cycles of plants and humans. The presentation of their work in science is of high quality. In information technology, pupils have secure word processing skills and can use the Internet effectively to research information. Work in religious education more than meets the recommendations of the locally Agreed Syllabus; pupils are beginning to ask searching questions about religious beliefs which help them to clarify their own understanding and opinions.

7. Eleven-year-old pupils reach average standards in art, gaining a broad knowledge and understanding of the work of different artists and developing a sound range of artistic skills. Standards in design and technology are average; pupils can plan their models effectively of, for example, Tudor houses and construct them, showing a satisfactory understanding of the use of different tools and joining techniques. Pupils' work in geography is average overall although they have good knowledge of some individual topics such as rivers and weather. Work in history is above average; pupils have good knowledge of life in different periods of history and use appropriate vocabulary effectively. Standards in music are also above average, with pupils having an extensive musical knowledge, shown, for example, when they discuss how arpeggios are formed and how they can be used in their own compositions. In physical education, standards are average; games skills are appropriate, for example in short tennis, and most pupils can swim 25 meters by the time they leave the school.

8. Children aged under five achieve above average levels for their age in language and literacy and in mathematics. They have a good knowledge of letters and sounds, which they are beginning to use to read and write simple words. In mathematics, they can sort shapes and objects and many can count forwards and backwards to 20. They can work out the answers to simple addition and subtraction calculations using apparatus. In the other areas of their development, children reach average levels by the time they are five. They relate appropriately to adults and to each other and work and play happily together. They show satisfactory co-ordination and balance in their physical activities and take on imaginative characters in their role-play activities. They show appropriate knowledge and understanding of the world in their work on classifying plants and objects found in the school environment.

9. Pupils achieve highly for their ages in many subjects, due mainly to the well organised curriculum and the good and often very good quality teaching which they receive. Progress in literacy and numeracy is good and they reach above average levels for their ages. The support of parents also makes a significant contribution, along with the high levels of motivation from the pupils themselves.

10. Pupils with special educational needs learn effectively and make good progress throughout the school. Their individual education plans are carefully tailored to their specific needs, realistic yet challenging targets are set and regularly reviewed. They achieve at least satisfactory standards in all subjects and sometimes exceed expectations in literacy and numeracy. Work in class is provided at a suitable level which has a positive effect on the good progress pupils make. Higher attaining pupils also make good progress because of the high expectations of teachers; they are provided with work which is challenging and interesting and are given high targets at which to aim.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The last inspection found that the attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the children were very good and had a significant effect on standards achieved. This continues to be the case.

12. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and their great enthusiasm for everything the school has to offer is very evident in all they do. It is a strength of the school which impacts not only on standards achieved, but also on the strong sense of community and mutual support within the school. In lessons, pupils concentrate well and listen very attentively to their teacher. They are keen to get on with their work and take pride in the finished product. In a Year 3/4 literacy lesson, pupils spoke confidently and enthusiastically about their poems. Their desire to learn and achieve had a significant impact on the high quality poetry written. This was also well fostered by the teacher's encouraging and excellent relationships with the children and the challenging task set.

13. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults, are excellent and contribute very well to the progress pupils make in lessons. Pupils get on well together and play happily at lunchtimes, showing an obvious desire to help and encourage each other to succeed. For example, whilst working on the computer in pairs, Year 3 pupils were very good at taking turns and at supporting each other. They willingly shared ideas and worked co-operatively together.

14. Behaviour throughout the school is very good and this is appreciated by parents. In several lessons behaviour was exemplary and this had a strong impact on the progress made. There was one exclusion during the last year. No poor behaviour or bullying was observed during the inspection and the few instances recorded had been well followed up by the headteacher. There were a very few instances of fidgety and restless behaviour, which were due largely to the teacher's inappropriate strategies for managing the pupils. In the main, pupils respond very well to the high expectations set by teachers. This is a clear reflection of the focus placed on respect and courtesy that permeates the school and is supported by parents. Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and are open, polite and courteous whilst talking to visitors.

15. The school actively encourages pupils to consider how their actions affect others and to show respect for the feelings, beliefs and values of others. As a result, pupils are confident in expressing their views without fear that they may be laughed at. In a Year 4 literacy lesson, pupils were discussing a poem written by one of them and their comments were positive and encouraging, even if not in agreement. This respect has allowed pupils to develop high levels of self confidence and self esteem.

16. Pupils show initiative and personal responsibility, for example, when the Year 6 pupils act as monitors at lunchtimes. They respond very well to these opportunities. Older pupils take good care of the younger, particularly at lunchtimes but also by helping in some lessons.

17. Pupils with special educational needs who have identified emotional and behavioural difficulties are particularly well managed in class and during breaks. All the school staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of the targets set for such pupils and work together to ensure that these targets are met. Pupils participate fully in all lessons and their behaviour is very good.

18. Attendance is satisfactory, being broadly in line with national averages with unauthorised absence being below the national average. Many of the absences are as a result of parents taking their children out of school to go on family holidays. This means that these pupils miss some valuable learning experiences. Pupils are extremely keen to attend school which is a clear reflection of their enjoyment in school life. Most arrive punctually which allows lessons to start on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. During the inspection, 69 lessons or parts of lessons were seen. The quality of teaching was excellent in four per cent, very good in 22 per cent, good in 46 per cent and satisfactory in 27 per cent. Only in one per cent of lessons was the quality of teaching unsatisfactory. These findings represent very good improvement since the school's last inspection, particularly in the percentage of very good and excellent teaching. The improvement is due largely to the success of the headteacher's monitoring programme, in which she identifies clear areas for improvement for individual teachers, and the general commitment of the staff to improve their own practice. Teaching is good in English, including literacy, mathematics, including numeracy, science, religious education, geography, history and music and satisfactory in information technology, art, design and technology and physical education. This corresponds directly to the standards pupils attain in these subjects.

20. The quality of teaching and learning for children aged under five is good overall. This judgement is based mainly on the well-planned and organised lessons in literacy and numeracy, which enable children to make good progress and reach standards which are above average for their age in these areas by the time they are five years old. The quality of teaching and learning for children's development in other areas, however, is only satisfactory, as many of these lessons are too formal and not organised carefully enough to promote children's development in their physical, personal and social and creative skills. For example, in a formal games lesson, children spent the majority of time waiting for their turn in a relay race, and were not involved enough in practising and developing their skills. Many opportunities are missed to use the outside area for activities other than "free play" which would further develop their personal and social, physical and creative development. Good assessment systems contribute to the teacher's planning in literacy and numeracy, but these systems are not used effectively to inform planning in other areas of children's learning.

21. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in both the infant and junior departments, although there is a significantly higher proportion of very good and excellent teaching in Years 5 and 6. Teachers in these classes plan meticulously for lessons, ensuring that pupils' previous skills and knowledge are extended as far as possible. They share the objectives of the lesson with the pupils and refer to these throughout the lesson so that pupils can assess their own progress. This provides the pupils with excellent motivation to do their best. Lessons are planned in accordance with the school's schemes of work and ensure that pupils' knowledge and understanding is gradually extended as they move through the school. Explanations are very clear and skilled questioning by the teachers ensures that pupils understand new concepts successfully. This was evident in a Year 5 science lesson when the teacher moved between groups, checking the work the pupils were doing and stopping to ask questions which

encouraged them to clarify their own thinking. In this way, the concept of how the pitch of a sound is altered was understood by the vast majority of pupils.

22. Throughout the school, teachers have a firm knowledge and understanding of the teaching of literacy and this means that the quality of these lessons is very good. Teachers present literacy lessons with enthusiasm and transmit their enjoyment of language effectively to their pupils. This results in pupils listening carefully to their teachers and responding well during class discussion and question and answer sessions. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 6 lesson on extended writing, in which the teacher's confident demonstration of language associated with a specific theme such as "jealousy" engaged the pupils' attention and meant that they understood the purpose of the lesson very quickly.

23. Lessons usually move at a brisk pace, with teachers often providing time limits which encourage pupils to concentrate and work hard. In a few lessons, however, the introductions are too long and the teacher "instructs" rather than asks questions to move pupils on in their learning. Very occasionally, the transition between class lessons and independent work is not managed well enough and time is wasted. The very detailed lesson planning by most teachers ensures that individual pupils receive work which matches their needs successfully. This is a distinct improvement since the last inspection, when it was noted that teachers were not using the results of assessment well enough to inform their planning for individual pupils. Most teachers provide high quality support for pupils with special educational needs on an individual or small group basis. They are able to do this because lessons are very well organised and pupils so well motivated that they work at their tasks with a minimum of teacher supervision, allowing the teacher to provide additional support where necessary.

24. Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils. The school expects virtually all pupils' attainment to be at least in line with national expectations in the National Curriculum tests for seven and 11 year olds and for a large proportion to reach even higher levels. Each year, pupils sit tests which assess their progress over the year in English, mathematics and science and, on the basis of the results, individual targets are set. These are shared with pupils and their parents. The high levels of encouragement and support provided by parents, coupled with pupils' motivation to succeed, mean that the high expectations of teachers are met in the vast majority of cases. Pupils are involved very well in assessing their own progress, both in lessons and over a period of time, and this increases their motivation to succeed still further.

25. Teachers in most classes manage their pupils extremely well. The high levels of respect for pupils' contributions and ideas and the very good relationships between pupils and their teachers mean that pupils are anxious to complete their tasks to a high standard. Because the work planned is appropriate to pupils' individual needs, they show good concentration and effort. This was evident in a Year 3/4 lesson in mathematics where the warm and positive atmosphere in the class meant that pupils were keen to explain how they arrived at their answers and that they relished the challenge of solving lengthy mental arithmetic problems. The pupils were so interested in the lesson that they behaved impeccably and concentrated extremely well on their work. In a few lessons observed in one junior class, however, the teacher's control of pupils was less successful. This occurred mainly during the introductory part of the lessons, where many pupils were not engaged enough by the teacher's questions.

26. The last inspection identified some variation in the quality of marking but this is now generally good, with some excellent examples seen. In one Year 3/4 class, for example, the teacher provides lengthy written comments on pupils' work, which explains how various aspects could be improved. At the last inspection the variation in the practice of setting homework was also identified but this is now good and is very much appreciated by the vast majority of parents.

27. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good, both by class teachers and by the special educational needs teacher. Work is set at an appropriate level to

enable pupils to make good progress towards their individual targets. Teaching assistants are used particularly effectively in lessons, when their work is carefully planned and their skills are fully utilised in all parts of the lesson including when the teacher is addressing the whole class at the start of literacy and numeracy sessions. Teaching assistants are used to monitor and support individual pupils and specified groups during this time and make notes of their observations to share with the teacher after the lesson. They also keep detailed records of what they have done in a lesson and the achievements of the pupils they have been supporting. This information is shared with the class teacher and is used to help plan suitable work for the next lesson. Pupils are occasionally withdrawn for small-group sessions, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and the special educational needs teacher plans these sessions very well, to meet the targets identified on pupils' individual education plans. These targets are clear and pupils are involved in assessing their progress towards them, which makes them aware of their progress. The school has identified one gifted pupil who is currently working in an older class and receiving very high quality provision. Plans are in hand to extend this provision next year, with the support of teachers from local secondary schools.

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

28. Overall, the curriculum provided by the school is good. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education and personal and social education. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements and offers pupils a good range of opportunities. The planned curricular time for all subjects is generally appropriate, with literacy and numeracy taking the largest part of the subject allocation. Weekly teaching hours are well within the recommended time. Teaching of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is very effective. The curriculum fully promotes the aims of the school and supports all pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development well.

29. The school's previous inspection report identified as a key issue the need to continue to develop long-term curriculum plans to ensure continuity and progression. The school has addressed the issue well and schemes of work are now in place which ensure that pupils are introduced to appropriate skills, knowledge and concepts as they move up the school.

30. The curriculum for children aged under five is planned appropriately to ensure that they receive opportunities to develop all the nationally recommended areas of learning for children of this age. By the end of the Reception year, many children are working effectively within the Key Stage 1 curriculum, particularly in literacy and numeracy. However, some and receive good quality support from teachers and teaching assistants. When appropriate, the curriculum is modified to meet the specific needs of pupils and their progress is closely monitored.

31. Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. There are lunchtime and after school clubs for chess, dancing, cross-stitch, choir, netball and football for both boys and girls. A good proportion of pupils, parents and some staff participate in and organise these activities. The curriculum is enhanced by the wide range of visits the pupils make and by visitors to the school. Year 6 pupils participate in a residential adventure trip to Dorset.

32. The school has productive links with the local business community. There is a very good input from the local police. For instance, when a police expedition group visited the River Kwai, to retrace the 'death railway' built by British prisoners of war, they kept in close touch with the school and the pupils tracked their progress. As a result of this, some elderly people in the local community who had taken part in the original building of the railway visited the school to share their own personal experiences with the pupils. Links with partner educational institutes are satisfactory. The school has very constructive relationships with the local playgroups and nurseries which help to prepare pupils well for their introduction to school. Pupils are well

prepared to transfer to secondary school and curricular links with the secondary schools are beginning to be developed through subjects such as literacy, mathematics and science.

33. Overall, the school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils, including those with special educational needs. Moral and social development is a significant strength of the school. This judgement reflects the findings of the previous inspection. The school has a very caring ethos, which ensures that every child is listened to and their views are respected. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school. Very good social and pastoral care is given to all pupils and this support is very well led under the guidance of the headteacher.

34. The provision for spiritual development is good. The main focus of development is through religious education and the acts of collective worship which have an appropriate and largely Christian emphasis and fully meet the statutory requirements. Some assemblies have multicultural themes when the religious and cultural festivals of different faiths are celebrated. A very good contribution to spiritual development is the emotive words of the school song, as sung by the pupils in their music assembly. Pupils are encouraged to take an active part in assemblies, either by answering questions which clarify their own thoughts or by voicing their thoughts about aspects of their own personal development such as self-confidence and the importance of team work. The study of a number of faiths in religious education, as well as Christianity, gives pupils the opportunity to develop a greater understanding of the practices and values promoted by these faiths. Pupils' spiritual development is appropriately promoted through the curriculum, and this is particularly evident in their poetry writing. All classes have a time in which pupils are encouraged to openly discuss their attitudes and values with other pupils and their teacher. Pupils also have the opportunity to visit places of worship such as a synagogue, the local church and the Methodist church.

35. The school's provision for moral development is very good, as noted in the previous inspection. The values that permeate the school's ethos make a major contribution and form the basis for the very good relationships in the school. Pastoral care is considered to be of key importance to all. There are clear expectations of high standards of behaviour and acceptable conduct is effectively promoted through the school's well-implemented policies. A constructive system of rewards and sanctions underpins the rules for behaviour. Religious education makes a strong contribution to pupils' moral development, through stories about the teachings of Jesus and the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their personal experiences. Each week there is a celebration assembly when the good work and personal achievement of pupils receive recognition by the headteacher. There are 'problem boxes' situated in the infant and junior areas of the school that are used by pupils to express opinions and concerns that they have about school. The headteacher talks through each problem with the pupils before the end of the day to help resolve it.

36. Provision for social development is also very good and links with the strength of their moral development. Relationships in and out of the classroom are very good; the pupils are natural, open and friendly with adults. The commitment of the school to fully integrate pupils with special educational needs into everyday life is clearly evident and very effective. Pupils are given many opportunities to show responsibility in carrying out tasks in classrooms and to undertake responsibilities around the school. Older pupils take care of the younger pupils in the playground, play games with them and listen to them read. Year 6 monitors have specific lunchtime duties, such as handing out drinks, checking coats in the cloakrooms and taking the younger pupils to the toilet. Social development is strongly promoted through the support of a wide range of local and worldwide charities such as Help the Aged, Pets as Therapy, and the Cystic Fibrosis charity, 'Jeans for Genes'. Further emphasis on social development is included in the programme for pupils' personal development through work on relationships.

37. The school makes good provision for the pupils' cultural development, through history, music, art, religious education and literacy. Pupils have the opportunity to appreciate the work of well known artists and musicians. In religious education, the pupils learn about a variety of faiths, in addition to Christianity. Visitors invited into school give an added cultural dimension to many areas of the curriculum. These have included visiting authors, theatre groups and visitors from other lands such as India, China and Africa. Pupils have enjoyed visits to a variety of museums and places of interest, including Hever Castle, Bethnal Green Toy Museum, Aklowa centre and the Millennium Dome. The school makes every effort to alert pupils to their historical heritage and to understand the richness of other cultures. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when it was reported that the school should provide further opportunities to recognise and value the contribution of different cultures. of the opportunities provided in other areas of their development, for example, their physical and creative development are too formal and limit the children's development in these areas. The use of the outdoor area is not planned well enough to support the curriculum in a variety of different areas.

38. There is very good provision for pupils' personal development, which includes policies for sex and drugs education. Pupils have regular one to one interviews with their class teacher to discuss the formation of future targets and, in Year 6, interviews are also held with the headteacher.

39. The school's aims and policies for equal opportunities are reflected in the curriculum. All pupils benefit from what the school provides. The needs of high attaining pupils have been identified and teachers address these by providing suitable extension work at the appropriate levels. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is appropriate and closely linked to their targets and individual education plans. Such pupils are given access to the full curriculum

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. The school provides a very safe and caring environment. The welfare of the pupils is paramount to the school and this is appreciated and supported by parents. Not only are there very good systems in place for dealing with accidents and for ensuring health and safety, but the personal welfare of the child is considered at all times. There is a strong listening culture within the school that includes pupils and parents. The use of the "problem box" is very successful. Pupils feel confident in raising a range of concerns both of a personal nature and of interest to groups of children. They and their parents know that by the end of the day, any concerns will have been discussed and sensitively followed up. This level of personal support is excellent and has a very positive impact on the pupils' personal development and in the creation of an environment in which pupils feel confident and respected.

41. The headteacher is the nominated member of staff responsible for child protection. Members of staff have received appropriate training and all are aware of procedures. A Health and Safety Policy is in place and regular checks are carried out by the site manager, governors and headteacher. All staff are involved in providing personal support to the pupils. There are very good systems in place for the midday staff to fulfil their role and to liaise closely with teachers.

42. The excellent relationships teachers have with their pupils and the close communication between staff ensures all pupils are well known and their individual needs are monitored. Teachers keep detailed records of pupils' personal development and regularly review any personal targets set.

43. There are very good systems in place for monitoring and promoting good attendance and the school has noticed a significant improvement in communication from parents regarding absence. All unaccounted absences are followed up on the first morning of absence. Good attendance is recorded and recognised in the award of certificates.

44. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. There is a clear behaviour policy which has been drawn up with the involvement of pupils. This has given them a good awareness of the rationale for the rules and policy and results in their very good behaviour. The expectations regarding behaviour extend to all activities within school and the policy is consistently applied throughout. Class teachers monitor behaviour in the first instance and more serious matters are referred to the headteacher. Bullying is dealt with quickly.

45. The school has made very good progress in developing assessment procedures since the last inspection and has responded well to the key issue.

46. Procedures for tracking pupils' attainment and progress are good. Teachers use a variety of tests to check pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science during and at the end of each year. Results of tests are analysed to identify weaknesses and effective measures taken to address these. This has had an impact on the delivery of the curriculum shown in the raising of standards. Teachers make regular and in some classes very detailed assessments of pupils' understanding and skills in specific topics against a range of criteria in all the areas of the curriculum at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. However, these are used inconsistently to inform planning as the relevant boxes are not always completed and there is no system in place to ensure that comments made are carried through into the planning stage of the curriculum. Pupils in parallel classes are not always assessed against the same criteria for specific topics, which makes it difficult to influence the curriculum planning for a whole year group.

47. Assessments for the children in the Reception class are good for English and mathematics. These are rigorously assessed and recorded with all staff members able to contribute. However, for creative development, knowledge and understanding and physical development there are insufficient assessments made to ensure the needs of all pupils are met within the planned curriculum.

48. Individual pupils are very aware of their own learning and what they need to do to improve both personally and academically. The school's emphasis on target setting with pupils has a very positive effect on the learning environment and on the pupils' recognition of their own achievement. Regular reviews of academic and personal targets enable pupils to talk about their improvement and encourage them to continually review their work. The marking policy is fully implemented and in some instances is meticulously carried out. Pupils respond positively to the comments made by teachers and appreciate the value placed on their work.

49. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early in their school life and are accurately assessed. They are given suitable work and, where applicable, good quality education plans are drawn up by the special needs co-ordinators in partnership with class teachers, parents and the pupils involved. These plans are reviewed each term and new and appropriate targets set. The school has no statemented pupils on roll. The statutory requirements of the special educational needs Code of Practice are fully met.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The school works hard to encourage parents to be active in the life of the school and this was the finding of the last inspection report. Since then the school has introduced several initiatives to improve communication and now has a very effective partnership with home.

51. Parents are very supportive of the school and have a great deal of respect and admiration for the staff. They particularly appreciate the good teaching and high level of care and personal support given. Nearly all parents at the meeting and in reply to the questionnaire feel comfortable in approaching the school to discuss any concerns.

52. The strong support for the school is indicative of the importance placed by the school on creating a true partnership with home. The school has very effective links with parents and actively encourages their involvement in the school not only as helpers and fund raisers but also in shaping the policies and in working with their children. As a result the impact of their involvement on the work of the school is excellent. Many parents help in classes on a regular basis, for example with reading and information technology. The school gives clear guidance on their role and has provided training for them, for example, on listening to children read. This help is much appreciated and contributes to pupils' learning. Parents also help in all aspects of school life, for example running the chess club, fund raising and providing support on visits. Parents have been very active in supporting the development of the library.

53. The school encourages parents to be involved in their child's learning. The Family Literacy Group has provided a very useful forum to develop parents' involvement with their children in the infants, and parents expressed positive views about the course. Many parents provide good support to their children, for example in helping provide resources to support lessons.

54. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed about their child's progress and are closely consulted and involved in all decisions made and targets set. The school actively encourages parents to be involved in the provision to maximise the progress made by their child.

55. A very small number of parents feel that they do not receive enough information about their children's progress but the inspection finds that, overall, the quality of information to parents is good. Class teachers provide useful information at the start of the year about what is to be covered in subjects and how parents might help at home. The school has also held evenings to keep parents informed about developments such as the numeracy and literacy strategies. Individual consultation evenings are held twice a year at which the child's progress is discussed and targets reviewed. The written annual reports meet requirements and are detailed for English and mathematics but there are inconsistencies in the reporting on progress in other subjects. There is a small amount of information missing from the school prospectus and the governors' Annual Report to Parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The quality of leadership and management is very good and is a considerable strength of the school. The headteacher has a clear vision of how she wants the school to improve and shares these expectations effectively with her staff. This results in all staff being committed to school improvement. As a result of this effective leadership, there has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

57. The quality of teaching has improved because of the headteacher's high expectations of staff and a systematic and effective monitoring programme. The curriculum is now well organised, with clear policies and schemes of work which ensure pupils' skills, knowledge and

understanding are developed in a systematic fashion as they move through the school. Pupils are attaining higher standards in the National Curriculum tests in mathematics and science and the findings of the current inspection show that Year 6 pupils this year are on course to attain above average standards in English which represents significant improvement. The positive ethos of the school identified at the last inspection has been maintained; pupils' views are valued, hard work recognised and high achievement expected. Good assessment systems have been implemented which identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses and contribute to lesson planning to meet their individual needs. The role of subject managers has been extended and they are now performing an effective management role, monitoring pupils' progress and identifying key areas for development.

58. Systems to evaluate school effectiveness are firmly in place, with analysis and evaluation of National Curriculum tests being carried out annually and comparisons made with pupils' prior attainment. The school ensures that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum.

59. The deputy headteacher provides an excellent example to colleagues in her role as a classroom teacher, and provides good support to the headteacher. She has implemented clear systems for assessment, which are being used effectively by most teachers, although the monitoring of these systems has not been rigorous enough to identify inconsistencies of approach in the early years or in science. The management of special educational needs is divided between the headteacher and the special needs teacher and this is very effective. There are good systems in place to identify the needs of these pupils very quickly and they receive high quality provision. The governing body monitors the provision and progress of these pupils very effectively.

60. The governing body is well organised and performs its roles and responsibilities very effectively. Regular visits to see the school in action, effective governing body and committee meetings, plus the close monitoring of individual subjects by specific governors, ensure that the governing body is very well informed and in a good position to identify particular strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, governors are able to prioritise areas for development and plan for these effectively, linking their planning closely to the budget setting process. They monitor their plans very carefully at regular governing body and committee meetings and review them formally once a year to assess their effectiveness.

61. Financial procedures are of high quality and the governing body maintains a very close overview of spending. Specific grants, for example, to support pupils with special educational needs, are used successfully and the governing body evaluates the success of its spending in this area by monitoring the results of these pupils in National Curriculum tests and their movement on and off the special educational needs register. Where major projects are identified, the governing body appoints a project manager to ensure that the work runs smoothly and that the school achieves the best value for money. Although the school carried over a slightly higher than average amount from last year into this year's budget, these funds have been allocated towards supporting long-term premises improvements.

62. The school has high ideals and aims for its pupils and these are very well met. The headteacher, governors and staff work very effectively together to provide high quality provision for pupils. Effective links exist between governors and parents, through the parent governors and through the annual meeting of governors and parents. However, there is a small amount of necessary information missing from the school prospectus and from the governors' Annual Report to Parents.

63. There are enough teachers with suitable qualifications and experience to match the needs of the curriculum. The school has a high number of teaching assistants; they support pupils well and contribute considerably to the good progress which they make. Other support

staff in the school, including the administrative staff, midday supervisors, site manager and kitchen and cleaning staff, provide valuable contributions which ensure that the school runs efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Systems for the appraisal of teachers are firmly in place which identify opportunities for teachers' individual professional development successfully and the school has already begun to move towards implementing a performance management scheme.

64. The school has a good amount of accommodation that is used effectively. The school building is attractive and welcoming and there is a good variety of colourful displays which provide an interesting and stimulating atmosphere. The new library is used well for a variety of purposes and Reception pupils have access to a spare relocatable classroom for creative and role play. The outdoor play area for these children is attractive, but is at present under-used for planned activities to support their physical, personal and social and creative development and to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Extensive playing areas are well used by older pupils. There are enough learning resources to support all subjects and these are used effectively in all classes.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Improve standards in English gained in the National Curriculum test in English at Key Stage 2.

(Paragraphs 4, 90)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

- Ensure that assessment systems for children aged under five are implemented fully and that they inform teachers' planning more carefully for creative, physical and personal and social development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. (Paragraphs 21, 32, 44, 75, 81, 83, 85)
- Ensure that parents receive all necessary statutory information. (Paragraphs 57, 64)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	69
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	22	46	27	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	261
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	39

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	6.0	School data	0.1
National comparative data	5.4	National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	22	26	48

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	22	22	22
	Girls	26	26	26
	Total	48	48	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100	100	100
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	22	22
	Girls	26	26	26
	Total	47	48	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98	100	100
	National	82	86	87

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	17	17	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	15	15
	Girls	13	12	13
	Total	24	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71	79	82
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	15	15
	Girls	13	12	13
	Total	25	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74	79	82
	National	68	69	75

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	231
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	1	1
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.5
Average class size	29

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	142

Financial information

Financial year	1999
	£
Total income	513,698
Total expenditure	515,077
Expenditure per pupil	1,974
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,312
Balance carried forward to next year	34,933

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	185
Number of questionnaires returned	56

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	21	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	34	7	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	45	4	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	52	9	4	2
The teaching is good.	61	34	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	34	13	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	29	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	41	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	46	48	4	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	57	38	2	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	39	4	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	61	5	4	2

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

66. Baseline assessments show that the children have broadly average attainment on entry to the school. They make good progress in English and mathematics, and satisfactory progress in their creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world, personal and social development and physical development. Pupils with special educational needs progress at a similar rate to that of their classmates. This area of the school was not reported on at the last inspection so it is impossible to note any improvements.

Personal and social development

67. Children are on line to meet the nationally recommended levels in this area of their development by the time they are five years old. They are confident in their relationships with adults and talk about a range of subjects. They work well individually and concentrate on their tasks, showing interest in all the activities. However, during role-play they find it difficult to negotiate and agree and need support to solve the situation. Praise and encouragement are used appropriately by all staff and each child's contribution is valued so that the children learn to listen to each other. They treat the equipment and the environment with care and tidy away when asked.

68. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in this area. Children are encouraged to share ideas, talk with and listen to each other, and learn about the celebrations such as Chinese New Year and Christmas and Easter. However, the lack of ongoing assessment in this area means that opportunities are missed to plan well-structured activities to meet the individual needs of children.

Language and Literacy

69. By the time they are five, the majority of children reach standards which are above average for their age. They join in class discussions and converse well with adults. Most are confident about offering their opinions and learn and use new vocabulary. Many can read a few words by sight and use their knowledge of sounds to help them build an unknown word. Children share books regularly at home and at school and the home-school diaries provide a very good link between parents and staff in helping the children to progress. Children make good progress with writing and by the end of the Reception year, many can write a sentence to match their drawing, using their knowledge of letter sounds to spell unknown words. Many children are aware of the use of capital letters for their names and the beginning of sentences, and use full stops appropriately.

70. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is good. The teacher has a good knowledge of the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy and adapts it to meet the needs of young children, introducing games and practical activities to maintain their interest and match their levels of development. Handwriting skills are taught but pupils' work is not monitored carefully enough to ensure they form their letters correctly.

Mathematics

71. The majority of children exceed the nationally recommended levels by the time they are five years old. Through sorting and counting activities they learn to explore mathematical ideas. Following a walk in the school grounds, they sort and classify plants and other objects. They carry out practical and mental tasks at home with support from their parents and make good progress with their counting skills. Most can count up to 20 and backwards from a given number. They use number rhymes and stories to support their understanding of subtraction. Adults encourage children to use the correct mathematical vocabulary which extends their language and understanding.

72. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is good. The children's achievement and progress is recorded carefully. This means that individual children's needs are recognised and activities provided which help them to make good progress. Practical activities are used well to interest and involve children in their learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

73. Children are on line to meet the nationally recommended levels in this area of their development by the time they are five years old. Some aspects of this area are well covered, such as their work on plants and the local environment and children achieve above the expected level. Through themes such as the seasons and living things they learn to explore the world around them and make observations of their experiences. Seeing a caterpillar on their walk engendered great excitement and they related this to "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" story. In their role-play they develop their literacy skills well in different situations. They talk about their "history" and collect photographs of themselves as babies, discussing things they could not do and how they have changed. They talk confidently about experiences in their lives such as birthdays and remember favourite toys they have. During "news time" all children are encouraged to talk about things that happened during the weekend. Some lower attaining and less confident children are encouraged to contribute to this session by the careful and sympathetic handling of the nursery nurse.

74. The quality of teaching in this area is satisfactory overall. In some areas pupils are encouraged to develop their understanding and achieve high standards in an entirely appropriate manner with practical activities and very good language development identified in the clear learning objectives for the lesson. However, insufficient record keeping and assessment in this area means that lessons may not always be planned to meet the specific needs of individual children.

Creative development

75. Children make satisfactory progress acquiring new skills through a range of experiences in art, music, story making and imaginative play. The garden area provides a suitable stage area for them to act out a favourite story and some children recognise the roles of lighting engineers and stage managers, while the second classroom provides ample space for activities such as painting and modelling. They make pictures of favourite stories and develop their cutting skills when making Chinese lanterns. They produce good observational drawings of plants they have grown but there are few opportunities for children to paint freely from their imagination. Planning shows that children are encouraged to play instruments and explore sounds in music lessons with the specialist teacher.

76. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to respond creatively within a range of role play opportunities. In an art lesson, however, good

discussion about the shades and shapes of sunflowers enthused and excited children, but the limited and inappropriate resources hindered their opportunities to paint freely and creatively. Limited assessment in this area means that the planned activities do not always meet the needs of the individual children.

Physical development

77. Children are making sound progress in developing their physical skills. They are learning how to throw and catch balls and showed appropriate co-ordination and balance in their lesson using large apparatus in the hall. In creative activities, pupils are developing sound control of small equipment such as scissors, the computer mouse, pencils and crayons.

78. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is satisfactory overall. Although there are some good opportunities provided for pupils to develop their skills using small tools and equipment, sometimes physical education lessons are too formal and do not involve children enough in practising their skills. The fenced off play area adjacent to the classroom is not being used effectively to support children's physical development.

ENGLISH

79. Standards in Year 2 are well above those found in most schools. This is confirmed by the results of the 1999 National Curriculum test results. Over the past four years, standards have been consistently high although there was a slight dip in reading in 1998. The findings of this inspection are that these high standards will be maintained this year. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection when standards in English were found to be generally average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in English.

80. By the age of seven, pupils attain well above average standards in speaking and listening. Many are confident speakers and, by the end of Year 2, pupils answer questions in detail, make useful contributions to class discussions and offer opinions willingly. For instance, after listening to the story of Elmer, pupils put forward their own ideas of how the story line could be improved. The majority of pupils listen carefully and productively to their teachers and to each other's contributions, both in whole-class sessions and in their group work in literacy.

81. At the end of Year 2, standards in reading are well above average. Pupils handle a range of books confidently and have a good understanding of their organisation. Most pupils read their texts accurately and fluently and employ a good range of strategies to tackle unfamiliar words. They read with obvious enjoyment and are able to recount stories in detail. Higher achieving pupils are confident in talking about their reading experiences and preferences.

82. Pupils' writing at the end of Year 2 is above average. Most pupils convey meaning in simple sentences and sequence them correctly to make stories or descriptions of a good length for their age. The range and quality of pupils' writing, including the use of punctuation and spelling, is good. They write in different styles and for different purposes, such as letters, diaries, poems and story settings. The work of many pupils shows an adventurous choice of words, as for instance when writing about their visit to the Millennium Dome or when completing the end of a story about Dogger. The range of their vocabulary is generally good and they contribute well to sessions in literacy which focus on building word structures. For example, pupils give a clear explanation of the use of 'ly' as a suffix and incorporate words such "lovely" and "slowly" in their writing to produce more complex sentences. Higher achieving pupils are able to make simple notes from non-fiction text such as posters and use the notes in their subsequent writing. Most pupils are using a neat consistent joined style of handwriting by the age of seven.

83. The inspection findings indicate that pupils in Year 6 are on course to reach above average standards this year. This judgement represents a considerable improvement on the 1999 test results for 11 year olds, which showed standards to be below average in English. The previous inspection in 1996 judged standards to be average, with some examples of very good attainment. Over the years from 1996 to 1998, standards have been rising steadily and by 1998 pupils' standards in English were very high. As a result of the drop in standards in 1999, the school adapted the delivery of the National Literacy Strategy in Year 6 and developed a programme to address the pupils' under-achievement in writing. Initiatives such as increasing the time given to sustained writing; booster group activities and an increase in comprehension activities have had a positive impact on standards.

84. By the age of 11, pupils attain above average standards in speaking and listening. Many pupils readily speak in discussions, talk confidently and offer ideas with clarity. They have an extensive vocabulary, which they use with understanding and maturity. This was evident in a Year 5 literacy lesson on poetry, when pupils referred to the imagery, structure and syllable pattern that had been used by a pupil in her poem. Their speaking and listening skills make a significant contribution to their progress in other subjects.

85. Overall, standards in reading are above average. The majority of pupils read fluently and accurately from a range of texts. They read independently, follow instructions and access information from a wide range of source material. Pupils show clear preferences for specific books and authors and are equally enthusiastic about reading whether engaged in poetry, story books or non-fiction books. Their understanding of the deeper meaning of texts develops well as they move through the school. Most pupils know how to make reference to subjects in the library, use contents and indexes correctly and use these skills effectively to support their learning in other subjects. By Year 6, many pupils are developing the ability to skim and scan text in order to research for information more efficiently.

86. Pupils' writing at the end of Year 6 is above average, with some very good examples of poetry writing. Pupils write for a wide range of purposes and audiences, such as imaginative story writing, note taking, letters, autobiographies, film reviews, play scripts and poetry. Many pupils write in an organised way, sequence ideas and use a wide range of vocabulary. Their writing is often thoughtful and imaginative and shows an increasingly adventurous choice of words that are used to very good effect. This was particularly evident in poetry writing in a Year 6 lesson. Pupils make good progress in punctuation and use more grammatically complex sentences as they move through the school. They divide their writing into paragraphs and use appropriate connectives to link one paragraph to another. Their spelling is generally satisfactory, although some still make careless spelling errors. Most pupils plan, draft and revise their writing effectively. By Year 6, the pupils write legibly in a fluent, cursive style.

87. At both key stages, standards in literacy reflect those found in English. The development of literacy skills across the curriculum is very good. Younger pupils label and annotate diagrams in science and geography. In history and religious education, they show good use of vocabulary in their writing. Older pupils write as newspaper reporters in the time of the Romans and in the more formal style of writing for a museum guide book. Across the curriculum, pupils use specific subject vocabulary effectively to communicate their ideas.

88. Overall, the quality of teaching and the quality of learning in English are good at both key stages. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. A significant feature of teaching is the skilful use of questions that challenges pupils and extends their learning. The very clear planning and sharing of learning intentions with the pupils ensure they all know exactly what they are expected to learn from the lesson. The very good relationships between pupils and teachers enable all pupils to feel confident and valued in the classroom. Strengths of the teaching

in English were well illustrated in a Year 6 lesson in which pupils were looking at 'themes' of books. The teacher immediately involved and engaged the pupils' interest with her own knowledge of, books, such as 'Goodnight Mr Tom' in order to increase their understanding of abstract nouns and short phrases. The teacher's confident presentation, clear explanations and lively pace inspired and motivated the pupils to learn. By the end of the lesson, the pupils had made very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of a main theme that can run through a story and had planned their own stories around such diverse themes as "conflict" and "stress." This was the result of detailed planning, high expectations, and the effortless management and control of the class in which effective learning was made possible.

89. In lessons where teaching is weaker, although still satisfactory, the management of pupils' behaviour and responses is not always effective and has an adverse effect on the pupils' concentration in whole-class sessions

90. The curriculum in English is very broad, well balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The school has a clear policy and together with the National Literacy Framework and the use of a commercially produced scheme of work, ensures progression in the teaching of skills and knowledge. The format of the National Literacy Strategy is well established and teachers are confident in managing its different components. Assessment procedures in English are good and appropriately linked to improving pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject. Good use is made of individual targets in literacy to ensure there is a good level of challenge for all pupils. Homework is used effectively across the school to reinforce and extend class work. The quality of marking, at times, is exemplary and not only contains evaluative comments and the next goals for learning, but provides a real sense of value and appreciation of the pupils' work.

91. The subject manager is well qualified and has a very clear understanding of her role. She provides very good leadership and has been instrumental in improving pupils' standards in English in Year 6. Her monitoring role in classroom observation, planning and sampling pupils' work is well developed to enable her to have a good overview of the subject and give professional guidance to other teachers. The literacy governor has also undertaken the monitoring of literacy throughout the school. Targets for the development of literacy are appropriate and include assessing the effectiveness of the resources purchased and continuing to develop book areas in the classrooms. Resources in English are good and each year group is adequately equipped with a suitable range of books to support the literacy hour. Since the previous inspection, a new library has been built. This is spacious and used well to teach specific library skills to the pupils. Feedback is sought regularly from the parents on a range of issues. For example the Family Literacy Group, who have been operating a twenty week course in the school, ask for written and verbal feedback from the parents every half-term. Training sessions have been offered to parents who are interested in hearing pupils read in school on a regular basis, and to date, forty parents have attended. Information technology is used appropriately in English to develop pupils' word processing and research skills. Displays throughout the school are used well to celebrate the pupils' achievements in English.

MATHEMATICS

92. The results of the 1999 national tests for seven year olds showed very high standards. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together, the performance of pupils was above the national average, although in 1996 and 1998 the standards achieved fell below the national average. The school's 1999 test results for 11 year olds show that pupils' attainment was above the national average. The trend in results over the past four years is slightly above the national trend. In all years, with the exception of 1998, standards were above the national average. There is no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys at age seven or 11.

93. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in Year 2 are on course to maintain the very high levels of previous years. Year 6 pupils are on course to reach standards above the national average with nearly half the pupils achieving at a higher level. This is a good improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged to be average. The school is intent on raising standards even further for all its pupils and the booster classes in Years 5 and 6 are having a good effect on increasing pupils' achievement. There are plans to target more able and talented pupils and introduce them, where appropriate, to the mathematics curriculum for secondary age pupils.

94. By the age of seven pupils understand the language of number, have a very good knowledge of place value to at least 100 and can quickly recall addition and subtraction facts to 20. More able pupils can mentally add two digit numbers, such as twenty-eight and seventeen, accurately. Pupils recognise and name a wide variety of two- and three-dimensional shapes such as squares, triangles, octagons, cubes and pyramids and have learned some of their properties. They have a good understanding of reflective symmetry and can work accurately with money in shopping situations, calculating change from a pound. Pupils know the days of the week, the months of the year and can tell the time in hours. Higher attaining pupils know a half and a quarter past each hour and a few pupils can tell the time using hours and minutes. Pupils successfully collect data on subjects such as birthdays of classmates and display them correctly in a bar chart.

95. By the age of 11 pupils have a good understanding of place value to at least a thousand, with more able pupils confidently handling numbers and computations to a million. Pupils can accurately add, subtract, multiply and divide such numbers with the majority of pupils working to at least two decimal places. They use correct mathematical vocabulary and have a good mental recall of a range of number facts including multiplication tables. Pupils understand the relationships between fractions, decimals and percentages and can convert one to another. They have a good knowledge of angles and can measure and construct them to the nearest degree using a protractor. Data handling is particularly well understood by pupils. They can collect data, for example from test results, and display it appropriately. As they have a good understanding of the range, mode and median, pupils can interpret their findings and draw well-informed conclusions. Pupils are able to use information technology to help them in their work and produce computer-generated graphs from data they have entered on a spreadsheet.

96. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In all lessons the teaching is at least satisfactory with seventy per cent of teaching being good or very good. This good teaching has a significant positive impact on all pupils' learning as they progress through the school. The teaching of basic numeracy skills is very good throughout the school. Teachers have a good understanding of the National Numeracy Strategy and are implementing it confidently and effectively. Lessons closely follow the recommended structure with appropriate amounts of time allocated to the different parts of each lesson. Every lesson commences with a brisk mental or oral session that, in the best lessons, fully involves all the pupils and gives them opportunities to explain and discuss the strategies they employed in finding the correct answer. Lessons are

planned carefully with clear objectives that are appropriately shared with pupils at the start, to help them focus on the learning intentions and make good progress. This was clearly seen in a Year 2 class where pupils were learning to tell the time. The teacher told the pupils exactly what they were expected to learn during the lesson, constantly reminded them of the aims of the activities and checked on their progress at the end. Teaching assistants are often used effectively to support individuals and groups of pupils, record their achievements and make notes to help keep the teacher informed of the progress of the pupils they are supporting. On many occasions teaching assistants support pupils with special educational needs and due to the good support they give, such pupils learn well and make good progress. Teachers explain work carefully and ensure, through careful questioning, that all pupils fully understand what to do during individual or group activities. Pupils willingly ask or answer questions and often make valuable contributions to class discussions. Teachers manage their pupils well and create a calm and purposeful working atmosphere in their classrooms that helps pupils to concentrate on their work, free from intrusive interruptions. Pupils respond well to this and behaviour in lessons and attitudes to learning are always at least satisfactory and frequently very good. A particularly good example was seen in a Year 6 class where pupils were interpreting data. The teacher encouraged the pupils to make sensible decisions in pairs. This they did in a very mature manner, supporting each other and considering a range of options to explain their conclusions.

97. The co-ordinator gives good leadership in the subject and supports her colleagues well. She has led training sessions to familiarise teachers with the National Numeracy Strategy, monitors their planning and has sampled pupils' work to assess standards and ensure that all aspects of the subject are covered. Teaching has been monitored by the co-ordinator and the numeracy governor to check that the structure of lessons and the delivery of the numeracy session are of a consistently high standard throughout the school. Assessment procedures are good and teachers keep useful records of pupils' achievements to help them set suitable individual targets. Test results are carefully analysed to identify specific aspects within the subject that would benefit from further input and thus inform future planning. The school intends to review the provision and identify areas for improvement to raise standards even higher.

SCIENCE

98. Analysis of the 1999 National Curriculum test results of pupils at the age of seven and 11 years old show that standards were above average. In 1999 no Year 2 pupils achieved Level 3 because teachers were insecure in their assessments. However, additional training and support have improved teachers' confidence in assessment and planning which has enabled a good proportion of current Year 2 pupils to achieve at the higher level.

99. By the age of seven, pupils make relevant predictions when carrying out their experiments and think carefully about variables which may affect their results. For example, pupils predicted lighter vehicles would travel further in the playground than heavier ones and adjusted their hypothesis in the light of their experiences and suggested several plausible reasons why they were wrong; they considered the effects of the surface and the reasons why different wheels could not move freely on it. All pupils recognise the importance of exercise and its effects on their body. They sort and classify plants using a range of criteria such as colour, shape or texture, and are able to decide on their own criteria. They experience the growth of plants as seeds and bulbs and use the correct vocabulary to describe the different parts. They have a good knowledge of the names of and can describe different materials such as paper, wood, textiles, glass and plastic.

100. Standards of work seen at Key Stage 2 indicate that standards this year are above average. Pupils are secure in their understanding of fair testing and are able to consider variables when devising an experiment. They measure accurately using a variety of instruments

and understand the different calibrations that may be involved, such as on a Newton meter. They have a good knowledge of the life cycles of plants and humans and understand the need for classifying the wide variety of living things. They classify rocks into their basic visual properties and discover through secondary sources about their origins. They know the conventions of writing out the results of their experiments and present their work neatly in appropriate tables and charts that they analyse to reach their conclusions.

101. The quality of teaching and learning for all pupils, including those with special needs, is good. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of science, which is supported by the current scheme of work. They teach the basic skills of science well and incorporate literacy and numeracy in meaningful tasks. They have very high expectations of their pupils in behaviour and the presentation of their work and make these clear in all lessons so that most pupils present their work in a scientific manner. Teachers manage their pupils very well and the quality of the relationships enables pupils to maintain their concentration and develop their independent thinking. Resources are used well at both key stages to support pupils' learning and, where health and safety may be an issue, it has been considered carefully by teachers and pupils are taught rules of safety in dealing with items such as hot water and hooks on weighing equipment.

102. The curriculum covers the full range of the National Curriculum and is being reviewed in the light of the new requirements. It makes a very good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and teachers make firm links to other subjects, such as design technology. The use of computers at present is limited but is being reviewed in terms of requirements and staff confidence. Collaborative work in pairs and groups makes a good contribution to the pupils' social development and they share results, equipment, and help each other well.

103. Teachers assess pupils regularly in the topics covered. However, pupils in parallel classes may not always be assessed on the same skills or areas of knowledge. This means that it is difficult for teachers to analyse their results sufficiently to make firm decisions about the development of the curriculum or the needs of particular groups of children. At the end of Key Stage 1, the teacher assessments for seven year olds in two separate classes do not correlate sufficiently for firm judgements to be made about the overall levels of achievement for these pupils, and provide insufficient guidance for teachers to plan the Year 3 curriculum.

104. Leadership and management of the subject are good and the co-ordinator has appropriate plans in place to meet the needs of the new curriculum. Resources have been reviewed and are well organised. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have risen as a result of the quality of teaching and pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in all the attainment targets.

ART

105. Pupils reach average standards in art which reflects the findings of the school's previous inspection. Pupils at both key stages receive a broad range of experiences which focuses effectively on the teaching of specific skills, such as painting, observational drawing and printing. They are also introduced effectively to a range of artists' work and encouraged to respond to these in their creative writing or in their own pictures. Pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in the subject.

106. By the time pupils are seven, they combine different materials successfully in their pictures of monsters, using paint and pasta. Careful colour mixing skills are taught, for example, through close examination of a seaside painting of Southwold, when pupils are encouraged to look at the colours of the pebbles and represent them in patterns. Pupils show satisfactory drawing skills in their observations of plants in science. By the time they are 11, pupils show confident use of paint in their portraits of one another, in the style of Hilliard. Skills in colour mixing are developed successfully as pupils move up the school and, by the time they are in the oldest class, they are able to use a range of colours and shades effectively in their work. They show appropriate skills in line drawing in their studies of "Ophelia" by Millais, when they are given one half of the painting and have to sketch the other in the same style. Detailed observational drawings of cut fruit provide a good basis for their collages using a variety of fabrics.

107. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, a scheme of work has been implemented, which provides teachers with clear guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding to be taught as pupils move through the school. Although art is often taught as a separate subject, which ensures that the scheme of work is covered, it is often linked to other subjects and pupils are able to practise their skills in different contexts. For example, pupils in Year 1 are studying "The Seaside" this term and their work in painting and clay has supported their overall understanding of the topic well. The time spent on art has been reduced since the last inspection because of the school's efforts to improve standards in literacy and numeracy and consequently, there are few opportunities for pupils to engage in more imaginative or creative art work, where they choose their own materials.

108. The co-ordinator provides sound leadership and is clear about how she wants the subject to develop in the future. She has already begun to review plans so that provision in September fits in with new national recommendations. She manages her budget efficiently, ensuring that there are enough resources available to teach the subject. She monitors the development of the subject and the progress the pupils make through the school successfully. There is good provision within art to develop pupils' cultural knowledge when they study the work of a wide range of artists. They also have the opportunity to enjoy the work of one of their teachers which is displayed in the library. Their social development is also fostered effectively through good collaborative work, for example, in a Year 3 lesson, where pupils work together in groups to form collective judgements on a variety of paintings.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

109. During the inspection there were no opportunities to see the subject taught and judgements have been based on pupils' work in displays and books, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils.

110. By the time pupils are seven years old and 11 years old respectively, the standards they achieve are average and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in developing their skills and understanding the process of designing. By the age of 11 they know about joining materials in different ways using triangular corners and

hinges and they use a variety of materials such as wood, paper and card to make strong frameworks for building Tudor houses and facades. By the time they are seven, pupils design a vehicle using paper, card and wood. The pupils understand the process of designing and talk about changes they might make to improve their design. They use the correct vocabulary to describe and plan details. All pupils plan their designs making detailed drawings and carry out their plans with a high degree of finish and presentation.

111. The curriculum gives all pupils the opportunities to investigate different materials, joining and fastening techniques, and they evaluate the effectiveness of existing products. The subject makes a good contribution to other subjects such as history and science and a strong contribution to literacy and numeracy. Pupils measure accurately, having planned their designs using detailed drawings. They write up results, often using tables to sort and analyse their findings and their literacy skills are developed further when they plan and evaluate their work. In Years 3 and 4 pupils make books for younger readers and design pop-up books, having first investigated different mechanisms to make the characters move. Teachers make appropriate assessments of the skills pupils develop that are used to inform end of year reports.

112. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The school is planning for the development of the subject in the light of the new curriculum. Resources have been reviewed and are well organised and stored safely. Improvement since the last inspection is good, as the scheme of work provides effective support for the teaching of skills and builds soundly on pupils' previous experiences.

GEOGRAPHY

113. By the time pupils are seven, they achieve standards in geography which are above average. By the time they are 11, standards are broadly average. Standards in the infants have risen since the school's previous inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress.

114. By the age of seven, pupils use geographical terms with confidence as they compare the natural and human features of Benfleet with those of the Isle of Struay. They locate and name the main continents on a map of the world and compare the similarities and differences between their own street to that of a street in Delhi. In their study of seaside resorts they locate Spain, Cyprus and Majorca on a map in a travel brochure and collect information about them, such as the weather, places to visit and the entertainment available. In Year 1, pupils draw pictures of buildings on a road map and acquire the technical language to describe different types of houses.

115. By Year 6, pupils achieve good standards in some aspects of geography but overall, their achievement is broadly average. Good work was seen in pupils' work on rivers and weather. For instance, they understand that the rain wears the world's deepest valley in the Himalayas away and that in Africa the mild tropical weather wears away the slopes of Kilimanjaro. Most pupils have a clear understanding of how to identify physical land features by interpreting map symbols. On a map of the world, they mark and name the main oceans, rivers and mountains. However, their skills in advanced map work, such as using four-figure grid references to locate geographical features are less well developed.

116. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are good. Strengths in the teaching of geography and its effect on learning were evident in a Year 6 lesson on mountain weather. The work was well organised and managed, so that the pupils knew exactly what was expected of them. The clear instructions and explanations, high expectations and good use of time engaged the pupils and enabled them to succeed. Good discussion and questioning extended their understanding of mountain weather conditions and the opportunity to use secondary sources of

information increased not only their geographical knowledge, but also their literacy skills. Where teaching is only satisfactory, teachers spend too much time directing pupils' work, leaving limited opportunities for independence.

117. The policy and scheme of work provides an appropriate overview of the subject and sufficient detail to support teachers in their planning. There are good links with other subjects, such as history, literacy, art and science, but in general, insufficient use is made of the pupils' numeracy skills. The subject manager is well informed and provides good leadership in the management of both geography and history. The curriculum is enriched by visits to places of interest, such as Tilbury Power Station, Benfleet Plotlands and Aklowa, where pupils experience the culture of Africa.

HISTORY

118. Standards in history are above average both in the infant and junior departments. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. These findings represent an improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were reported as average.

119. By Year 2, most pupils have a good sense of chronology for their age and use a range of words associated with the passing of time. Younger pupils have constructed a time line from 1910 to 2000 and matched the dates with pictures of teddy bears, thus developing an early knowledge and understanding of chronology. They make simple observations about different Victorian household objects and compare them with more recent developments. They find out about seaside holidays in the past by looking at postcards from 1950 and 1970 and compare them with holidays in 1990. By Year 2, pupils have a good knowledge of the lives and times of some historical characters, such as Florence Nightingale and Samuel Pepys and understand why their lives were significant. They recognise why events happened, such as the Great Fire of London and Gunpowder Plot, and what happened as a result.

120. By Year 6, pupils have an increasing depth of factual knowledge and understanding of Ancient Egypt, life in Tudor times, the Romans and aspects of their own local history. They have gained a good insight into the way that people lived at different periods and the important events that shaped their lives. They know about ancient Egyptian beliefs of life and death and use the associated specialist vocabulary, such as, 'canopic jars' and 'the scales of Anubis' when designing a guide for a museum.

121. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are good at both key stages. Pupils' work shows that teachers have a secure understanding of what is appropriate for pupils to know. They plan lessons carefully and create varied and interesting opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and to record their work. Teachers in Key Stage 2 show confidence in teaching the subject, use appropriate vocabulary, focus well on historical skills and tell stories that bring history alive. They develop pupils' interest in the subject and enable them to enjoy being young historians. Strengths in the teaching of history and its effect on learning were evident in a Year 5 lesson about the ancient Egyptians. The teacher skilfully led the discussion on the Ancient Egyptians' beliefs about death and developed the pupils' learning well by constantly asking searching questions. She had effective strategies for involving all pupils and, within a secure and supportive environment, the pupils felt at ease in asking for further explanations of points raised in the lesson. By the end of the lesson, pupils had gained a secure knowledge and understanding of the mummification process and were confidently using postcards, books and information technology to search for information that could be included in a museum guide. Teachers make good use of relevant resources to stimulate and develop pupils' learning in the periods of history they study. Pupils show great interest in history and discuss their knowledge and understanding with enthusiasm.

122. A sound policy and scheme of work ensures that teachers are well supported to teach the subject. The subject is linked well to other subjects, such as art, religious education, literacy, geography and information technology. For example, pupils' study of the life of Robert Drake was linked well with religious education. The study of Ancient Egypt was enhanced by the opportunity to find information from books and from CD-ROMs and linked to developing their observational drawing skills when sketching artefacts. The subject manager is knowledgeable and has a clear understanding of her role. She has an appropriate overview of teachers' plans and of pupils' learning. Resources for the subject are good with a good range of artefacts and videos that link well with the topics taught and some good quality books to support the pupils. The curriculum is enriched by a number of visits that include Colchester Castle, Hever Castle, Bethnal Green Toy Museum and Braintree Museum.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

123. Attainment in information technology is in line with national expectations for seven and 11 year olds. This matches the judgement of the last inspection. By the age of seven, pupils use computers competently for word processing and change the size, style and colour of the font to present their work attractively. They collect data about their classmates such as the number of pets they own, input the data and print it as a bar chart or pictogram. Pupils use graphics effectively to create their own pictures. A particularly good example of this is the striking artwork, produced in a Year 2 class in the style of Lowry, where pupils had used a graphics program to draw industrial buildings and add smoke using a spray can effect. Pupils program a robot to follow a set of simple commands and understand the importance of putting in the commands in a logical sequence to achieve the desired results. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactory levels for their capabilities.

124. By the time pupils are 11, they have developed their word processing skills satisfactorily and use them to produce reports and text, often in other subjects such as history and science. They are familiar with the main toolbar functions in a word processing program and can spell check, edit, save and print their work with confidence. Many pupils, however, are slow at typing in text and this limits their output in the time available for using the computers. Pupils use CD-ROMs, books and the Internet for their research work and are able to compare the effectiveness of each of these in providing relevant and useful information. Pupils manipulate graphics successfully to model commercial products such as sweet wrappers and keys. They create spreadsheets and print the data in a variety of appropriate ways. Younger pupils in Year 3 are writing and sending e-mails to another Year 3 class in a school in Middlesex.

125. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. As the number of computers in the suite is insufficient for a whole class to work at the same time, teachers are rarely able to have any direct effect on the quality of learning during these lessons. Teachers have to explain to pupils in the classroom what they are to do and then the pupils go in groups to the computer suite with a teaching assistant to try the tasks for themselves. Many of the teaching assistants have been well trained and have a good level of expertise in the subject, give useful support to pupils and have a positive impact on their learning. They keep careful notes of pupils' achievements and share the information with the teacher at the end of the session. Teachers organise plenary sessions at the end of lessons so that pupils can share their learning with the class. This was particularly effective in a Year 5 class where the pupils reported back to the class about the problems they had encountered when searching the Internet for information. Every class is timetabled for a morning or an afternoon in the computer suite with a teaching assistant allocated to them. This time is generally used well although in some lessons only a few of the nine computers were in use as the groups of pupils sent by the teacher were small. Pupils give each other good support and work together in pairs and independently with good concentration and

interest. The computers installed in classrooms were only in use occasionally during the inspection to enhance learning and enable pupils to practise and improve their skills.

126. At present the school is trialling a new scheme of work to ensure that all aspects of the subject are thoroughly taught as pupils move through the school. Resources to support this scheme are being purchased and some, such as a scanner and digital camera, are already in place. The school is fully committed to raising standards in the subject and also to improving the cross-curricular links, particularly those with literacy and numeracy

MUSIC

127. Pupils reach average standards in music by the age of seven and above average standards by the time they are 11. This reflects the school's continuing high emphasis on the subject since the last inspection when standards were also above average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress, particularly during their time in the juniors.

128. Seven-year-old pupils sing pleasantly during assemblies and know a range of different songs. They compose simple sequences on chime bars and perform these confidently in front of the rest of the class. They listen to pre-recorded music effectively and can identify simple repeating rhythm patterns. By the time they are 11, the pupils have a very good musical knowledge; for example, they can play simple melodies from standard musical notation and use a range of musical vocabulary correctly; they know how arpeggios are formed and can recognise these in pieces of music. They are able to evaluate one another's compositions, giving constructive advice on how they could be improved. Pupils recognise a range of famous pieces of classical music and can describe the characteristics of various composers' work. Pupils' singing in assembly is very tuneful and their rendition of the school song very sensitive.

129. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The school employs a specialist teacher who takes every class once a week. Very good knowledge of the subject enables the teacher to plan well-structured lessons and transmit key information effectively to the pupils. She has high expectations of the pupils, providing them with challenging activities which extend their learning successfully.

130. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator who takes a very active role in maintaining the high profile of the subject within the school community. The large number of pupils in the choir provides good evidence of the enthusiasm which pupils have for music. Regular concerts are performed for parents and the school takes part in local and regional festivals. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development when they listen and respond sensitively to pieces of music, when they work together on their compositions and when they learn about a variety of music from cultures other than their own.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

131. Standards attained in physical education are average in both the infants and the juniors. This is a similar judgement to that of the last inspection. Only dance, swimming and games lessons were timetabled during the inspection but, from looking at teachers' planning, it is clear that all aspects of the subject are covered over time, including athletics and adventurous activities for the older pupils. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactory levels for their capabilities.

132. Pupils in Year 2 use space well in games and dance lessons and are careful to avoid other pupils when moving in the confines of the school hall. They can throw a small airflow ball

with reasonable accuracy to a partner using under and over arm throws. The majority of pupils catch a ball correctly and understand the importance of keeping their eye on the ball during its flight. In dance lessons, pupils develop an awareness of how to link together a sequence of movements in pairs or small groups and can match their movements to the beat of the music. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 can strike a ball with a tennis-type racquet using good technique. They hold the racquet correctly and can use both forehand and backhand strokes to hit a ball over an improvised net. Many pupils can successfully engage in quite lengthy rallies. Over ninety per cent of pupils can swim at least twenty-five metres and are confident in water by the time they leave the school.

133. The quality of teaching and learning is always at least satisfactory with some good and very good teaching observed during the inspection. Teachers manage their pupils particularly well and most use time effectively to keep pupils active throughout lessons. Pupils have a very good attitude to the subject and their behaviour is often exceptionally good. This is particularly the case with the older pupils who listen most attentively to their teachers and respond immediately to any instructions. This has an extremely positive effect on their learning as they remain focused on the learning intentions throughout each lesson. A brisk and appropriate warm up at the start of each games and dance lesson is followed by the main learning activity which is well planned so that pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils dress correctly for lessons and teachers are fully aware of health and safety issues.

134. The curriculum is enriched through a range of extra-curricular activities such as football, tennis and netball. There is also an annual residential school journey for Year 6 pupils to enable them to participate in adventurous activities such as abseiling and various water sports. The school holds two annual sports days that are popular and well attended by parents. Older pupils, both boys and girls, can take part in competitive games against other local schools and the school has enjoyed a good number of sporting successes in athletics and football.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

135. By the ages of seven and 11 pupils achieve above average standards in relation to the local authority's Agreed Syllabus and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. This good progress and the high standards which they reach are related directly to the emphasis the school places on valuing one another's beliefs and ideas.

136. By the age of seven pupils can retell stories from Hinduism and Christianity and talk about the main features of other religions. They are able to talk about right and wrong and recognise the effects of their own and others' actions. They understand the meanings of different symbols relating to religions such as the Star of David, and the cross of Christianity. They realise that some questions are difficult to answer but ask profound questions about God, where he lives and who made Him. They show a genuine and deep interest in other religions asking searching questions, for example, about the place of women in the synagogue.

137. By the age of 11, pupils know about the beliefs of the main religions of the world. They make comparisons between them, recognising that, although the words are different, all religions have their places of worship, special ceremonies and moral teachings and that there are similarities between them. Pupils demonstrate respect for the beliefs of others and ask searching questions about God, and show their understanding of the feelings of others in their discussions of special places and special things.

138. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Teachers' planning is very good and well supported by the schemes of work. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in their behaviour and in the presentation of their work and, through their own behaviour

demonstrate the importance of listening to each other's contributions to discussions. Where the quality of teaching is very good or excellent, teachers use their own experiences to illustrate concepts and encourage the pupils to make a personal response to the subject. Pupils answer and ask questions confidently about facts and personal experiences and observations.

139. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and those of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on their own experiences, for example, when discussing mementoes that are very important to them and how they ensure their safety. They reflect on the importance of the person giving the gift and how this affects the value of the item. They learn facts about other faiths and the resources used support their understanding well. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and personal development.