

INSPECTION REPORT

SHALFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Shalford, Braintree

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114844

Headteacher: Mrs A Hunt

Reporting inspector: David Watson
23494

Dates of inspection: 26 – 28 February 2001.

Inspection number: 189268

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Community
School category:	Infant and Junior
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Church End Shalford Braintree Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Eversden
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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23494	David Whatson	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Mathematics Information and communication technology; Physical education; Special educational needs.	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught?
9115	Terence Clarke	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well is the school led and managed?
20063	Gerry Slamon	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Art; Design and technology; Music.	Foundation Stage How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
10782	Henry Moreton	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Geography; History; Religious education; Equal opportunities; English as an additional language.	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	1
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 PART B: COMMENTARY	
 HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	 6
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
 HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	 9
 HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	 12
 HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	 14
 HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	 15
 HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	 16
 WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	 19
 PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	 21
 PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	 25

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Shalford Primary School is situated in attractive rural surroundings. The school was originally opened in 1874 and has been remodelled and extended since then. The majority of teachers present at the last inspection in 1996 continue to be in post. The governing body has completely changed since the last inspection.

The school is smaller than most other primary schools and has shrunk by ten per cent since the last inspection. There are 89 pupils on roll in four classes from reception to Year 6. All classes have pupils of mixed ages and two classes have children and pupils from two different key stages. There are considerable differences in both the size and the gender makeup of different year groups. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The background of many of the pupils generally matches that of pupils in most other schools. There are no pupils who have English as an additional language or a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils who do have special educational needs (17.3 per cent) is below the national average. Attainment on entry in different years can vary widely; generally it is broadly in line with national expectations. The figure of 30 per cent of pupils joining or leaving the school at times other than the beginning or end of the academic year is high.

The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. Pupils' results in English, mathematics and science are close to the national average. Teaching is good with some very good elements. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy, provides strong leadership for the school. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The school provides a very caring and supportive atmosphere.
- Attendance is very good.
- The quality of learning support assistants is very good and adds considerably to the good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Pupils' moral and social development is very good.
- Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is very good.
- The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good.
- The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage and at the end of Key Stage 2 is good.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Standards in mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Standards in information and communication technology in Key Stage 2.
- The collection and use of assessment information.
- The percentage of good teaching in upper Key Stage 1 and Lower Key Stage 2.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in September 1996. Since the national tests of 1996 standards in English, mathematics and science have fluctuated but have gradually improved. Standards have fallen in physical education and music since the last inspection but risen in geography and history. In spite of the school's efforts, standards in information and communication technology remain below national expectations. The structure of the school development plan has been revised. It now offers a better tool for developing the work of the school and is carefully monitored by the staff and governors. In many lessons time is used well, pupils share in the expected outcomes and most pupils get sufficient challenge. In many cases teachers use assessment information in their planning. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching has improved, but still requires further development. The special needs policy has been reviewed and all staff are now fully involved in supporting pupils with special educational needs. The quality of fiction and non-fiction books has improved as has the pupils' understanding of other cultures and societies. Overall the school has achieved a satisfactory level of improvement since the last inspection. Now that the headteacher is no longer a class teacher, the opportunity for further and rapid school improvement has been created.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	C	E	A	A
Mathematics	C	E	D	D
Science	C	B	E	E

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>average</i>	<i>C</i>
<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>

The underlying improvement in all three subjects over the last three years is masked by the great fluctuations noted in the table above. These swings can be attributed to the difference in groups of pupils sitting the annual national tests. The differences in standards between subjects in the national tests of 2000 is the result of a greater emphasis being placed on English at the expense of other subjects, including mathematics and science. The below average result in mathematics was due in part to a weakness in examination techniques and in science to fewer pupils achieving the higher Level 5. No comparisons of Key Stage 1 results

can be made due to the very small year group of six pupils last year. The school has set appropriate targets for English and mathematics for 2001 and it is likely to achieve them. The targets for 2001 are lower than those published for 2000. This is because the current Year 6 has a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs and those born in the summer. Singing at the school is good, as are standards in geography, history and swimming. Standards in information and communication technology at the end of Key Stage 2 are below national expectations, as pupils have not had enough experience in all elements of the subject.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The great majority of pupils enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are always well behaved. They are polite and courteous to each other and adults. No bullying was observed.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good. Pupils are respectful of each other and attentive to all adults in the school. Personal development is satisfactory. Pupils respond maturely when given the opportunity.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average and pupils arrive at school on time.

The high levels of attendance and very good behaviour are strengths of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
30 lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	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 is good. Of the lessons observed 97 per cent of were satisfactory or better. Thirty-three per cent were good and 23 per cent were very good. Only three per cent of lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. All the very good teaching was seen in the oldest and youngest classes. The teaching of English and mathematics is good. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well, although not all opportunities to use them within the curriculum are fully exploited. The great majority of pupils are taught according to their ability rather than their age. This, coupled with the high quality of support staff and well managed lessons, enables the needs of all pupils to be met. Fun activities, supported by clear educational foci, that build upon pupils' own skills and experiences in the majority of lessons enable all pupils to achieve to their potential. In a minority of classes, teaching pupils according to their age rather than their ability, resulted in a steady pace to the lesson and activities that lacked sufficient challenge for the most able pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum meets the needs of all children under five and of all other pupils. The school provides a wide range of visits and visitors to enrich pupils' experiences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. All teachers and support staff are involved in providing support for pupils with special educational needs so that they make good progress. The quality of intervention offered by the very able learning support assistants is very good and adds considerably to the level of support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Spiritual and cultural development is good and moral and social development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils greatly. Both the formal and informal procedures of ensuring pupils' welfare are particularly good. There are satisfactory procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance, but these need to be extended to track and make predictions for individual pupils as well as for groups.

The school provides many opportunities for parents to work with the school. The quality of moral and social development contributes directly to pupils' good attitudes and behaviour. The caring and supportive education provided by the school reflects the small village school ethos and its aim to 'Work hard, Play fair'.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The caring and supportive leadership provided by the headteacher is strong. She has a balanced view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and how it needs to develop.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The new governors have embraced their roles and responsibilities. They fulfil many of them well. They meet all their statutory duties. Their monitoring of the school provides them with an insight into its strengths and its needs. Their strategic view of the school and an understanding of its effectiveness have yet to be fully developed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school uses a sound range of procedures to assist it in evaluating its performance.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of the resources made available to it. The implications of educational and financial decisions are carefully considered in the light of the needs of the school and the projected falling roll.

The six full-time and part-time teaching staff have an appropriate balance of age and experience. The enthusiastic, experienced and well-trained learning support staff are a valued asset of the school. In many areas resources are good, although there are insufficient up to date computers. The setting of the school is quite beautiful. Overall the accommodation is satisfactory. There is limited storage space, no suite for the teaching of information and communication technology, and the size of the hall poses difficulties for the teaching of gymnastics to the oldest and biggest pupils.

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 enjoy coming to school. • The children are expected to work hard. • Behaviour is good. • The school is approachable. • Teaching is good and pupils make good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how their child is getting on. • The range of activities outside lessons. • The leadership and management of the school. • The closeness with which the school works with parents.

The inspection team agrees with the parents on their views of what the school does well except in relation to pupils' progress. The inspection team concludes that over time at the school pupils make satisfactory progress, although the rate of learning was good in many of the lessons observed during the inspection. However, contrary to parental views, the team judges that a school of this size provides a suitable range of activities outside lessons, that the leadership and management of the school is satisfactory and that the school does work closely with them. The team supports parents' views that the information provided to parents about how their child is getting on could be improved.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The 2000, national end of Key Stage 2 tests results highlighted a significant difference between subjects. The standards achieved in English were well above the national average and well above average for similar schools (based on the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals). The proportion of pupils who gained the expected Level 4 and above in mathematics was below both the national average and that of similar schools. These results were in contrast to the above average results that the school was expecting. The analysis of the test papers indicated that poor examination techniques and a weakness in problem solving robbed pupils of their expected levels. In science, standards were well below average when compared to all and similar schools: the percentage of pupils who gained the expected Level 4 was above the national average, but well below for the number of pupils attaining the higher than expected Level 5. This was due to the underachievement of the more able pupils and the lack of emphasis placed on the teaching of practical and investigative skills that would have helped them achieve well. The greater achievement in English was attributed to the additional support and emphasis given to the subject last year and the good use of literacy skills in other subjects such as geography and history.

2. Key Stage 2 test results have been erratic since the last inspection. However, overall improvement has been similar to the national trend in both mathematics and science and, due to a sudden improvement in 2000, has outstripped the national trend in English. Based on the school's Key Stage 1 results in 1996, pupils who sat the national tests in 2000 made progress at a rate well above average in English, but well below the national average in mathematics and science. Overall, therefore, pupils' progress is satisfactory, and not as the parents believe, good. The success in English is attributed to the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and the use of literacy skills in other subjects. This has, in part, been at the expense of mathematics and science, where the rate of pupils' learning would appear to be well below average. However, the school also has a high mobility rate. On average, only three-quarters of pupils remain at the school for the whole of Key Stage 2. Analysis of school data indicates that those who were educated for the full four years of Key Stage 2 at Shalford made satisfactory progress during the course of their education. The targets set by the school for pupils taking the national tests at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics are likely to be met.

3. Current English standards in Year 6 do not reflect the very high standards achieved in last year's end of Key Stage 2 national tests. In mathematics and science standards are now below national expectations even though the school has addressed the issues that gave rise to the unsatisfactory results in these two subjects last summer. This is because there is a significant difference between the groups of pupils who sat the national tests in 2000 and those sitting them this year. Nearly 30 per cent of pupils in the current Year 6 have special educational needs compared to the 20 per cent last year. Out of those sitting the national tests this summer 50 per cent were born in the summer months. They, therefore, started school later than those born in the autumn months and have, on average, experienced only 19 terms of education as opposed to 21. In Year 6 last year, only 25 per cent of pupils were born in the summer term.

4. The number of seven year old pupils who sat the national tests last summer was six. No statistically valid comparisons can be made between the school and either schools nationally or those of a similar nature. Since 1996, test results indicate that, at the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading and writing have remained broadly the same but improved slightly in mathematics. Inspection findings, however, place current standards in reading and writing above national expectations and in line with national expectations for mathematics and science. Although, in mathematics and science, many pupils were working at the expected Level 2, few were working at the higher Level 3. This was because they were not being given the opportunities to demonstrate or achieve their full potential. Therefore, standards in mathematics and science have remained stable since the last inspection, but those in English have improved. The higher standards in reading and writing are due to the emphasis placed on literacy, especially in the Reception / Year 1 class.

5. Even though there are differences in the number of boys and girls in different year groups there was no difference in their attainment or response during the inspection week. Standards in geography and history across both key stages are above national expectations. This is due to the quality of teaching and good links made between these and other subjects, especially English. At the age of 11, however, pupils do not achieve the expected standards in information and communication technology because they have not had sufficient learning experiences in all the elements of the subject. Standards are in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages in art, design and technology, music, physical education, religious education, and in information and communication technology in Key Stage 1 only.

6. Children enter the reception class with a wide range of attainment, that can vary from year to year. Currently, while some have good speaking skills and a sound general knowledge, others have limited skills in communication, language and literacy. Overall, attainment is broadly average on entry. Because of the consistently good teaching that they receive, most children will achieve or exceed the expectations of the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1 and start the National Curriculum.

7. The link between teaching and learning is very clear. Where teaching is good or very good pupils make at least good progress. Assessment information is used well to match the work to the needs of all pupils and they all achieve well. Elsewhere pupils' satisfactory, or unsatisfactory progress, matched the quality of teaching. In many of these lessons pupils are grouped according to their age rather than their ability and not all pupils' needs are catered for. Parents at the parents' meeting were concerned about the lack of challenge for the more able pupils. The inspection team confirm their views and found that a few pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 were underachieving, particularly in mathematics and science.

8. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress during their schooling due to the high quality of support they receive, especially from the learning support assistants. The quality and use of individual pupils targets is good. However, progress in upper Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 is satisfactory as teachers do not plan their lessons to meet the needs of the full range of abilities in their classes.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' behaviour is very good. Their attitudes to the school, their personal development and relationships are good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved since the previous inspection. The rate of attendance is very good.

10. Pupils' attitudes are good. They enjoy coming to school. Parental questionnaires indicate that most pupils enjoy coming to school. All pupils are enthusiastic when they arrive and they quickly settle down to work. They are proud of their school and are eager to talk about it to visitors. All pupils, from those in the Foundation Stage to those in Year 6, were quick to praise the school and talk about their favourite subjects. Pupils also have good attitudes in the classroom, where they are quick to put their hands up and wait their turn to answer questions. They also enjoy other activities that the school provides, such as the after school craft club. Pupils put a lot of effort into their work: for example, the amount of physical effort that went into many physical education lessons, including the lesson on country dancing, was notable. The amount of physical effort that went into many physical education lessons, including the lesson on country dancing, was notable. Where the teaching was good or very good all pupils were fully involved in their work. They applied themselves well and were proud of their finished work, as evident in their history and geography books. When given the opportunity most pupils enjoy the challenge of stimulating work: able pupils in the Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, applied themselves very well, even when confronted with difficulties in their problem solving.

11. Behaviour throughout the school is very good. Parents are pleased about this aspect of the school. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to adults and always behave in an orderly way. Behaviour is very good at break-times as well as in the hall at lunchtime. There is very little inappropriate behaviour and on the rare occasions when it occurs, teachers intervene quickly to deal with it. There were no exclusions during the previous year.

12. No bullying or oppressive behaviour was observed during the inspection. When asked about it, pupils said that it happens only very occasionally and, when it does, the school deals with it quickly and effectively. Parents, at their meeting, said the same. That pupils behave well towards each other and are happy individuals is very much a part of the school's educational vision. Pupils have a very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others. They listen very well to adults and to each other and respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs. This was particularly true in the religious education lessons, but also in the plenary of many lessons.

13. Pupils' personal development in showing initiative and taking responsibility is satisfactory, when they are given the opportunity to do so. As they grow up through the school, all pupils are given an increasing amount of responsibility. In the youngest classes, pupils are given little tasks to do such as taking the registers back to the office after registration. Older pupils move on to more responsible positions. For example, they ensure that all the pupils who come on the bus are gathered in the hall by the time it arrives at the school to pick them up. In lessons, pupils carry out some good individual work, and support each other during problem solving activities in mathematics. Pupils take the initiative: they make suggestions about collecting for good causes and on ways to improve the quality of the playground. However, there is no school council.

14. Relationships across the school are good between pupils and adults and particularly between each other. All teachers provide very good role models, as do older pupils to younger ones. They work well together in the classroom, in pairs and in groups, willingly sharing ideas and resources, even when they have to wait to use the computer. A good

feature is the way pupils support each other. The older pupils look after the younger ones and help them if necessary. The school consciously promotes the principle that everyone is good at something. So, even when a pupil had difficulty in reading, the other pupils quickly supported him by saying that he was good at art.

15. The attendance level, as at the last inspection, is very good: well above the national average. Unauthorised absence is well below the national average. There was none in the previous reporting year. Pupils arrive at school on time. The very good level of attendance and the prompt arrival of pupils have a positive effect on attainment and learning: pupils are at the school for the start of the teaching day and miss very few lessons, if any, during the course of a year.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The standard of teaching observed during this inspection is good, with many very good elements. Ninety per cent of parents also believe that teaching is good. This is an improvement on the findings of the 1996 report where teaching was judged to be satisfactory. Of the 30 lessons observed, 23 per cent were very good, 33 per cent good and 40 per cent satisfactory. Three per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory, compared to 19 per cent unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. The percentages, however, mask considerable differences between classes. The great majority of very good teaching was in the Year 5/6 class and in the reception/Year 1 class. These two classes accounted for 87 per cent of the very good teaching and 66 per cent of the good teaching in the school. Eighty-three per cent of the satisfactory teaching was in the Year 2/3 and the Year 4/5 classes. There is a clear correlation between the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. In 17 per cent of lessons pupils' made very good progress, in 43 per cent of lessons they made good progress and in 37 per cent of lessons they made satisfactory progress. In only three per cent of lessons was there unsatisfactory progress. Overall, therefore, all pupils were making good progress in the lessons observed. Over the course of their schooling, however, pupils throughout the school only make satisfactory progress at best due to the range in the quality of teaching they experience.

17. Since the previous inspection, the reception class has become part of the new national Foundation Stage of education. Planning is to the new early learning goals. The quality of teaching is good. Staff are calm and friendly in their management of children, who are made to feel valued and confident. The teacher has a very good understanding of the curriculum and of how children of this age learn. Explanations are very clear and questions help children to think. In managing group work, adults give high priority to encouraging language development, and other basic skills to good effect. At the time of the inspection, there were no reception class children identified as having special educational needs. There are good systems for keeping track of each child's progress, and the information is well used when planning future work.

18. In the 56 per cent of lessons in the rest of the school that were good or very good, teachers showed well developed questioning skills that elicited ideas as well as facts from pupils. Pupils are therefore active listeners and learners who, through their explanations, deepen their own understanding and achieve well. In a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson, rapidly asked questions at the beginning of the lesson encouraged pupils to use their knowledge of the four rules of number and quickly solve a wide range of mental problems. Pupils enjoyed

the fast pace of the start of this lesson: it stimulated and engaged. The teacher's careful monitoring of the class ensured that all pupils were asked at least one question. In satisfactory lessons, as in the Year 4/5 lesson on investigating the relationship between odd and even numbers, pupils experienced a more teacher-dominated discussion that encouraged pupils to be passive recipients rather than active learners. Their learning was, therefore, satisfactory at this point of the lesson, and not as good as it could have been.

19. Where the teaching is good and very good, teachers have good subject knowledge, and their lessons are lively and interesting. Teachers' knowledge of Howard Carter, (in Year 5/6) and of mummification, (in Year 4/5) allowed teachers to talk freely of historical concepts of fact and opinion in relation to death rituals. The topic and the high quality of the teaching of it captured pupils' imagination and attention. Lessons are carefully planned and sequenced so that they build on previous learning, and pupils make sound gains in their knowledge and understanding. This was very evident in the reception/Year 1 science lesson. The use of the five senses was carefully built upon to help classify fruit and vegetables.

20. Many lessons were well prepared. Resources were plentiful, except in information and communication technology, and readily accessible, as in the Key Stage 1 mathematics lessons. The aim behind many of the lessons was shared with the pupils, with the result that they knew what they were to do and what they should learn in the lesson. Consequently they were focused in their work made good progress in their learning.

21. Teachers and learning support assistants, with support from the special needs co-ordinator, write the targets for pupils who are on Stages 1 to 3 of the special educational needs register. They review these targets on a termly basis. Whole staff involvement in supporting pupils with special educational needs was a key issue at the last inspection; it has now been fully addressed. Targets are, in the majority of cases appropriate, precise and measurable. The quality of support provided by the learning support assistants is very good. They are always fully prepared for the lesson and well managed by the class teacher. All four assistants are very experienced and all are currently undergoing further training in numeracy and literacy. Their skills and supportive manner for all pupils, and especially those with special educational needs, ensure that pupils make good progress. There was, however, not always a clear link between pupils' targets from their individual education and a teacher's lesson plan. On such occasions, pupils' progress was good rather than very good.

22. For the last two years, teachers have set individual targets for pupils in English and in mathematics for the last year, but not for science. These targets have established an expectation and focused both teachers' and pupils' efforts on achieving them. In the good and very good lessons, teachers continually assessed their class. Teachers' carefully monitoring and regular interventions, especially in the upper Key Stage 2 English and mathematics lessons, provided pupils with guidance and direction, ensured that they all achieved well and enabled high levels of concentration to be sustained. Teachers' assessment of pupils' knowledge, however, was not always good. In the Year 4/5 lesson introducing scanners to the class, the teacher did not ascertain that a few pupils had used scanners at home and did not need to be introduced to the basic procedures covered in the lesson.

23. Teachers in the good and very good lessons used their knowledge of their pupils to teach them according to their ability rather than their age. In the Year 5/6 English and mathematics lessons some less able Year 6 pupils were doing similar work to Year 5 pupils and a few more able Year 5 pupils were working along side the Year 6 pupils. This made a

significant impact on pupils' achievement as the needs of all pupils were met and they achieved their full potential. In many of the satisfactory lessons, planning did not match activities to pupils' ability; it was usually matched to their age. Rates of learning were, therefore, steady due to the lack of both challenge and pupil interest in such activities. In the Year 2/3 lesson on shape, Year 2 pupils were not challenged by the task of making three-dimensional shapes, even though they may have enjoyed it. In this situation, the more able pupils in particular did not achieve their full potential, as they were not given the opportunity to do so. In the unsatisfactory lesson, it was the teaching of pupils by age rather than ability, coupled to the poor use of assessment information, that resulted in the underachievement of many pupils. In particular, the Year 3 pupils' work on the properties of shape was similar to work they covered to achieve Level 2 in the national tests of 2000. They made unsatisfactory progress in that lesson.

24. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well, especially in reception/Year 1. The foundation stones of counting and language were constantly reinforced and built upon. The school has implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well, and this is having an effect on raising standards, particularly in English. Marking is satisfactory overall. Most work is marked and consists of comments that indicate the strengths or weaknesses within pupils' work, or how they can improve. It is, however, on occasions simply ticked and any comments made are cursory.

25. The management of pupils' behaviour is very good and all pupils behave well and are highly responsive. All teachers are explicit about what they expect and give clear instructions. Pupils move quickly and purposefully to their set tasks and settle quickly and eagerly to work. In many classes, relationships were also very good. The most notable feature here was the open and supportive way that children and pupils worked together sharing ideas and thoughts and generally being supportive. By doing this, Year 6 pupils were successful at solving group problems and in the Year 2/3 art lesson, the more proficient plasticine rollers helped their classmates to achieve a more evenly rounded 'worm' effect. In both these instances this support facilitated the good progress of the pupils. The trusting and caring relationships between adults and pupils enabled pupils to openly seek assistance. In the Year 4/5 mathematics lesson on odd and even numbers, the support from the teacher and the learning support assistant ensured that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, overcame their uncertainties, made good progress, and were able to make a contribution to the discussion at the end of the lesson.

26. Parents expressed concern about the amount of homework their children receive. There is a school homework policy that states the amount of time and the basic elements each year group is to receive. In many classes they received some English, mathematics and spellings each week. Reading is also an integral part of homework. The time and range of subjects designated for homework increases as pupils progress throughout the school. The inspection team finds this to be appropriate and the quality of homework set was judged to be good by the inspection team. It was often closely linked to class work and offered suitable extension and reinforcement of lessons.

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

27. The planned curriculum provides a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities that meet statutory requirements for all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The main weaknesses in provision are the lack of a consistent development of practical investigative skills in science and skills in information and communication technology, especially in Key Stage 2. A programme based on the Early Learning Goals for the Foundation Stage prepares children well for the National Curriculum programmes of study at Key Stage 1. Although the time spent in lessons in both key stages meets the nationally recommended teaching time, teachers have been concentrating on developing pupils' literacy skills, at the expense of other subjects. The length of the school day provides the minimum teaching time and is in the lower quartile when compared to the national average. The school is severely constrained in increasing the length of the school day as many pupils travel to school using a public service bus; the times of which cannot be altered by the school. The reduced emphasis on subjects such as music and physical education has meant that some curricular opportunities have fallen since the last inspection. By basing the curriculum planning of many subjects on the recent national recommendations the school has ensured the appropriate coverage of skills and knowledge in most subjects are maintained but that they also reflect the needs of the pupils and the school.

28. Planning for the teaching of basic skills in language acquisition and mathematics in the Foundation Stage is very good. The use of national guidance ensures that children's development in literacy and numeracy builds on what children have already learned. The National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy have been implemented well in Key Stages 1 and 2 and there are signs that they are now beginning to have an impact on standards, particularly in English. The systematic planning for the development and use of pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum is well developed in subjects such as history and geography. Although numeracy skills are used well in science, there is little evidence to suggest their use in a wider range of subjects and they are therefore under-developed.

29. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Due to the school's caring approach and the teachers' knowledge of their pupils, those on the special needs register have good support. Many make good progress towards their individual targets. The learning support assistants are central to the achievement and monitoring of these targets, all of which takes place in class. The majority of the targets are based around literacy and a few on numeracy. In a minority of lessons in upper Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, teachers organise their classes by age rather than ability and make insufficient use of pupil's individual targets. On such occasions pupils with special educational needs only make satisfactory progress.

30. Overall, the school provides satisfactory equality of access and opportunity for all its pupils. There are no significant differences in attainment of boys and girls. The school policy of valuing all pupils - regardless of ability - recognising their strengths and including them in all aspects of school life, ensures that no group or individual is excluded. The opportunities for the great majority of pupils to make good progress in all subjects of the curriculum are enhanced by the good behaviour of pupils in both key stages and, in particular, by the support from the learning support assistants. In a minority of lessons, the most able pupils are given insufficient challenge for them to reach their full potential.

31. The school places appropriate priority on pupils' personal development. Aspects of personal, social and health education are well planned. Sex education and issues relating to drugs misuse are dealt with through the involvement of the health services and the community police officer. The programme ensures that all pupils are made aware of health and safety issues and given accurate facts as part of their preparation for adult life.

32. Many parents were concerned about the range of extra-curricular activities being offered by the school. The inspection team found them to be adequate for a primary school of this size. Activities as football, netball, athletics and a craft club, run by three governors one of whom is a learning support assistant at the school, enrich pupils' experiences and to add to their enjoyment. There are also benefits from good local links, which enhance the curriculum and pupils' sense of community. A good example of this is where pupils were involved in planting trees when the local rubbish tip was being converted into a park for the local people. There are good links with other primary schools through the local federation of schools and cluster groups. This initiative provides training sessions for teachers, which give them a greater insight into the primary curriculum, moderating work and comparing national test results. There is a good partnership with the secondary school to which pupils transfer. Visits from teachers help to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education.

33. Pupils' experiences are also extended through a good programme of educational visits and through visitors to the school. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 benefit greatly from the opportunity of a residential visit, which builds on what they have learned in school, increases their confidence and contributes well to their personal development and sense of achievement.

34. Provision for pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development is good. It has improved since the previous inspection.

35. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Assemblies include an act of collective worship, and there is time for reflection. Displays around the school, such as the different religious celebrations and festivals in the hall, have a positive impact on learning, while pupils also visit local churches. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Pupils are helped to develop a sense of the difference between right and wrong through their part in debate and discussion about school rules and procedures. Staff talk through issues of behaviour with pupils and all pupils are very aware that their actions have consequences for others. The schools' 'blue book' and merit system is well structured and is effective in focusing pupils' thoughts on what is good and bad. Adults in the school provide good role models through their relationships with the pupils. Assemblies often address moral issues such as friendship and forgiveness. The provision for pupil's social development is very good. There are many organised opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of responsibility within the school. Older pupils perform useful tasks to assist in the running of the school: they value being asked to help to look after the younger pupils during 'wet playtimes' and acting as 'escorts' to and from the school bus at the end of the day. There are, however, few opportunities provided where pupils can take the initiative. Pupils are encouraged to take an interest in others, for instance when they raise money for less fortunate children in other parts of the world and when they learn about how the recent floods have affected people in the United Kingdom. The very good provision for pupils' moral and social development makes a significant contribution to the very good behaviour in the school. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. This was a key issue in the last report and has been fully addressed. Pupils are introduced to a range of music through assemblies, and

opportunities are planned so that they learn to appreciate the work of famous artists such as Monet. Teachers emphasise the contribution of a range of cultures, for instance when learning about the major world faiths in religious education. The school provides many opportunities to broaden pupils' cultural development with a wide range of visits and visitors in a number of subjects.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The school cares for its pupils well. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal support, and the educational and personal support and guidance provided for pupils, are both satisfactory.

37. At the time of the inspection there were seven children under the age of five in the Foundation Stage. Arrangements for admission are good and include interviews with parents and visits to the school. As a result, they quickly settle into an environment in which they feel secure, valued and eager to learn.

38. Procedures in place for child protection are in line with those of the local authority and all staff are aware of them. The headteacher is the designated adult and she is well supported by two members of the governing body, both of whom have professional experience in child protection matters. There are very good procedures in place for ensuring pupils' welfare as the school works closely with local agencies. The school follows the local authority's health and safety policy and there is a very good level of governor involvement. All staff have received at least minimal first aid training and all accidents are meticulously recorded. Sick pupils are well cared for, even without the benefit of a school medical room. Consequently all pupils receive their education in a secure, supportive and caring environment.

39. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Registers and all associated records and letters are completed meticulously. The school has very clear and firm practices to ensure good attendance. For example, on pupils' annual reports, absences due to holidays are recorded along with those for sickness. The school has very good procedures in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. It believes that good behaviour should be rewarded. While the behaviour and discipline policy appears to be wide-ranging and complicated, all pupils are able to explain how it works down to the smallest detail. They totally understand and value the merit system for rewarding good work and behaviour and the 'Blue Book' for recording any misdemeanours, including bullying. The outcome of these procedures is the very good behaviour and lack of bullying seen in the school.

40. Children's attainment is formally assessed when they enter the Foundation Stage. The school makes good use of this information to guide planning. Regular and routine assessment procedures are good in the Foundation Stage and are well used to plan appropriate work for children of different attainment. The learning support assistant is heavily involved in keeping good records of children's developing skills; for example, in speaking and listening.

41. In this small school, teachers know their pupils well and are aware of their all their needs, both academic and personal. Good use is made of school records of pupils that are new to the school so that appropriate support, if need be, can be provided as quickly as possible. The 'open door' policy adopted by the school allows parents, and teachers, quickly to broach and resolve issues that may have the potential to hinder a pupil's learning. This is an aspect of the school that many parents are pleased with.

42. Procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment are satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2. Annual reading tests, end of topic tests in mathematics and the use of the optional national tests in Year 4 provide teachers with a basic set of results relating to pupils' attainment and progress. Learning support assistants closely monitor, through individual observations and lesson evaluations, the progress of pupils they support, including those with special educational needs. This, and teachers' assessments are used to set individual targets for pupils in English and mathematics. However, this good practice has not yet been extended to include science. Many of these targets are general in nature and are not used regularly in teachers' short-term planning. The school has plans to introduce optional national tests in Years 3 and 5, to give teachers a greater understanding of what they can expect from individual pupils and to assist them in setting achievable and specific targets as a result.

43. The headteacher and subject co-ordinators closely analyse standardised national tests to identify weaknesses in provision, as in mathematics. The good practice in Year 6 of making predictions of pupils' achievement at the end of the academic year is not yet undertaken for every pupil in the school. Current systems allow predictions for whole year groups to be made, rather than individuals. There is no process or recording system whereby the progress of individual pupils throughout the school is monitored on a year by year basis that clearly indicates what individual pupils had achieved, what was expected of them and what they had actually achieved. This would provide teachers' with the information by which to match activities to pupils of different ability and for the headteacher and governors to monitor the effectiveness of the school more accurately.

44. The school closely follows the guiding principles laid down by the county council in the 'Essex Stages' for special educational needs. Through close assessment, mainly based on teachers' observations, pupils are identified at an early stage. They are entered on to the special needs register, and through termly testing and review, are carefully monitored. Progress towards the targets within individual education plans is checked and then followed by the most appropriate action: from parents, the school or the county.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The parents' views of the school, as measured by those expressed at the parents' meeting and in the answers to the questionnaires are satisfactory. The number of questions in the questionnaires answered positively by 90 per cent of parents or over is an improvement on the views expressed at the time of the last inspection. This is an improvement on the views expressed at the time of the last inspection.

46. Parents were most pleased that their children enjoy going to school, they are expected to work hard, behaviour is good, the school is approachable, teaching is good and pupils make good progress. They are less happy about the information they receive on how their

child is getting on, the range of outside activities, the leadership and management of the school and the closeness with which the school works with them. Inspectors support their views that the information on pupils' progress could be improved.

47. The school has effective links with parents and the inspection team believes that the school does work closely with them. There is an active parent teacher association, which supports the school financially through a 100 club and the events that they arrange. The impact made by the parents' involvement in the work of the school and the contribution they make to pupils' learning at school and at home is good. A number of parents volunteer to help in the classroom. They listen to pupils read, both at school and at home, for which they receive guidance from the school. Others help with swimming and accompany pupils on school trips. Some parents are taking part in an interesting new library initiative. They are in the process of re-organising the library and are about to undergo training in library skills, which they will then pass on to pupils. Parents value the approachability of members of staff as a source of information, but also as an important avenue of communication.

48. The quality of information provided by the school is satisfactory. There is a very informative prospectus and a detailed governors' annual report to parents, both of which are well presented and contain the relevant statutory information. The governors' annual report is a high quality colour booklet. The school sends out regular, brief but relevant newsletters that cover school 'news and events'. There are separate letters that outline class topics. Pupils' annual reports are detailed and contain pupils' targets for English and mathematics. However, last year's reports did not mention information and communications technology, and art and design technology were reported as one, as opposed to two distinct subjects. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are involved in the termly review of their child's learning targets and receive copies of new targets written so that they may support them at home. There is only one parents' consultation evening a year to discuss pupils' progress. Parents find this insufficient and the inspection team agrees with them. It is, however, made clear that a parent can make an appointment to see the teacher at any other time if they are concerned.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. At the time of the last inspection, the leadership and management of the school was sound. Twenty per cent of parents who returned their questionnaires believe that the leadership and management of the school could be improved. The inspection team find that the leadership and management of the school remain sound with some good elements. There remain, however, a few areas that could be improved, such as the head teacher's formal monitoring of teaching, the development of an assessment system that tracks individual pupils, and improving resources for information and communication technology.

50. The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, provides perceptive and sensitive leadership. They are both committed to the school's aims; achieving high standards while maintaining pupils' well being and happiness. Staff, governors and parents value these principles. All the key issues identified in the last inspection report have been addressed, even though they may still require further refinement as in the case of monitoring the school's effectiveness. Many of the concerns raised within the 1996 report have been addressed but some, such as reading, remain a concern. Overall the school's progress in addressing the key issues and concerns raised within the last report has been achieved in

bursts of focused activity that have been difficult to sustain. The great changes within the governing body and the teaching commitment of the headteacher have contributed significantly to this. It was not until September 2000, when the headteacher was released from class teaching duties, that the school development and the maintenance of high standards across a range of subjects and identified areas could be given due priority. The school's capacity for further development is good. All staff and governors are committed to raising and maintaining standards and improving the quality of education. The headteacher now has the time to give this energy, direction and consistent support. Following the last inspection, the school development plan was given greater structure and now provides a framework of improvement, maintenance and monitoring that guides the whole school. All staff and governors are committed to the identified priorities, such as undertaking training in information and communication technology. Educational priorities are closely linked to financial decisions and the impact on educational standards. An example is the funding of the additional training for the learning support assistants.

51. With only four classes in the school, the headteacher's informal monitoring of teaching has been adequate to provide an understanding of the teachers' strengths and weaknesses. This current system needs to be more formalised and offer clear developmental feedback that is linked to staff training. Even though internal monitoring had acknowledged the consequences of teaching by age rather than ability, it has been identified by the inspection as continuing in a minority of classes.

52. School and subject responsibilities are delegated amongst the staff. Many staff have multiple responsibilities and a limited amount of time to carry out the many duties of subject co-ordination. The co-ordination of mathematics and science is good and the co-ordinators lead their subjects well. They use a range of opportunities, including assessment data from end of key stage tests, to monitor standards within their subjects. This has been successful in identifying areas of weakness in both subjects. The current assessment procedures used by the school, however, do not produce information on individual pupils through which the impact of teaching and school effectiveness can be accurately measured. The co-ordination of special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator has a very active role in identifying pupils with special educational needs and providing a good structure that allows them to make good progress. Her monitoring of the provision enables her to provide good support to individual pupils and their families, while offering guidance and advice both to teachers and to learning support assistants.

53. Because of recent changes within the governing body, governors are effective in carrying out their statutory duties and established a solid system of monitoring the school. The chair of governors has only been in place since the autumn and his appointment followed a period of turbulence among the governing body. There are a number of committees and an established set of channels of communication so the distribution of information is efficient. Their regular visits to the school are linked to the priorities of the school development plan. On such visits, such as those made by the governor responsible for special educational needs, they meet with the teachers, discuss developments and write a report to the governing body. The reports give the governors a satisfactory insight into the school's strengths and weaknesses, and help monitor and determine the school's priorities. The immediate and major priority for the school, however, is the issue of falling rolls. The governors have, as yet, to use the full range of performance indicators, such as individual pupils' progress, to monitor the health and academic success of the school.

54. Staffing is good overall with appropriately qualified and experienced teachers. All the teachers are well experienced. The school's programme of in-service education and training is good. Provision for the induction of staff to the school is sound. The school's systems of staff development have been easily incorporated into the new performance management system. The support staff, including the learning support assistants and the school secretary, make a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school, and to the progress pupils' make. Training for the non-teaching staff is good. The school has adequate accommodation, with an appropriate range of facilities, but provision for storage is poor and there is no specialist room for teaching information and communication technology to either groups or whole classes. Improvements have been made to the school building and grounds since the last report. The school environment is pleasant and well used to support learning and play. Learning resources are sound overall, and have improved since the last inspection. However, resources for information and communication technology are unsatisfactory. Resources are well used, especially in the literacy and numeracy lessons.

55. Financial planning in the school is good and there are sound systems in place to ensure that the school's priorities are effectively linked to the budget. The finance governor and the office manager closely monitor the school's financial status and report regularly to the governing body. All the minor issues raised from the last local authority audit have been put in place. When compared to all schools, the pupil unit cost is high because the school is small: a smaller school requires additional funding to assist it in meeting the demands of maintaining a fully functioning and developing school. The recent and unexpected receipt of additional money from the county and central government has resulted in the school having a large 'carry forward' to the next financial year. Decisions on its use have been made with care, as there are two main areas that will require funding in addition to leaving a 'buffer' to lessen the impact of falling roles next year. The two areas relate to structural building work and computer hardware. The school's strategic use of its resources and the extent to which it applies the principle of best value are satisfactory. The school has successfully applied the principles of best value by buying in the services of a technician to help with computer breakdowns, and the school plans to 'share' music teachers with the South Braintree cluster of schools. Although the school's use of new technology for administrative purposes is satisfactory, across the school, its use both by pupils in class and teachers in areas such as monitoring pupils' progress, is unsatisfactory.

56. Taking into account the effectiveness of the school, especially in relation to pupils' very good attitudes and good behaviour, the overall good teaching, how well most pupils achieve and its high unit costs, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. To improve the school further the headteacher, governor and staff should:

- Raise standards in mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 by:
 - * Providing more opportunities for the more able pupils in science to carry out investigations and draw their own conclusions;
 - * setting pupils scientific targets that identify specific skills or concepts that have to be developed or acquired;
 - * raising the profile of mathematics in school and the number of displays devoted to the subject;
 - * systematically planning for the use of mathematical skills across the whole curriculum;
 - * increasing the rate of pupils' progress in both mathematics and science through upper Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2.
- Develop further the school's systems for assessing pupils' attainment and use this more rigorously by:
 - * Establishing a range of opportunities that frequently gathers information of pupils' individual performance;
 - * creating records whereby the performance of individual pupils is recorded and is readily accessible to be used in teachers' short term planning;
 - * using assessment data to make predictions of a pupil's achievement at the end of each year and key stage;
 - * identifying and supporting gifted and talented pupils;
- To raise the percentage of good teaching in upper Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 by:
 - * Ensuring that feedback from regular monitoring clearly identifies areas for development and that the school's system of staff development addresses these areas;
 - * Modifying current classroom practice so that, where appropriate, all pupils are taught by ability rather than age;
 - * Raising both teachers' and pupils' expectations;
 - * Making greater use of assessment data in planning.

- Raise standards of information and communication technology at the end of Key Stage 2:
 - * Raising further the knowledge and confidence of the staff;
 - * Adapting short term planning that includes information and communication technology in most lessons;
 - * Ensuring that the scheme of work provides for the development of skills;
 - * Ensuring that activities provided take into account the knowledge and understanding that pupils may already possess;
 - * Increasing the level of monitoring in the subject;
 - * Increasing the available space and resources for the teaching of the subject.

58. In addition to the key issues above the following minor areas for development should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

- * The formal monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching by the headteacher.
- * The content of end of year reports.
- * The provision of more frequent consultations between teachers and parents.
- * Enhancing the role of governors in monitoring the effectiveness of the school by using a range of performance indicators.
- * The management of the teaching of reading.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	30
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	23	33	40	3	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	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	89
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	13

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	21

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	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	3.9	School data	0.0
National comparative data	5.2	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
	2000	3	3	6

Data from the tests for seven year olds in 2000 are excluded from the report as the year group size was below ten. Groups of pupils that are ten or fewer are not statistically valid.

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
	2000	9	11	20

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	19	12	18
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	95 (56)	60 (72)	90 (83)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	11	14	20
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	55 (44)	70 (50)	100 (78)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

In Key Stage 2 the test results for boys and girls have also been omitted as the numbers are too small for comparisons to be made.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	79
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes
**Qualified teachers and classes:
YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8:1
Average class size	20.8

**Education support staff:
YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	240318.00
Total expenditure	231352.00
Expenditure per pupil	2453.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	23711.00
Balance carried forward to next year	32677.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	68
Number of questionnaires returned	30

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	43	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	34	63	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good	47	43	10	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	53	10	7	0
The teaching is good.	30	60	7	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	17	40	40	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	40	13	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	40	60	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	21	50	23	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	30	43	10	10	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	21	59	17	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	0	22	44	30	4

Other issues raised by parents

The 13 parents at the parents' meeting were concerned about the inconsistent approach to the development of reading between classes, the quality of the teaching of mathematics and the lack of challenge for the more able.

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

59. At the time of the inspection there were seven children under the age of five in the Foundation Stage. Arrangements for admission are good and include interviews with parents and a carefully managed start for each child. Children enter the reception class with a wide range of attainment. It varies from year to year. In this current year group while some have good speaking skills and a sound general knowledge, others have limited skills in communication, language and literacy. Overall, attainment is broadly average on entry. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. The overall quality of teaching is good, with some very good elements. The school has created a good learning environment in which they flourish. The school works hard to offer children under five a rich, varied curriculum in line with national guidelines, and it is successful in doing this. Teaching assistants make a very valuable contribution to the teaching of the reception group. All children are achieving well across the curriculum and by the end of the Foundation Stage will exceed the early learning goals in many areas of learning.

Personal and social development

60. The development of children's personal and social development is given high priority and underpins all the work in the reception class. Teaching in this area of the curriculum is very good. Children settle well into the caring and safe environment where basic routines and high expectations are fostered. They are encouraged to listen to others, to share, to take turns and to relate positively to adults. As a result, strong all-round relationships are soon forged. During the inspection, children were observed changing quickly and independently for physical education lessons. This is an example of the emphasis placed on the development of children's self esteem, confidence and independence. As a result, children respond positively to new challenges, displaying enthusiasm and enjoyment in their work and play. They listen attentively and soon begin to sustain concentration for longer periods. They behave very well and gain a good understanding of right and wrong. The well structured activities support children's personal and social development effectively, encouraging co-operative play, and consideration for others. Consequently by the time they leave the Foundation Stage most will have exceeded the early learning goals in this area.

Language and literacy

61. Children make very good progress in all areas of language because of the high quality teaching they receive. Some of the children have a limited vocabulary when they first come to school and are not able to engage in extended conversations with adults. The teacher provides rich opportunities for children to improve their speaking and listening skills through stories, poems and rhymes. In a very good literacy lesson, children worked with deep concentration when challenged to write the end sounds of high frequency words such as 'said', 'she' and 'that'. The quality of the teacher's questioning motivated them to listen and to work hard. The learning support assistant was very actively engaged throughout the lesson and was making a very effective contribution to children's learning. Both adults in the class give guidance, praise and encouragement in a consistent manner. Throughout the day they

engage children in meaningful conversation. As a result, children discuss, converse, and generally talk about their experiences with a growing vocabulary. Another result of the high quality teaching is that children of all abilities are enthusiastic about books and they can retell stories they have heard. Evidence shows that all of the children will achieve the expected level at the end of the Foundation Stage, and more than half achieve above expectations in reading. The emphasis placed on early reading and writing skills is evident in many activities within the classroom.

Mathematics

62. The teaching of this aspect is very good. Children learn to count with increasing confidence and work well when investigating numbers. In one very good activity, the teacher promoted good learning when ‘jumping’ in twos from 0 to 20 using a hundred square. Children continued to consolidate their learning when they were engaged in a variety of activities accurately matched to their differing needs. Adults introduce mathematical language very effectively, and consequently children begin to name shapes such as circles and triangles. They use terms such as ‘more than’ and ‘less than’, ‘odd’ and ‘even’. They learn to write numbers, and become familiar with the concepts of addition and subtraction. Children experience a good range of practical activities to further their understanding of number, shape and measures. Most children will surpass the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

63. Children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world, and attain the outcomes expected by the end of the Foundation Stage due to the good teaching they receive. They talk with interest about experiences and events which have taken place in and out of school. Well planned activities, such as nature walks within the school environment, are used successfully to develop children’s knowledge of nature and of the local area. As a result, they are able to talk about and describe features of the local environment, and to express their views on different features. Children are encouraged to observe the passing of the seasons and to describe the weather. Information and communication skills are well taught. Children find out about, and use, everyday technology and programmable toys to support their learning. They are taught to investigate objects and materials by using all of their senses, as, for example, when they investigate different fruits and vegetables. Children are made aware of their own personal history through the use of photographs and toys, and through speaking to parents and grandparents. These and other activities, such as when a mother visits them with her new born baby, help children to recognise that humans grow and change.

Creative development

64. Children make very good progress in their creative development. The teaching and support they receive is very good and concentrates on the development of skills as well as the imagination. There is a very good balance between guided activities and opportunities for children to explore freely. They paint and draw with increasing control, as when they used a variety of materials and techniques when engaged in observational drawing of a bowl of fruit.

They experiment with mixing paint to achieve a desired effect. Opportunities for imaginative play are stimulating. Children design and make their own puppets and use these, with adults' help, to make up and produce simple plays. They experiment with different musical instruments to make patterns with sounds. In music lessons, they quickly learn the words of songs and choose instruments to accompany their singing. Such experiences make a good contribution to children's spiritual, social and cultural development so that by the end of the Foundation Stage the majority of them will exceed the early learning goals.

Physical development

65. Children make good progress in developing their physical control, mobility and awareness of space. Physical education lessons in the school hall and playground provide good opportunities for children to learn to move in space, improve their balance and develop physical skills. In these lessons, good teaching ensures that children work safely, but at the same time encourages independence. Children are taught to be aware of the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active and they can tell that their hearts beat faster. Skills are progressively taught and children move with control and co-ordination. The staff know the children very well and target the development of individual children's skills. Fine motor skills are well developed as children use tools such as scissors, crayons, and construction kits in their work. Children handle tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control. By the end of the Foundation stage most children will have achieved all the goals in this area of learning.

ENGLISH

66. At the time of the inspection in 1996, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening, reading and writing was reported to be meeting national expectations, although the national tests results at the end of the academic year in which the inspection took place were below the national average. Standards in Key Stage 2 have varied significantly since the national test results of 1996. Other than in 1998 standards have remained below the national average until 2000, when they peaked dramatically. Pupils' performance when compared to all schools and those of a similar nature was then well above average. Standards were above the national averages at both Levels 4 and 5. Boys' attainment in the standardised assessment tests was better than the attainment of boys nationally, although there was no evidence of this during the course of the inspection. When compared with pupils' prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 1, evidence suggests that most pupils have made well above average progress and have therefore achieved well. This is a reflection on the emphasis that has been placed on literacy in recent years. Inspection findings indicate that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are now good in speaking and listening and in writing, and at least in line with national expectations in reading. Current standards are above national expectations but not well above average as they were in summer 2000. This difference in attainment is because of the nature of the two groups of pupils. The current Year 6 has a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs and summer born pupils than in last year's group. The school has published a realistic target for performance for 2001 that reflects the year group's overall ability.

67. No meaningful comparisons can be made using the end of Key Stage 1 results of 2000, as the year group is too small to be statistically significant, as were previous year groups. Evidence suggests that standards have remained broadly stable in reading and writing since 1996: above the national average in reading and in line with the national average in writing. However, inspection findings place current standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing above national expectations in Year 2. The majority of pupils build upon the very good foundations laid in reception and make good progress through Key Stage 1. Standards of work seen during the inspection have improved compared to those reported at the time of the last inspection when they were judged to meet national expectations. Most pupils achieve as they should but inspection evidence indicates that the higher attaining Year 2 pupils do not perform as well as they could as they are given insufficient opportunities to be challenged fully.

68. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the good quality support that they receive in classrooms. Support staff are deployed well by teachers and provide valuable help to all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who need extra literacy support.

69. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Eighty per cent of lessons were good or very good. The remainder were satisfactory. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented effectively throughout the school. It provides an effective framework for teachers, which they have adapted well. The teachers have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of English. They are technically competent in teaching basic literacy skills, such as phonics and reading, though rigour in teaching these important skills is sometimes wanting in a few lessons. Lesson planning is firmly based on the National Literacy Strategy, though pupils are not always appropriately grouped according to their prior attainment. Consequently some pupils in Year 2 are not provided with the opportunities by which they could attain their full potential. Learning objectives for each day and each group are clear. There is an appropriate balance of activities, including both word and text-level work. In the lessons seen, pupils were motivated by the teachers' exposition, and teachers always maintained good discipline. Tasks for the independent groups were interesting and teachers kept a close enough eye on these pupils to ensure that they sustained a good rate of work. The older pupils especially were so well behaved that they worked well independently, helping and supporting each other and wasting little time. Plenary sessions were used appropriately to reinforce what the pupils had learned. Throughout the school, the quality of teachers' marking is sound and is appropriately corrective. Comments are encouraging but also reinforce the focus of the piece of work and tell pupils what they can do to improve. Many pupils take pride in the presentation of their work. Pupils are given spelling, reading and writing tasks for homework and this is contributing to their progress.

70. Standards in speaking and listening are above national expectations throughout the school. Whole-class introductions to lessons make a sound contribution to the development of speaking and listening skills. The teachers' use of praise and the good relationships between teachers and pupils create a supportive classroom atmosphere in lessons, and this gives pupils the confidence to express their ideas. They listen to each other courteously. Most pupils use spoken language effectively to communicate with adults and with each other, and class discussions provide good opportunities for developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. However, the school does not have a framework for speaking and listening to provide planned progression through the school.

71. Standards in reading are above national expectations by the end of Key Stage I, and at least in line with expectations by the end of Key Stage 2. In Year 2, pupils read simple texts fluently and accurately. They recognise many everyday words out of context and have strategies - as well as their knowledge of letter sounds and use of picture cues - to help them decipher unknown words. Higher attaining pupils read unfamiliar text easily, using punctuation to aid expression. They are not, however, consistently guided into choosing fiction or non-fiction books that would extend their interest or their ability. In Year 6, some of the higher attaining pupils read a range of texts fluently and accurately. Some talk about the plot and offer opinions about the characters. Some older pupils do not take the responsibility of writing in the reading diaries seriously and they were not being used well. Some pupils who were heard reading by inspectors said that they enjoyed reading but did not have enough opportunities to read in school. Pupils write critiques of books read, but they are not doing this well; they lack insight and structure. Pupils use the small library for independent research. Some pupils receive invaluable support from the involvement of their parents or guardians. The home-school reading records, when used, are a source of ongoing information about pupils' attainment in reading. They indicate which books have been read but do not routinely include contributions from the teachers. One of the findings from the previous inspection was that reading diaries contained too few analytical comments to assist in the development of reading skills. Progress in this has not been good enough. Some teachers do not keep a sufficiently close watch on what pupils read with the result that books sometimes do not meet pupils' needs. The school's resources for reading are sound overall with an appropriate range of non-fiction texts in the library, and fiction in the classrooms. This range of fiction books is an improvement since the last inspection.

72. At the end of both key stages, the range of writing is good and includes stories, accounts, book reviews, news reports, letters and poems. Younger pupils write independently. Their writing conveys meaning in everyday words and phrases. Most pupils are aware of the need for capital letters and full stops even though they do not use them consistently. Spelling of common words is generally correct but, where there are errors, they can be understood. Higher attaining pupils make a conscious effort to use more interesting vocabulary. They write at greater length. Handwriting is sound with most pupils joining their writing. Many use correct sentence punctuation and many are beginning to organise their work in paragraphs. Writing is usually based on the spoken word but some pupils choose words carefully in order to interest the reader. Spelling is satisfactory. Older pupils write at greater length. They use different tenses and observe the necessary conventions, as when writing formal and informal letters. They use commas to mark boundaries in complex sentences. They organise their materials well in their non-narrative writing. The use of information and communication technology to promote writing skills is limited in both key stages.

73. The use of literacy across the curriculum is generally satisfactory, and is good in history and geography. Lesson planning in other subjects, however, does not routinely include learning objectives for developing literacy skills or identify additional assessed opportunities for speaking and listening, or reading. In nearly all lessons there is a suitable emphasis on teaching vocabulary that is specific to each subject. Writing skills, including handwriting, are promoted consistently.

74. The co-ordination of the subject sound. Teaching has been monitored by the co-ordinator, though not with enough depth, as instanced by the teaching of reading, to identify areas for development. Assessment procedures are sound and provide data by which standards are monitored. The good practice seen in Years 6 and 1 of predicting levels for each pupil using assessment data, such as annual reading test results, is not consistent across the school.

MATHEMATICS

75. The standard achieved in mathematics by 11 year olds in the National Curriculum tests in 2000 was below average when compared to both all schools nationally, and those of a similar nature. This was lower than the school's published targets for 2000 and lower than teacher assessments. This lower than expected performance was attributed, in part, to unsatisfactory examination techniques by a few pupils. Standards in mathematics have gradually risen since 1996, the year of the last inspection, at a rate similar to the national trend. Other than in 1998, however, standards have remained below the national average. Current inspection findings are that standards are below national expectations. Pupils in Year 6 used the four operations of number to write number sequences. The less able, with support, were able to manipulate numbers up to 100, the average attaining pupil up to 1000 and the ablest of pupils with numbers to two decimal points. During the problem solving activities the majority of pupils were able to understand the nature of the problem and break it down into manageable steps, applying all four rules of number. The most able, in their attempt to calculate the average takings of a museum, used their knowledge of averages as well as that of the four rules of number, to find the projected income.

76. The rate of progress of pupils who have been at the school for the whole of Key Stage 2 has been satisfactory. Those pupils with special educational needs have made good progress due to the quality of support they receive from a group of well trained and managed learning support assistants. Between 1999 and 2000 there was some variation in the performance of boys and girls. Due to the small numbers involved, this is not statistically significant. The inspection team found no difference in attainment or response in either group. The school's published targets for 2001 are lower than they were for 2000, even though teachers have worked at developing better examination techniques. This is because of the significant difference between this year's and last year's groups of pupils. The current Year 6 have a far higher proportion of pupils on the special needs register and pupils born in the summer months.

77. The number of seven-year-old pupils who sat the national tests last summer was six, so no comparisons can be made between the school and either all or similar schools. Since 1996, standards in Key Stage 1 have gradually improved. Inspection findings are that the majority of pupils are working at the expected Level 2, but only a few at the higher Level 3. The majority of pupils were able to name and identify a range of two and three-dimensional shapes and their properties. There was, however, no teaching or activities that extended this knowledge. There was therefore a lack of challenge for the most able pupils. This was also evident in the work in pupils' books. Even where work had taken into account pupils' different abilities, the differences between each set of tasks was narrow.

78. In contrast to comments made at the parents meeting the overall quality of teaching is good and this is an improvement on the last inspection when it was judged to be barely satisfactory. Four lessons were observed during the inspection. Fifty per cent were very good: one in Year 1 and the other in upper Key Stage 2. One lesson was satisfactory and the other, unsatisfactory. The link between teaching and learning during the inspection was very clear. Pupils made good progress due to the quality of teaching observed in lower Key Stage 1 and upper Key Stage 2. Where the teaching was satisfactory or worse, pupils' rate of learning mirrored the quality of teaching. Over the course of their schooling, however, pupils throughout the school only make satisfactory progress at best due to the range in the quality of teaching they experience.

79. The three part lessons of the National Numeracy Strategy are well established in the school. Teachers in the majority of lessons used the oral session to develop mathematical thinking. Rapidly fired questions - using all the rules of number and carefully targeting them at pupils of different ability - was a key element in the success of the Year 5/6 lesson. Pupils enjoyed this stimulus, applied themselves well, and later used this knowledge in problem solving. Many questions encouraged pupils to offer their own explanations, as in a Year 1 pupil's perception of a number sequence and what the next number would be. The teaching of the basic skills of numeracy is good. The energy and dynamism in the very good lessons was a key factor in motivating the pupils to do well and work hard. In the majority of lessons teachers used assessment well to ensure that work was planned to meet the needs of the individual. In the Year 4/5 lesson, Year 4 pupils' prior knowledge of odd and even numbers was used successfully in an investigation where pupils successfully worked out a rule for adding odd and even numbers. Many lessons were carefully planned and sequenced so that they built on previous learning, and pupils made good gains in their knowledge and understanding. This was very evident in the Year 1 lesson on counting and ordering numbers from 10, to 20 and beyond. A few Year 1 pupils were able to identify the missing numbers in 100 number squares. Due to good planning, the pupils in this class made good gains in their learning. Many of the well-planned lessons were very focused. The aim behind the lessons was shared with the pupils, with the result that they knew what they were to do and what they should learn in the lesson. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In all lessons resources were used well to support the planned activity. In the Year 2/3 lesson on three-dimensional shapes, the use of straws and 'clicxi' construction material, helped pupils reinforce their existing knowledge. In all lessons pupils behaved very well. This was due to their enjoyment and involvement in their work as well as the teachers' good classroom control and management. This allowed the majority of teachers both to monitor and involve themselves with different ability groups at different times of the lesson. The careful assessment of these groups ensured that little time was lost and that the pace of the lessons was maintained.

80. In all lessons the learning support assistants were well prepared and gave very good support to the groups that they were working with and to pupils with special educational needs. Their contributions ensured that those pupils identified on the special needs register were making good progress in relation to their targets. The quality of relationships not only underpinned the behaviour but also produced an atmosphere of trust and support in which pupils willingly shared their thoughts, ideas and uncertainties with their peers and their teacher. In Year 5/6, the most able to pupils worked together pooling their thoughts and ideas on how to solve their set problem of the expected yearly income of a museum.

81. In the unsatisfactory lesson pupils were taught by age rather than ability. Assessment information was not used to provide work that built on existing knowledge and offered further challenge. At the beginning of the lesson, pupils were already confident in classifying three-dimensional shapes according to their properties. The task of making such shapes out of construction material did not add to their knowledge or understanding even if they did enjoy it.

82. The co-ordination of the subject is good and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Through careful and comprehensive monitoring the co-ordinator has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. Raising standards in mathematics is a feature of the next school improvement plan. It was through the careful analysis of test results that the school identified the reasons for the lower than expected results in the national tests of 2000. Assessment procedures are sound and therefore continue to have room for improvement. Regular assessments are undertaken but the results are not part of a computerised system. Consequently although the school can monitor the progress of groups of pupils, the tracking of individual pupils and the setting of individual targets from when they enter school are not as firmly established. Teachers write mathematical objectives and then share them with both parents and pupils. This is a useful tool in helping raise standards, although it has not been in place long enough for it to impact on end of key stage tests. There were very few links between mathematics and other subjects, except science, or school displays devoted to the subject.

SCIENCE

83. Results of the national tests in summer 2000 for Year 6 pupils show that standards were well below those of schools nationally and those of a similar nature. The number of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 was above the national average but the proportion attaining the higher Level 5 was well below average. Over the four-year period to 2000, results have varied significantly. They have kept pace with the nationally improving trend but remain below average. Current standards are slightly better than they were at the time of national tests in 1996, but remain below national expectations. Pupils in Year 6 attain standards that are in line with expectations in their knowledge of life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes. They use keys based on observable features to assist in systematically identifying, comparing and grouping living things. Along with pupils in Year 5 they predict whether bulbs will light or not when considering various circuit arrangements. They understand the differences between the properties of various materials, and of the resulting classification into solids, liquids and gases. However, inspection evidence shows that pupils' attainment in scientific enquiry is below average because the skills required in this area have not been progressively developed. As a result, the few potentially higher attaining pupils in Year 6 lack skills in conducting the whole process of independently planning and carrying out experiments that would gain them the higher Level 5 in the national tests. The school has identified this weakness in provision and there is now a greater emphasis on investigative work throughout the school. In spite of this, standards remain below national expectations. This is due to the overall ability of the current Year 6. Compared to last year there is a higher number of pupils with special educational needs, and those born in the summer months. The school's evidence shows that most of the pupils who have been at the school since Year 3 achieve appropriately. Progress has not been greater in science due to the emphasis that has been placed on English.

84. There were only six pupils in Year 2 in 2000. Consequently, the results of teacher assessments are not published and comparisons cannot be made. Standards attained by pupils currently in Year 2 are in line with those expected for their ages in all aspects of the subject, except in scientific enquiry. Standards in Key Stage 1 have remained the same since the last inspection. From written evidence, Year 2 pupils know how to test materials for electrical conductivity and recognise that different living things are found in various habitats.

85. Two lessons were observed during the inspection, one in each key stage: one was good and the other satisfactory. These, together with analysis of pupils' work and discussions with staff indicate that the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the good Year 1 lesson, pupils' interests in using their senses and their skills of classification were built upon through identifying the differences between fruit and vegetables. The teacher also had high expectations and the confidence to encourage pupils to record their own results. Pupils were highly motivated by this practical approach and the group discussions were very worthwhile. Many pupils made good progress in their ability to identify and describe different features. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and motivate them to work with interest. All learning support assistants are well used to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs so that they make similar progress to that of other pupils in lessons. Under the careful guidance of the class teacher they are also used well to support the learning of younger pupils in mixed age classes. However on occasion discussions were dominated by the teacher and practical activities heavily organised and prepared. As a result, pupils in Year 6 did not choose their own apparatus or set their own task to measure air resistance to slow a moving object. This opportunity to develop their scientific skills was missed. From the scrutiny of pupils' work in the remainder of Key Stage 2 it is evident that on occasions pupils are taught by age rather than ability. By employing such organisational methods the needs of pupils of different ability, regardless of age are not fully considered, and work not set to ensure they achieve their full potential.

86. The co-ordination of science is good. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning, pupils' work and test results and, as a result of this has modified the organisation of the curriculum through the subject action plan to allow a greater and more frequent development of scientific skills. Regular monitoring reports are given to the governors to keep them closely informed. Assessment procedures are sound. Assessment information, however, is not used either to track individual pupils' progress or ensure that work is closely matched to their ability. Resources are satisfactory for present needs but the range will need to be improved when considering the needs of developing more investigative styles of teaching, particularly for the higher attaining pupils. The development of pupils' numeracy skills is well supported in science as pupils measure temperature, mass and capacity and record their findings graphically.

ART

87. Standards of attainment in art match the national expectation for pupils aged seven and 11. Standards have been sustained since the last inspection. Pupils throughout the school are given opportunities to study and to use the styles of famous artists such as Monet and Picasso. There is evidence of some good cross-curricular links with other subjects such as history. Pupils in Year 2 studied the techniques used in Ancient Egyptian art when they created their own tomb paintings.

88. Three lessons were observed during the inspection; two were satisfactory and one was very good. In the very good lesson, Year 1 pupils were being taught to draw what they saw when observing a bowl of fruit. This lesson was very good because the emphasis placed on developing pupils' observational drawing skills ensured that they made very good progress. The class teacher and the learning support assistant, through effective intervention skills, continued to teach and challenge pupils as they worked and this helped maintain good pace in their learning. At the same time, pupils were given good opportunities for independent decision-making. As a result, they enjoyed their work, showed deep concentration and were proud of their finished pictures. The other lessons seen were not so successful because pupils were given too little guidance as they worked. Although the lessons were well organised and management of the pupil was good, teachers' planning did not clearly or consistently identify the skills to be developed, and, as a result, there was too little direct teaching to ensure progress in this respect.

89. The co-ordination of the subject is under-developed. No formal monitoring of the subject has been undertaken. Although the school has adopted the new national guidelines, the teaching of specific skills - at particular times and through particular topics - has not yet been decided upon. There is no portfolio of pupils' work. There is no system by which pupils' ability can be identified and challenging work provided for them. There is a good range of resources but, because of a shortage of storage space, they are in various parts of the school and are not always readily available.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

90. Due to the school's timetabling arrangements, no lessons in design and technology were observed during the inspection. Scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils and staff form the basis of the judgements made. The evidence shows that pupils achieve standards that are similar to those expected for their age at the end of both key stages and that teaching is at least satisfactory. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection, when standards were reported to be less than satisfactory.

91. Work on display shows that pupils work with concentration, paying attention to detail and finish. The work is imaginative and takes good account of aesthetic consideration. Good examples of this were seen where pupils in Year 6 designed and made bridges using their knowledge of structures. Pupils in Year 2 plan their own work and produce models, pictures and words to explain their own designs. They have used their knowledge of simple mechanisms to make joints that allow movement in their models of clowns.

92. Currently planning, especially in Key Stage 2, does not consistently identify specific skills to be taught. As a result, pupils' progress in this respect is satisfactory as opposed to good. The subject is taught within topic work and enhances pupils' work in other subjects, particularly history, although the full potential of mathematics and information and communication technology to support this subject has not been fully realised. Consideration is given to food technology, for example, in baking Easter cakes in Key Stage 1 and designing healthy diets in Key Stage 2. However, these opportunities are too infrequent to teach the knowledge, skills and understanding of this aspect of the subject as well as they should. There is no portfolio of pupils' work or system to monitor pupils' individual progress.

GEOGRAPHY

93. During the inspection it was not possible to observe any lessons. However, from discussions with staff and pupils, the examination of documents and the scrutiny of pupils' work, it is clear that the geography curriculum is wide-ranging and balanced, and that teaching is at least satisfactory. By the age of seven, and when the pupils leave the school, standards in geography are above average. Pupils make good progress in gaining geographical knowledge and skills during their time at the school. Standards have improved since the last inspection when they were judged to be in line with national expectations.

94. Learning builds on what has gone before, as in the pupils' mapping skills. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress due to the quality of support they receive. Pupils have good opportunities to describe and interpret their surroundings using appropriate vocabulary, and to carry out fieldwork, as in their local weather and river studies. Key Stage 1 pupils know that people have an effect on the environment and older pupils understand the differences between physical and human geography. Pupils are given opportunities to observe and ask questions about geographical issues, including about the effects of the recent flooding in the area. They collect, record and analyse evidence and communicate their conclusions. They write reports that are informative and helpful to the reader and contribute directly to the development of their literacy skills.

95. Visits and visitors help to enliven the subject. For example, pupils go on local walks, and to a local nature reserve and a local railway. They also enjoy an exchange with a contrasting area of Essex. The subject contributes well to pupils' awareness of other cultures, for instance, when they visit a replica African village. Links with other subjects are good. For example in the Year 5/6 work on bridges they incorporated aspects of design and technology and art. The standard of pupils' drawing, sketching and illustrations enhances the quality of their work. Pupils make insufficient use of their skills or in either numeracy or information and communication technology enough to help in handling, classifying and presenting evidence.

HISTORY

96. At the ages of seven and eleven, standards in history are above average. Pupils make good progress in gaining historical knowledge and skills during their time at the school, and they enjoy history. Pupils with special educational needs, in common with others, make good progress. Standards have improved since the last inspection. This is due to the good links that have been created between history and other taught subjects, particularly English.

97. Two lessons were observed during the actual inspection; one was good and the other very good. Overall the quality of teaching is good and evidence indicates that learning is also good. Lesson activities are planned to help pupils make progress in the various aspects of the subject, especially in looking at evidence, developing their skills of enquiry and posing the appropriate questions. Over time pupils are taught to look for the underlying causes of major events, patterns and trends. Key Stage 1 pupils have a good understanding of the passing of time in relation to their own lives and clearly demonstrate this by the use of photographs. Older pupils understand that it is possible to get different versions of the same person or

event. For instance, when studying the work of Howard Carter and his sponsors, they learn that people have different motives for doing things. Pupils enjoy finding out about the past and how people lived. In informal conversations during the week' pupils frequently commented on how they had enjoyed the visiting Egyptian dance group.

98. The quality of visual materials and displays, that include a good range of artefacts, stimulate pupils' interest. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils present their work to a good standard. Visitors to the school, and visits by pupils, add interest and breadth to their work. These include visits to Braintree Museum and to Ingatestone Hall. Another good feature of the subject is the way in which teachers make effective links with other subjects of the National Curriculum, such as geography and music, to enliven their work, as when pupils learn about Ancient Egypt. The quality of pupils' imaginative and report writing makes a significant contribution to the development of pupils' literacy. The standard of written work in history does not always reflect the same high standard achieved in English lessons when work is more closely matched to the ability of pupils, particularly the more able. Numeracy and information and communication technology skills are not widely planned for or used in the history lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

99. By the age of 11, standards in nearly all aspects of information and communication technology are below age related expectations, as pupils have not had the prior experiences to reach the expected levels. Due to the school's efforts, standards have improved since the last inspection but they remain below what is expected for 11 year olds. Pupils in Year 6 are confident in their use of the hardware, loading programs and controlling the mouse. At Christmas, Year 6 pupils used the digital camera to make cards and calendars. Word processing skills are basic. There is very little word processing on display but pupils could demonstrate how to change fonts, cut and paste and use the spell checker. In discussion with pupils, the sending of e-mails and using the Internet for research purposes were not regular occurrences. Aspects of control are in line with expectations; as in the interactive display related to the previous history topic of 'Invaders and Settlers'. The uses of information and communication technology to monitor the weather or control programmable objects, however, are unsatisfactory. Pupils have made simple spreadsheets containing information about cities and their populations but were unsure on how to produce graphical data from this application. The development of their skills and knowledge for all pupils is unsatisfactory.

100. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 have skills in line with national expectations because they have had opportunities to build on the skills they developed while in the reception/Year 1 class. They can enter, save, print and retrieve work in word processing programs and change font types. They are confident and eager to demonstrate their accurate use of both the keyboard and mouse. They have used the school's floor robot and can plan and program the commands to make it move in a planned way. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress.

101. Three lessons were seen during the inspection and, in each, the quality of teaching was satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection when most teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. Each class in the school experiences at least one lesson on information and communication technology each week. Many lessons were well planned and built on pupils' prior skills, as in the Year 5/6 lesson on spreadsheets. This gave pupils the

confidence to add to class discussions and develop their understanding of spreadsheets further. In all lessons, teachers had at least a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the subject. This enabled them to guide pupils through the process of refining a search on an imaginary database on birds, or on how to use a scanner. In one lesson, discussions dominated by the teachers restricted pupils from demonstrating their knowledge or understanding. Two teachers failed to assess their pupils' ability carefully enough to set them challenging work. For example in Year 4/5 all pupils were taken through the basics of using a scanner irrespective of whether they had ever used one before or not. Due to this, the rate of learning for this small group was unsatisfactory. There is no dedicated space in the school where either a whole class or groups of pupils could have access to a number of computers while they were being taught. On one occasion the poor visibility of the one teaching computer slowed the pace of the lesson, pupils became restless and the rate of learning suffered.

102. There has only been marginal improvement in the subject since the last inspection. Staff expertise has improved due to the number of courses they have attended. Further training is now taking place. The purchase of new computers was delayed by over a year due to a problem with accessing a national grant. The new computers that the school has, however, remain too few and their recent installation has not yet raised standards to expected levels. There is a co-ordinator for the subject, but the development of the role is unsatisfactory. Although good use of external support has been made via the South Braintree cluster to help write the subject development plan, little formal monitoring of teaching or standards has been undertaken. The school is aware that its pupils do not have the necessary skills to reach the expected National Curriculum levels and have introduced 'catch-up' activities based on commercial schemes. There is no school-based scheme of work, systems of assessment, or portfolio of pupils' work. As the school does not assess information and communication technology skills, teachers are unable to build upon the skills that pupils bring to school with them by matching their teaching to the needs of the pupil. From teachers' medium term planning there is clear evidence to suggest that all the areas of information and communication technology have been planned for, following national guidelines. There was, however, little evidence of information and communication technology in pupils' work in any class, especially in Key Stage 2. In teachers' short-term plans, the use of computers was rarely identified. The school has many programs that support both literacy and numeracy but these were not seen or used during the inspection week. In fact, in many lessons, computers were on but not used.

MUSIC

103. Pupils' standards of attainment are similar to those expected for their age at seven and 11. Standards in music were reported to be good at the time of the last inspection. The school explains that the recent emphasis on literacy and numeracy has left less time for teaching music. This, together with the loss of their specialist teacher, has led to the decline in standards.

104. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 sing tunefully, clap rhythms from notation and experiment with instruments to create sounds. Teachers make effective use of taped programmes in music and movement lessons so that pupils understand how different moods and effects can be created. In Key Stage 2, there are differences in the standards seen within aspects of music. The quality of singing in song

practices is good. Pupils sing with enthusiasm, enjoyment, and sustained effort to maintain a good level of control. The tone quality is good, diction is clear and pupils respond well to signals to vary the dynamics of the singing. All pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a joint weekly music session together with their class teacher and a temporary music specialist. Despite the large number of pupils involved in this lesson, the level of participation was high, management of the pupils was good, and pupils were able to make satisfactory progress in performing rhythmically, simple parts requiring a small range of notes. Although this provided them with opportunities to compose and perform, there were too many pupils to allow the teaching of pupils of different abilities to be wholly effective, or time to suggest ways to improve their work, or time to listen to that of others. As a result, standards in composing are below average for pupils currently in Year 6. During the inspection a visiting performer, linked to the topic on Ancient Egypt, involved pupils in considering their responses and feelings when listening to music. Such occasions make a very useful contribution to pupils' learning. The inspection finds, however, that such opportunities to describe compare and judge a range of music using suitable musical vocabulary was a rarity.

105. The headteacher, who is the co-ordinator of the subject, is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. The need for training to increase all teachers' confidence in teaching has been identified in the school improvement plan. This, together with the planned appointment of a music specialist, and manageable assessment procedures to ensure the systematic development of skills, will encourage a greater rate of progress for all pupils. There is sound provision for extra-curricular music, which includes recorder tuition. Recorder groups enhance the quality of, and add a further valuable spiritual dimension to pupils' singing in assemblies. The school provides pupils with opportunities to take part in performances and to sing with the local orchestra. These occasions enhance pupils' learning, enrich their experiences and extend their enthusiasm for the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

106. During the inspection, there was no evidence of standards in gymnastics in either key stage, or games at the end of Key Stage 1. Standards in lessons observed were in line with national expectations. They have deteriorated since the last inspection, when they were judged to be good, due to the fact that less time is now allocated to the subject. Pupils make satisfactory progress in most aspects of physical education. In a Year 6 lesson on netball skills, all pupils were able to control the ball when throwing or catching it, and were competent in their ability to dodge their opponents. Year 2 pupils, working in pairs in a movement lesson based on a taped programme, developed a series of actions and expressions that produced realistic impressions of lions, crocodiles and rabbits. The great majority of pupils are able to swim 25 metres by the end of Year 3. Many then move on to achieve even higher awards. All Year 6 pupils who left the school last year did so being able to swim 25 metres. In these areas of physical education, pupils' attainment and progress is good.

107. Four lessons were observed during the inspection and overall the quality of teaching was satisfactory. All pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have their physical education lesson on a Monday afternoon, each teacher taking a specific activity; netball, football or country dancing. The teaching of games skills was good. The teachers' good knowledge aided the lively and confident teaching of both lessons so that they captured pupils' imagination and enthusiasm. A good knowledge of how to teach the subject using demonstrations by pupils, direct teaching and evaluation of work, focused lessons on the development of skills and

pupils achieved well. These lessons were very well paced and kept the attention of all pupils. In all lessons, pupils responded positively to praise and encouragement and, in the cold conditions of the week, doubled their efforts to move fast. Those Year 5 pupils who were indoors for dance, enjoyed demonstrating the Dorset Ring Dance, even though they were unsure of all the right moves. In all lessons, teachers were well prepared and organised. There was good class control and management. All lessons were therefore conducted with due regard to pupils' health and safety. The remainder of lessons observed were satisfactory due to their steady pace, as in the Year 5 dance lesson. In the Year 2/3 dance lesson, the use of a taped programme restricted the amount of intervention by the teacher and demonstration and evaluation by the pupils.

108. The facilities for teaching physical education at the school are adequate overall as there is a hall, a large playground, and a field. The hall, however, is too small for the oldest and largest pupils to undertake gymnastic lessons safely in there. There is a co-ordinator for the subject but there has been little development of the subject recently. A range of extra-curricular activities, such as netball and cricket, actively supports physical development and competitive sports at the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

109. Standards in religious education meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for pupils aged seven and 11. Progress is satisfactory overall. The school has maintained the standards seen at the last inspection. Key Stage 1 pupils understand the part played by special people such as Moses and Jesus. Older pupils have a secure knowledge of the special places, symbols and books of many of the world faiths such as Islam, Hinduism and Judaism and make appropriate links with places of worship such as churches and synagogues. They develop an understanding of the significance of belief to a follower of a faith. They know, for instance, about the significance of baptism to a Christian, and re-incarnation to a Hindu. Assemblies, and displays around the school, particularly in the hall, make a good contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion as well as to their cultural development.

110. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is sound and resources, especially artefacts, are used well. Pupils behave very well in class due to teachers' high expectations and the ethos of the school. The subject content and class based discussions make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Teachers lead these discussions sensitively and pupils therefore show similar levels of respect and reverence for the way people deal with festivals of birth and death. Pupils share their experiences with each other in a mature and mutually supporting way. Many written tasks are satisfactory. They are adequate in their appeal to pupils' interests but rarely provide an exciting written record of a well-executed lesson. Such tasks do not always meet the individual needs of pupils, especially the higher attaining pupils.