

INSPECTION REPORT

Abbots Hall Primary School
Stowmarket

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique Reference Number: 124631

Inspection Number: 191083

Headteacher: Mrs. C. M. Underwood

Reporting inspector: Mr. Adrian Everix
23079

Dates of inspection: 18th – 21st October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707807

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school: | Primary |
| Type of control: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 4 to 9 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Danescourt Avenue Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 1QF |
| Telephone number: | 01449 612 818 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | The Reverend J. A. Pugh |
| Date of previous inspection: | May 1996 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Adrian Everix, Rgl | Science | Attainment and progress |
| | Design and technology | Attitudes, behaviour and personal development |
| | History | Teaching |
| | Physical education | Leadership and management |
| Michael Hudson, Lay Inspector | Equality of opportunity | Attendance |
| | | Support, guidance and pupils' welfare |
| | | Partnership with parents and the community |
| | | The efficiency of the school |
| Andrew Hicks | Mathematics | Curriculum and assessment |
| | Information technology | Staffing, accommodation and learning resources |
| | Geography | |
| | Music | |
| Brenda Clarke | Special educational needs | Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development |
| | Areas of learning for children under five | |
| | English | |
| | Religious education | |
| | Art | |

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London WC2B 6SE

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress in reading, mathematics, spelling, speaking and listening.
- Children under five are taught well and make good progress.
- Pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported and make good progress towards their targets.
- The headteacher provides effective leadership, well supported by the staff and governors.
- Relationships amongst members of the school community are very good.
- There is very good provision for pupils' moral and social development.
- Pupils receive very good support and guidance from the staff which aids their personal development.
- A very effective partnership with parents and the community enhances pupils' learning.
- The spending of money is rigorously monitored and clearly focused on educational improvements.

• Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Religious education is not taught in enough depth at Key Stage 2.
- II. The range and depth of writing are too limited for the most able pupils and this restricts their attainment.
- III. Investigative and experimental work in science are not sufficiently challenging for brighter pupils.
- IV. Pupils do not always take enough care in the setting out and general presentation of their work.

The weaknesses are significantly outweighed by what the school does well but they will form the basis of the governors' action plan which will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

• How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. Good progress has been made on the most important key issues regarding standards, teaching and curriculum planning. Standards in the key areas of numeracy, literacy and information technology have all improved. Many of the strengths of the school have been sustained and built on, as for example the support and guidance given to pupils, and the partnership with parents and the community. The school's capacity to improve is good. There is strong leadership and teamwork committed to raising standards. This was evident in discussions with staff and all connected with the school. The school has already identified most of the weaknesses found in the inspection through its own monitoring.

• Standards in subjects

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1998 based on the National Curriculum tests:

| Performance in | Compared with all schools | Compared with similar schools |
|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| English | A | A |
| Mathematics | C | C |
| Science | C | D |

| Key |
|-----------------------------|
| <i>well above average</i> A |
| <i>above average</i> |

Overall, the past three years' test results have been above average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics. In 1999 nearly all pupils achieved national standards in reading but fewer achieved higher levels compared with 1998. Nearly all pupils attained national standards in 1999 in mathematics and writing which is an improvement from 1998. Comparisons with other schools were not available at the time of the inspection. For current pupils, attainment in English is above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4. Reading and spelling standards are above average and pupils develop good listening skills. Nearly all pupils attain national standards in writing but few attain higher than this. In mathematics current attainment is above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 4. The successful introduction of numeracy lessons from 1997, followed by the National Numeracy Strategy this year, have both contributed to higher levels of attainment than those indicated by the test results. Attainment in science is average at both key stages. However, few pupils achieve higher standards in investigational science. In religious education at Key Stage 2, attainment is below that expected in the local syllabus. Standards in design and technology are higher than expected at Key Stage 1. In all other subjects, including information technology, standards are those expected for the pupils' ages.

· **Quality of teaching**

| Teaching in: | Under 5 | 5 - 7 years | 7 - 11 years |
|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| English | Good | Good | Good |
| Mathematics | Good | Good | Good |
| Science | | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Information technology | | * Insufficient evidence | |
| Religious education | | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Other subjects | Good | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |

** Whilst pupils were observed working on computers, insufficient direct teaching was observed to make a judgement.*

Teaching was very good in 14 per cent, good in 40 per cent and satisfactory in 46 per cent of the lessons observed. No lessons were less than satisfactory. Teaching was nearly always good in the reception classes. The remainder of the range in the quality of teaching was evenly spread through Key Stages 1 and 2.

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

Other aspects of the school

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| Behaviour | Good behaviour in and around the school. Pupils demonstrate a caring attitude towards each other. |
| Attendance | Very good. The school's procedures are effective in keeping absence to a minimum. |
| Ethos* | Very good. Most pupils are keen learners and try their best. They are well supported by staff, and relationships are very good. Headteacher, staff and governors share a commitment to high standards. |
| Leadership and management | Very good. The headteacher is effective and the governors are fully involved. A clear direction is focused on improving the quality of education. Very good procedures for monitoring teaching and standards enable weaknesses to be identified and improvements made. |
| Curriculum | Satisfactory overall with strengths in numeracy and literacy. Insufficient time for religious education at Key Stage 2 contributes to unsatisfactory standards. Good planning procedures. Very good extra curricular activities at Key Stage 2. Detailed assessment procedures used well to track pupils' progress. |
| Pupils with special educational needs | Pupils are well taught and make good progress towards clearly identified targets on their individual education plans. Provision is well managed. |
| Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development | Very good moral and social development. Pupils are taught right from wrong, and have many opportunities to develop social skills when in lessons and during breaks. Satisfactory spiritual and cultural development. |
| Staffing, resources and accommodation | Well-qualified classroom assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' progress. Several new staff benefiting from good induction procedures enabling them to work well as a team. Effective staff training and appraisal. Overall, good resources and accommodation. |
| Value for money | Good. |

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

The parents' views of the school

| What most parents like about the school | What some parents are not happy about |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They are encouraged to take part in the life of the school. ● The headteacher and staff are approachable. ● They are kept well informed about what is taught. ● Standards are good. ● The right values and attitudes are taught. ● Behaviour is good. ● Their children like school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A few parents do not agree with the |

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. They judge that homework is used well to support learning throughout the school.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve the standards of education and rectify the weaknesses identified in the inspection, the governing body, headteacher and staff must:

- A. Raise attainment in religious education, particularly at Key Stage 2 by:
 - a. Increasing teaching time so that is closer to the recommendations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
 - b. Teaching the subject in greater depth and ensuring that pupils have a better understanding of different faiths.
 - c. Providing pupils with more opportunities to write about the subject in a variety of ways.
 - d. Enhancing pupils' first hand experience of different religions by increasing the range of artefacts.
 (Paragraphs: 9, 16, 36, 68, 114, 115, 118)

- A. Raise attainment in writing for the most able pupils by:
 - a. Ensuring that ongoing assessment is used consistently to provide challenging work for the highest attaining pupils.
 - b. Providing more opportunities for extended writing so that pupils learn to organise their work logically and, as they get older, sustain and develop their ideas.
 - c. Planning more opportunities for pupils to write in depth in different subjects.
 (Paragraphs: 10, 12, 20, 31, 38, 86, 87, 90, 91, 103, 129, 133)

- A. Raise attainment in investigative science, particularly for the most able pupils, by:
 - a. Improving planning so that it gives greater guidance on the development of experimental skills.
 - b. Ensuring ongoing assessment is used more effectively to plan for pupils' different levels of attainment.
 - c. Providing more opportunities for the oldest highest attaining pupils to test their own ideas and learn a greater range of methods for recording their observations.
 (Paragraphs: 10, 14, 31, 32, 38, 102, 103, 106, 107)

- A. Raise expectations of how pupils present their work by:
- a. Ensuring that pupils use and apply their handwriting skills more frequently in their work.
 - b. Building on recent improvements in several classes by consistently teaching pupils the importance of carefully setting out their work.
 - c. Making sure that different forms of recording, such as diagrams and charts, are set out carefully and accurately.
- (Paragraphs: 11, 31, 86, 99, 104, 129, 134)

(The paragraph numbers in brackets refer to sections of the report where the issues are discussed).

In addition to the above points, the following actions to rectify minor weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Ensuring that all teachers complete attendance registers accurately using the correct symbols. (Paragraph: 26)
- Including rates of both authorised and unauthorised absence in the school prospectus. (Paragraph: 26)
- Monitoring teachers' marking to ensure that the school's guidelines are being consistently followed. (Paragraphs: 32, 41, 90, 106)
- Ensuring that teachers use computers to their maximum potential in all lessons. (Paragraphs: 34, 101, 112)
- Continuing to develop pupils' awareness of other cultures. (Paragraph: 48)
- Improving the outdoor play resources for children under five. (Paragraphs: 68, 79)
- Monitoring the work in sketch books to ensure it is of a consistently good quality. (Paragraph: 120)

· **INTRODUCTION**

· **Characteristics of the school**

1. Abbot's Hall Primary School is a community, county controlled school for pupils aged four to nine years old. Of the 205 full time pupils on roll, 108 are boys and 97 are girls. At the time of the inspection there were 39 part time children under five attending school for the mornings only. Most pupils come from the area around the school with a few from other parts of Stowmarket. The number of pupils claiming free school meals is a little below the national average for a first school. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds although the number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is below average. Twenty-six pupils are on the special needs register, none of whom has statements for their needs. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school varies but overall is average. Only two teachers are still in post from those present at the time of the last inspection. Three new members of staff have joined this term, including a new deputy headteacher.

2. The aims of the school are summed up in the school's mission statement, which states: "Our school offers a friendly, caring environment which encourages academic excellence and the development of each child's full potential."

3. The current main priorities of the school are to establish a new staff team, raise the number of pupils attaining above average levels in English, mathematics and science, and improve the teaching of religious education.

3. Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1¹

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

| Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1998 | 23 | 26 | 49 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above | Boys | 21 | 19 | 19 |
| | Girls | 25 | 22 | 23 |
| | Total | 46 | 41 | 42 |
| Percentage at NC Level 2 or above | School | 94 (88) | 84 (94) | 86 (88) |
| | National | 80 (80) | 81 (80) | 84 (83) |

| Teacher Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above | Boys | 20 | 21 | 20 |
| | Girls | 26 | 24 | 23 |
| | Total | 46 | 45 | 43 |
| Percentage at NC Level 2 or above | School | 94 (91) | 92 (84) | 88 (97) |
| | National | 81 (80) | 85 (84) | 86 (85) |

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

Attendance

| Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year | | | % |
|---|-----------------------|-------------|-----|
| | Authorised Absence | School | |
| National data | | comparative | 5.7 |
| Unauthorise d Absence | School | | 0.0 |
| | National data | comparative | 0.5 |

Exclusions

| Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year: | Number |
|---|--------|
| Fixed period | 0 |
| Permanent | 1 |

Quality of teaching

| Percentage of teaching observed which is: | % |
|---|-----|
| Very good or better | 14 |
| Satisfactory or better | 100 |
| Less than satisfactory | 0 |

3. **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

3. **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

3. **Attainment and progress**

4.The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is broadly average. Overall, children under five make good progress. Most achieve the expected standards by the time they are five and many exceed them.

5.Results in national assessment tests at Key Stage 1 over the past three years were above average in reading and writing, and close to the national average in mathematics.

The 1998 assessment results show that attainment in reading was well above the national average, and in writing and mathematics it was close to the national average. In science, teacher assessments show that attainment is broadly average when compared nationally. When compared with similar schools, results in reading were well above, mathematics below and writing close to the average. In the 1999 results there was an increase in the numbers achieving national standards, with nearly all pupils reaching the expected level 2 or above in reading, writing and mathematics. The inspection judgements reflect the test results in English where overall attainment is judged to be above average, and in science where attainment is average. Inspection evidence shows that attainment in mathematics is above average. The improved standards are explained by the school's successful participation in the local authority's numeracy project since 1997. This has paved the way for the effective introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and the good progress seen in lessons during the inspection.

6.There is no national test data for pupils in Year 4. However, inspection evidence shows that overall attainment for pupils currently in Year 4 is above average in English and mathematics, and average in science.

7.Test results at Key Stage 1 highlight significant differences in attainment between girls and boys in reading, and a smaller difference in writing. The school has monitored these results and can find no clear explanation for the difference. However, it has reviewed its library books to ensure there is a range that appeals to boys. No significant differences in the performance of boys and girls were evident during the inspection.

8.The school has set targets for improvement in its national test results for the past few years. It has achieved its target of improving the numbers achieving national standards and is now aiming to increase the proportion attaining the higher level 3. In 1998 the proportions attaining above average scores were well above the national average in reading, average in writing and below average in mathematics. The proportions at higher levels in 1999 were lower in reading, higher in mathematics and similar in writing.

9.Compared with the judgements in the last inspection, standards in English, mathematics, information technology and design and technology have risen at both key stages. Attainment in religious education at Key Stage 2 has fallen and does not meet the expectations of the agreed syllabus. In all other subjects, where judgements were possible, standards are similar to the last inspection, apart from in art where they are not as high.

10.Overall, pupils' progress is good at both key stages. The judgement takes into account the overall good progress in lessons and over time in the key skills of reading, spelling, speaking and listening, and numeracy. Higher attaining pupils make sound progress. In mathematics and reading progress is good. However, in writing and investigative science the most able pupils are not achieving high enough standards. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support both in and out of the classroom. This, together with the realistic targets set by

teachers, contributes to their overall good progress especially in literacy and numeracy.

11. Standards of presentation in pupils' work varies between classes, and past work shows that at times it is unsatisfactory, particularly in some classes at Key Stage 2. For example, pupils' drawings of diagrams are poor and setting out on occasions is untidy. Many pupils are printing rather than using the cursive handwriting they have been taught. Through its monitoring of pupils' work the school has recognised that standards are not high enough and has begun to address the issue by, for example, replacing worksheets with exercise books. Although standards of presentation are not yet high enough, many teachers are now insisting that pupils take more care.

12. Overall, at both key stages, pupils make good progress in **English**. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening. By Year 2 pupils describe in detail how to make a milkshake, or the method used when printing leaf shapes, whilst Year 4 pupils speak with good expression as they act out play scripts. At both key stages pupils listen attentively to teachers and to each other. Pupils make good progress with reading. At Key Stage 1 pupils develop suitable strategies, including the use of phonics, to read unfamiliar words. At Key Stage 2 pupils read for a variety of different purposes, including play scripts, recipes and instructions. They enjoy a range of fiction and non-fiction books and many name their favourite authors. Pupils find information competently in the library and from books. At both key stages most pupils make sound progress in writing; in spelling progress is good. At Key Stage 1 most pupils understand the use of capital letters and full stops and a few are beginning to introduce speech marks into their work. Pupils make lists, label captions and write simple instructions such as how to make a jam sandwich. By Year 4 pupils learn the conventions of play writing, understanding scene and setting. There are too few opportunities to extend the writing skills of the most able pupils and this limits their progress. Pupils' handwriting is satisfactory although it is not used well in other subjects.

13. Pupils make good progress in **mathematics**. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a secure grasp of number. They confidently add and subtract numbers mentally and have a good understanding of place value. Many pupils know multiplication tables for 2, 3 and 5. Pupils use decimal numbers when working with money, and higher attaining pupils are beginning to understand negative numbers. They weigh in grams and measure length in centimetres. Pupils know the names of two and three-dimensional objects and identify right angles. They use and apply their knowledge of number well, for example, to explore patterns in multiplication tables. Nearly all Year 4 pupils have secure calculation skills. Pupils add and subtract numbers up to 1000 and know most multiplication tables. They apply a good knowledge of decimals and division to solve problems. Pupils use their understanding of measurement to calculate the perimeter of simple shapes. They correctly identify shapes from the number of edges, faces and corners. In work on data handling, pupils collect and record data using tally tables, which they then use to draw bar graphs.

14. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in **science**. However, higher attaining pupils make insufficient progress with investigative skills, as work is often set at one level. Pupils gain a good knowledge of life, living processes and materials. They have a sound knowledge of physical processes such as electricity and forces.

15. Pupils make satisfactory progress in **information technology** and meet national expectations. At Key Stage 1 pupils write short passages of text choosing font styles and sizes, and edit work before printing it out. They give instructions to a floor "Roamer" to make it move. Pupils enter data to draw bar charts such as those of pupils' hair colour and use the paint facilities of a computer competently. By the end of Year 4, pupils use CD-ROM references to look up information. They word process work confidently using facilities such as "edit" to remove spelling mistakes, and "cut" and "paste" to move text. Pupils enter data into a prepared database, and follow simple lines of enquiry. They write sequences of instructions to draw shapes on the screen.

16. Pupils make satisfactory progress in **religious education** at Key Stage 1 but insufficient progress at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1 pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of how change affects them and the wider world. They know the stories of Christmas and Easter and relate these to the life of Jesus. The quality and quantity of written work over the past year at Key Stage 2 is unsatisfactory. Pupils have not developed sufficient understanding of different faiths. Progress was sound in the lessons observed.

17. Pupils make satisfactory progress in **art** at both key stages with good standards in some drawing and painting in Year 4. In **design and technology** at Key Stage 1 work is of a standard higher than expected for the pupils' ages and they make good progress. Pupils learn to design and make objects for specific uses from an early age, and evaluate how well they meet the intended purpose. At Key Stage 2, the work available is of a similar standard to that expected for the pupils' ages. However, there is not enough evidence to make an overall judgement about progress.

18. Pupils make satisfactory progress in **history**. At Key Stage 1, pupils develop a sense of chronology and look for evidence of change, for example, when studying objects at the local museum. At Key Stage 2, pupils compare life in the past with their own when learning about Romans and Victorians. Pupils learn that evidence can be obtained from a variety of sources including books, CD-ROMs, and local buildings. Pupils make satisfactory progress in **geography**. At Key Stage 1 pupils understand what an aerial view is and draw simple maps of the school grounds. They compare life in Stowmarket with Felixstowe and faraway places such as Mexico City. At Key Stage 2, pupils develop their study of other places through work on India and Europe. Pupils correctly label the countries of Europe. They study the course of a river and correctly name its parts.

19. In the aspects of **music** observed pupils make satisfactory progress. Progress in singing is good, especially for members of the school choir. At Key Stage 1 pupils develop their listening skills by describing their reactions to short excerpts of music. They know appropriate musical terms such as "timbre". At Key Stage 2, pupils write and perform simple graphic scores for their composition and incorporate features such as "ostinato" patterns. Too few lessons were seen in the various aspects of **physical education** to make an overall judgement about progress. In the lessons seen, young Key Stage 1 pupils had a good awareness of space and competed well in chasing and dodging games. In the gymnastics and games lessons at Key Stage 2, pupils joined movements with the expected levels of fluency and had satisfactory bat and ball skills.

20. Pupils make satisfactory use of **literacy** skills in other subjects. A particularly good feature is the learning of specialist vocabulary such as "flow", "sequence" in physical education, and "solubility", "evaporation" in science. There are a few good examples of pupils using their writing skills in other subjects, as for example, in history, when they write about their visits to a castle and describe artefacts seen in a local museum. However, past work shows that there are not enough opportunities for the most able pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects. Pupils make satisfactory use of **numeracy** across the curriculum. For example, they weigh ingredients for making bread and they measure materials before cutting in design and technology activities. Older pupils measure temperature in science experiments and draw graphs to show how it changes, and they use co-ordinates in developing their understanding of maps in geography.

20. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

21.Children under five establish good relationships with each other and with adults. The children settle quickly to their tasks and have adapted well to the school's routines and rules for behaviour. As a result of effective teaching the children have good attitudes to learning and start each day eager to explore the day's activities. Most pupils, at Key Stages 1 and 2, including those with special educational needs, have good attitudes to learning. For example, in a Year 4 literacy lesson the pupils eagerly raised their hands to answer questions and then worked collaboratively in groups discussing play scripts. Occasionally, progress slows when a few pupils at Key Stage 1 do not come to order quickly, and talk when the teacher is explaining a lesson.

22.Behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils are involved in devising class rules and generally abide by them. This results in a positive learning environment in which pupils co-operate and collaborate well. Pupils act sensibly when moving around the school and have regard for the safety of others, for example in physical education lessons. Pupils can be relied upon to act sensibly when visitors are present. In an assembly taken by a member of the clergy they were required to respond with various actions in a story. They did this with great self-control and settled sensibly to the reflective part of worship. On another occasion the teacher was having problems with a computer fault; the class waited patiently and sensibly, offering helpful suggestions to the teacher. Occasionally, particularly when the pace of lessons slows, pupils fidget or chatter and lose concentration. No incidents of harassment or bullying were observed during the inspection. There has been one permanent exclusion during the past year.

23.Relationships between members of the school community are very good. Pupils are sociable with one another and with adults. They work collaboratively when required, discuss their tasks sensibly and value each other's contributions in lessons. For example, in a personal and social education lesson pupils listened carefully to each other's responses about how they would act responsibly in various situations. This enhanced their progress; their thoughtful contributions showing that they had reflected on each other's opinions. A strong feature of the school is the mutual respect between pupils and all adults. This underpins the very good ethos in the school.

24.Pupils' personal development is very good. They willingly take on additional responsibilities, including acting as class monitors, from a young age. This is evident from the reception class upwards where they clear away equipment tidily and efficiently. In one lesson a group using the "home corner" organised the area tidily for another group without being reminded. As they get older, pupils sensibly carry out a range of responsibilities including helping younger children at lunchtime, preparing the assembly hall and looking after the library. Older pupils show care and concern for younger children. They take responsibility for befriending children starting school and this continues informally at playtime and during lunches where they help them with their dinner. Older pupils discuss their life at school sensibly with visitors and have learnt such appropriate manners as standing back to let adults through doors and saying, "excuse me" if they wish to come past. Pupils show good levels of initiative in lessons. For example, Year 2 pupils operated a tape recorder without needing help in a literacy lesson and Year 4 pupils independently referred to wall posters and dictionaries to find out word meanings during a numeracy lesson.

25.The high standards in pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development have been maintained since the last inspection.

25. Attendance

26.As in the last inspection, attendance is very good. In the last school year the attendance rate was very high compared to the national average, while unauthorised absence was well below average. Registration is conducted promptly and effectively, pupils answer politely and are gainfully employed while it is in progress. Apart from a few minor errors, registers are completed accurately. Pupils are punctual and lessons start and finish on time. Most parents observe the absentee procedures including those on holidays taken in term time. Together attendance and punctuality have a positive impact on attainment and progress. Absence rates are published in the governors' annual report to parents but only the unauthorised rates are included in the school prospectus.

26. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

27.The quality of teaching is good overall. This is an improvement from the last inspection when teaching was satisfactory and a key issue for the school was to raise its quality. In the current inspection teaching was very good in 14 per cent, good in 40 per cent and satisfactory in 46 per cent of lessons. No unsatisfactory or poor teaching was observed. The quality of teaching in the reception classes was almost always good and good overall at Key Stages 1 and 2. The range in the quality of teaching was similar at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The overall quality of teaching observed in literacy and numeracy was good. The best teaching was motivating and enabled pupils of all levels of attainment to make rapid progress. This was evident in a very good numeracy lesson at Key Stage 1. Skilful whole class questioning involved both year groups in the mixed age group. To ensure all were involved the teacher used the responses of one year group to challenge the other with questions such as, "What more can you tell the year ones about this pattern?" The subsequent group work was challenging as it was well matched to the different attainment levels within the year groups. Effective discipline, based on the teacher's very good relationships with her pupils, ensured that they worked hard in all parts of the lesson.

28.The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers plan to ensure that pupils' targets are progressive and achievable. Targets are shared with classroom assistants who frequently devise additional support material. Their work contributes significantly to the pupils' good progress. Teachers use a range of effective strategies to support pupils with special educational needs. For example, sometimes the pupils work in small ability groups and at others alongside high achieving pupils, as in a Year 2 religious education lesson. Teachers also ensure that special educational needs pupils are included in class discussions, and frequently ask them challenging, yet realistic questions.

29.The quality of teaching for children under five is good overall and occasionally very good. The teaching observed in literacy and numeracy lessons was good. In nearly all lessons, in the other areas of learning, teaching was good, with particular strengths in personal and social development. The teachers have a good understanding of the needs of young children. They provide an interesting range of well-planned activities which reflect high expectations. The teachers have very good behaviour management strategies based on praise, fairness and attention to small detail. On-going assessment is used well to match work to the ability of each child. The classroom assistants share in planning and make a valuable contribution to the overall good progress of the children.

30.At Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 teachers have a good knowledge of the curriculum. Their understanding of the structure of the numeracy and literacy hours is good and underpins the good teaching seen in these lessons. Where teachers' knowledge is very good this leads to rapid progress. For example, in a Key Stage 1 music lesson, pupils were given a good explanation of "timbre" and the teacher knew exactly what to focus on when asking pupils to

identify background percussion. This enhanced their progress. Occasionally, teachers' inaccurate knowledge leads to misunderstanding, for instance, in the use of electrical symbols in circuit diagrams.

31. Overall teachers' expectations are sound at both key stages. In most numeracy and literacy lessons, pupils of all levels of attainment are challenged. In a Year 3 handwriting lesson the teacher had very high expectations and continually challenged the pupils to do better. Consequently, the quality of handwriting in this class was of a high standard. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson the teacher extended pupils' thinking by providing work in the form of problems, mental arithmetic and games. This caused the pupils to think hard for the whole lesson and as a result they made good progress in understanding number bonds beyond ten. The school is beginning to address weaknesses in the writing skills of the most able pupils which, past work shows, have not been taught to a high enough level. Similarly, investigative science has not been taught at a high enough level to challenge the most able pupils. Through the headteacher's monitoring, staff have been made aware that the expectations of pupils' presentation of work are not high enough. Improvements have been made recently but some pupils are not always taking enough care, for example by using rulers in diagrams or applying their handwriting skills in different subjects.

32. Teachers plan lessons well. The numeracy and literacy formats are used successfully and help teachers focus on the different levels of attainment in their classes. Most lesson plans are detailed, reflecting a great deal of thought and effort. In a few instances at Key Stage 1 lesson plans are briefer and not of such a high quality. A very good feature in all classes is the sharing of lesson objectives with the pupils. These are placed on the wall and reinforced during the lessons. This gives pupils a clear understanding of what they are learning and why. Day-to-day assessment is satisfactory overall. Several teachers set individual learning targets which are recorded in pupils' books. This good practice helps pupils to focus on self-improvement. The quality of marking varies and does not consistently follow the marking policy. Although all work is marked, comments range from those that are encouraging and helpful in identifying areas for pupils to improve, to just ticks. Most work is planned from a good knowledge of what pupils' know. However, weaknesses in using ongoing assessment to plan for different levels of attainment in science and in a few foundation subjects are evident in past work.

33. Teaching methods and the organisation of classrooms are usually good. In nearly all lessons teachers have a good balance of introduction, individual or group activity and an opportunity to share learning at the end. Teachers often provide good opportunities for social development. For example, in mathematics, art and literacy lessons, pupils learn to work co-operatively and to make group decisions. The management of pupils is good overall. Teachers have successful strategies for ensuring pupils concentrate on their tasks. Much of this is based on the very good relationships teachers have with their pupils. In a few lessons at Key Stage 1 pupils lost interest and started chatting because they were seated on the carpet in such a way that they were unable to see the teacher. In nearly all lessons teachers succeed in creating a calm working atmosphere. Raised voices are rarely heard.

34. Teachers make sound use of time in lessons. In the best lessons there is a sense of urgency and pupils are given time limits such as "you have three minutes left". A numeracy lesson in Year 3 proceeded at a rapid pace, the teacher ensured that pupils were productively employed from the moment they entered the classroom, and they made very good progress. In a few other lessons the pace was slower. For example, in a Key Stage 2 literacy lesson the introductory session was too long and a few pupils began to misbehave. In one class the mental arithmetic session was more "snappy" and took less time than in the other class from the same age group. Teachers make satisfactory use of resources. Equipment is out and available to pupils in most lessons. However, there were several missed opportunities to use computers.

35. There is a clear policy for homework and it is used well to support learning. Pupils take reading books home from reception and in Year 2 they take spellings as well. Occasionally, other tasks are set. At Key Stage 2 maths and English are set and the amount increases in Year 4. Homework folders for last year show that there are clear explanations of the work, and that tasks are directly related to work undertaken in school. Homework makes a positive contribution to pupils' progress.

35. The curriculum and assessment

36. Overall, the school's curriculum is satisfactorily broad and balanced. The emphasis on literacy and numeracy is good with over half the timetable allocated to these areas of national priority. The curriculum meets statutory requirements but there is insufficient time for religious education at Key Stage 2, preventing the school from teaching the locally agreed syllabus in sufficient depth. With this exception, a satisfactory time balance has been established between subjects. The curriculum is relevant to the pupils and provides good opportunities for pupils to work independently as they get older, for example through the increased emphasis on individual and group work in English and mathematics. Children under five are offered a broad, balanced curriculum, which is well planned to ensure a progression of skills and good preparation for work at Key Stage 1.

37. The school's literacy strategy is effective and has been particularly successful in raising reading standards. The school has prepared well for the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy through participation in a similar Suffolk project for the past two years. This has contributed to higher standards, especially through an increased emphasis on mental calculations. Curriculum planning in information technology and design and technology has improved since the previous inspection, where it was identified as a weakness. Health education, including an awareness of substance misuse, is appropriately included in science and social education lessons.

38. Overall, equality of opportunity is promoted effectively. All pupils have equal access to the content of the curriculum and all activities are open to boys and girls. The school's planning ensures that classes in the same year group are taught the same curriculum. Great care is taken in the mixed age class to ensure the curriculum is modified for the two age groups. In most subjects, clear learning objectives and careful planning ensure that pupils are suitably challenged. However, work in investigative science and writing is not always sufficiently demanding for higher attaining pupils. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and ensures that they have access to the whole curriculum. Regular termly reviews of their progress are undertaken; their needs are assessed well and clear realistic targets set in their individual education plans. Pupils are sometimes withdrawn from Literacy and Numeracy lessons to receive quality individual tuition from the special needs teacher. This arrangement is effective in ensuring that targets are met.

39. A detailed planning system ensures that the curriculum systematically develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, and provides good continuity of learning. Starting with schemes of work, subject co-ordinators draw up half-termly plans for each year group. Teachers working together in each year group develop these into good weekly lesson plans. This is good practice enabling expertise and skills to be shared. The plans are good as they identify clear learning objectives, teaching activities and resource requirements. Planning for English and mathematics is especially detailed, following the recommended framework in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.

40. Although there are no extra curricular activities at Key Stage 1, there is very good provision at Key Stage 2. These include choir, dance, environmental, gardening, football, sports and table-tennis clubs and they contribute well to pupils' personal, cultural and physical development. Educational visits enrich the curriculum. For example, pupils visit the local museum, nearby castles and places of worship to support work in history and religious

education.

41.The school has good procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress. A clear assessment policy gives good guidance to teachers. End of key stage assessments are generally accurate, although teachers over-estimated the number of pupils who would reach level 3 for writing in 1999. The school marking policy is clear, but it is not consistently applied by all teachers.

42.Assessments are made half-termly in most subjects, and class record sheets are completed. These provide good ongoing information to track progress, and to complete an end of year profile for each pupil, including National Curriculum levels of attainment. Results from regular standardised tests in reading, spelling, mathematics and science provide valuable additional data to track overall and individual progress.

43.Teachers make good use of assessment information. Baseline tests are used to plan appropriate work for children under five and assist in the early identification of pupils with special educational needs. All pupils have individual termly targets for English and mathematics and for science at Key Stage 2. These are regularly reviewed in the light of teaching and assessments made throughout the year. At the end of the year, targets for the following term are discussed and set with pupils. The information is included in the high quality reports for parents, and informs the pupils' new class teacher of their attainment. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection.

43. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

44.The provision for the pupils' moral and social education is very good and the provision for their cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory.

45.A comprehensive framework for collective worship has been devised, and termly themes developed in line with the current school topics. This ensures a consistent approach and a progression in the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils acquire. Assemblies and worship are important events which successfully enhance the pupils' spiritual understanding. They present planned opportunities for pupils to develop spiritual awareness, to reflect on a variety of issues, and to experience a sense of awe and wonder. For example, in an Assembly about "Change", pupils were enthralled when the teacher lit a large candle. She told the story of Zacchaeus, and explained that the changes he made in his life could be likened to the candlelight shining through the wax. Good links are fostered with local churches and visiting ministers taking collective worship make a significant contribution to pupils' spirituality. Reception pupils considered the wonder of autumn as they heard the sound of leaves crunching. However, overall, there are limited opportunities for reflection or to develop a sense of wonder in lessons.

46.The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral development. The school's rules are based on moral principles such as honesty and caring. These are reflected in the personal, social and health education policy, used to guide lessons. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, pupils were asked to consider the causes and effects of acting responsibly or irresponsibly when taking a message. From early in the reception classes pupils are taught right from wrong. During a lesson with the part time children, the teacher explained to a reluctant boy that it would be helpful for the group if he tidied up the toys even though he wasn't the last to use them. The adults working in the school all provide very good role models and consistently apply the class and school rules. As a result the pupils understand what is expected of them and the school is a very orderly community. The concern for wider moral issues is heightened by a variety of fund raising events which the pupils are encouraged to organise themselves. Events include Poppy Day, Great Ormond Street Appeal and Red Nose Day. Parents strongly support the positive values and attitudes fostered by the school.

47. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. Pupils are encouraged to co-operate and collaborate in small groups, respecting each other's wishes and points of view. This mutual respect was developed well in a Key Stage 2 literacy lesson where one pupil in each group was asked to read out the text and the others sensibly listened. Another example was a discussion in an art lesson where pupils had to decide where to place objects on a collage. Paired games used in mathematics promote both numeracy and social skills. Formal skills such as taking turns when speaking, not interrupting others and walking calmly and sensibly around the school, are strongly encouraged. At Key Stage 2, there are very good opportunities for pupils to collaborate and compete with each other in a range of extra curricular activities. The school values opportunities at break times to promote pupils' social skills. For example, at dinnertime Year 4 pupils act as monitors and help younger children. Books and comics are provided for pupils waiting to have their lunch. Older pupils are taught to care for younger children. They write to new reception children prior to their starting school, and then befriend them at lunch and play.

48. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory overall. Pupils experience a range of opportunities to learn about their own culture. They visit local shops, the library, church, and the Museum of East Anglian Life. Their education is enriched by class visits to interesting places such as Colchester Castle. Opportunities to learn about the cultural traditions of others have improved since the last inspection. The head teacher has ensured that the pupils enjoy a range of cultural experiences such as a Ugandan dance display, African drumming, and Japanese shadow puppets. Some initial work has been done in planning a multicultural perspective in other subjects of the curriculum such as geography, religious education, music and art. This remains an area for development. There is a satisfactory supply of books, CDs and posters which promote the beliefs and life styles of others.

48. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

49. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. The school fosters a safe, secure and friendly environment in which pastoral care and welfare have a high priority. Teachers know the children very well, and parents confirm that effective support and advice are provided for their children across all aspects of school life. For example, great care is taken to meet the individual needs of pupils who have social, dietary and other difficulties at lunch time. The personal, social and health education policy, which includes circle time, citizenship and environmental issues, is very good.

50. The school has good procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress and personal development. Good records are kept on every pupil and include assessment data, work samples and yearly reports. A good feature is the setting of individual targets which are discussed with pupils. The good progress made by pupils with special educational needs relates directly to the good level of support they receive. Adults take time to listen to pupils and help them overcome their problems. Pupils are praised for their efforts, especially in whole class lessons.

51. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are of a high quality and a strong feature of the school. The behaviour policy is very positive, clearly defines standards and expectations, and is supported by a balanced scale of rewards and sanctions. The policy, which is sent to parents, is supplemented by a good code of conduct and class rules which pupils help to draw up. There are separate and very good policies on bullying, exclusion and the use of reasonable force to restrain pupils. Behavioural issues are discussed with pupils as part of their personal, social and health education. Lunchtime procedures are very effective with courtesy, good manners and social skills being emphasised. Each class keeps a "special mentions book" and regular celebratory assemblies are held which include recognition of good behaviour. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. The prospectus gives clear guidance on attendance and parents are regularly reminded about procedures. The application forms which are submitted for any holidays in term time, suitably

draw parents' attention to the educational disadvantages of such holidays. The school liaises closely with the education welfare officer.

52. The school has very good child protection measures. A child protection officer is designated, trained and known to staff, and links with the appropriate agencies are in place. The health, safety and risk management policies too are very good, a health and safety governor is appointed and regular inspections are conducted. All members of staff have good health and safety awareness, and pupils feel safe and secure. Hygiene and general cleanliness are very good. Supervision at lunch and playtimes, including wet playtimes, is good. Lunchtime supervisors have regular training and meet regularly with the headteacher to discuss areas of concern. The school has very effective procedures on accidents, illness and medicines, both in school and on educational visits, and sufficient staff have first aid training. The inspection of all equipment and appliances are in date. Fire procedures are very good and emergency evacuation drills are frequently practised.

52. Partnership with parents and the community

53. Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to improve its partnerships with parents and the community, and these are now very good. The school promotes positive relationships with parents and the quality of information it provides is very good. Communication includes consultations, meetings, curriculum booklets, assemblies, newsletters and notices. A home-school agreement has been agreed and issued. The governors' annual report to parents too is an interesting, well-written document, which meets statutory requirements. School reports are very good. They are evaluative, show progress in subjects over the year and clearly indicate areas for pupil improvement in English and mathematics. Almost all parents who answered the questionnaire and attended the parents' meeting are satisfied both with the information the school gives them on the curriculum, and with what they are told about their children's progress. The school has a very good complaints procedure and parents find it easy to approach staff with problems and questions. Most parents believe the school handles complaints well.

54. Parental involvement in pupils' learning is very good. The school values the part parents and grandparents play in pupil's education and encourages them to become involved in all aspects of school life. Almost all parents confirm they are made to feel very welcome. Many regularly support class, sporting and extra curricular activities, educational visits and fund raising events. Very good guidance is given to parent helpers. Parents of pupils with special educational needs assist in drawing up and agreeing individual educational plans. Homework, which is based on reading, spelling and tables, is well planned and a useful booklet is issued to parents giving guidance on home reading. Most parents are satisfied with the work their children are expected to do at home. Parents are consulted in the preparation of the school development plan. The Friends of Abbot's Hall School is thriving and very active in arranging fund raising and social events.

55. The school's links with the community are very good. The school's work is greatly enriched by its local contacts, and community links contribute markedly to pupils' progress and social experiences. Transfer arrangements for pupils to the middle school are excellent. As well as very close academic contacts throughout the year, there are teaching days, visits and sporting and social occasions. The school takes part in extra curricular and sporting activities with local schools and it regularly accepts students on work experience. Pupils have a good appreciation of disadvantaged people in the wider community. They organise and run events to support charities of their choice, such as the Great Ormond Street Appeal and Red Nose Day. A variety of educational visits in the local community include the post office, library and market, and notably the Museum of East Anglian Life which adjoins the school. Further afield there are trips to a nature reserve and castles. Officers from the emergency services talk to the pupils and there are visits by theatre workshops, storytellers and such multi-cultural groups as African drummers and Japanese puppeteers. The school has a close association with several

churches and the school choir and dancers perform at care centres. Sports coaches from local clubs, including Ipswich Town FC, train pupils. There is an on-going business link with a local supermarket, and other businesses support projects such as the environmental area and annual fete.

55. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

55. Leadership and management

56. The headteacher, supported by the governing body provides effective leadership. The headteacher is a strong, professional leader who has a clear vision of the positive direction which the school will develop. A good sense of teamwork has quickly become established with the several new members of staff. An effective senior management team, involving deputy headteacher and key stage co-ordinators, meets frequently to monitor and discuss school policy. Day to day organisation is very good. Effective management, clear procedures and good communication support teachers.

57. The governing body is well organised into an appropriate committee structure. It meets all statutory requirements apart from a minor omission in the school prospectus regarding rates of authorised absence. The headteacher keeps governors fully informed about standards in the school. Governors take their responsibilities very seriously and provide critical and constructive support for the headteacher. For example, they were concerned about the arts curriculum being reduced and suggested an annual arts week, which is to be arranged. Governors are assigned a curriculum area and a good system of monitoring ensures that they fulfil their roles effectively. Discussions are held with subject co-ordinators and they are invited to governors' meetings to make presentations about their subjects. Governors are well informed through frequent monitoring visits to the school. A governors' file contains detailed written accounts of focused visits, for example on literacy and numeracy. Other good examples include visits from governors following a concern expressed by a parent. Several governors, at the request of the headteacher, monitored behaviour and supervision arrangements at lunchtime. This good practice gives governors a further valuable insight into the life of the school and provides the headteacher with helpful independent feedback.

58. The headteacher, who joined the school shortly before the last inspection in 1996, together with her senior management team, has continued to review and develop the curriculum. Audits have been undertaken to reflect national and school priorities. The role of the subject co-ordinators, a weakness in the last inspection, has greatly improved. Each co-ordinator has a clear action plan for his or her subject with dated targets for improvements. Co-ordinators monitor teaching and produce written reports. Many of these provide useful points for development; others are more descriptive and lack evaluation. The headteacher regularly monitors teaching through formal classroom observation, providing feedback on points for development. This has been effective in improving the quality of teaching, which is now good overall compared with satisfactory at the last inspection. The monitoring of pupils' work through work scrutiny has been very helpful in identifying issues for improvement such as the presentation of pupils' work. Monitoring of teaching and the curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection.

59. The introduction of the literacy and numeracy hours has been well managed. The school's provision for special educational needs is effectively managed by the headteacher and well supported by a part-time teacher. The requirements of the code of practice are fully met.

60. The school development plan is very good. The previous plan has been reviewed and the new one drawn up with the full involvement of teachers, support staff and governors. Parents have also been consulted. Indications of further developments are projected ahead for the next two years. Clear success criteria enable the school to judge the impact of the various strategies. The progress of the development plan is rigorously monitored at governors'

meetings.

61.The school has good aims, values and policies which underpin its work. It is successfully implementing its values and most policies, for example, in promoting self-confidence and pupils' care and respect for one another. As expressed in the first part of its mission statement, "the school provides a friendly, caring environment". The school is working hard to fulfil the aim expressed in the second part of the statement: "encouraging academic excellence and the development of each child's potential". The ethos of the school is very good. There are positive attitudes to learning, a commitment to achieving high standards and very good relationships amongst all members of the school community.

62.The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. The key issues have all been addressed. Good progress has been made on the most important, regarding standards, teaching and curriculum planning. Standards in the key areas of numeracy, literacy and information technology have all improved. Many of the strengths of the school, for example the support and guidance given to pupils and the partnership with parents and the community, have been sustained and developed.

63.The school's capacity to improve is good. There is strong leadership and teamwork committed to raising standards. This was evident in discussions with staff and all connected with the school. The school has already identified most of the weaknesses found in the inspection through its own monitoring.

63. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

64.The school has sufficient well-qualified and experienced teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum. Teachers have appropriate qualifications and experience for their management and curriculum responsibilities. The overall provision of support staff is good. Several hold recognised qualifications appropriate to their deployment in the school. All have received training for English and mathematics, which has developed their expertise and improved their effectiveness, especially in supporting pupils with special educational needs. Teachers and all other staff work effectively together, contributing to the positive ethos of the school.

65.Professional development arrangements for staff are good. Appraisal is up-to-date. Informal discussions are held annually to identify the training needs of teaching and support staff. The programme for professional development is carefully developed within the budget to ensure a blend of individual needs and those related to the school's development plan. Staff training has had a positive impact on raising standards, for example, through the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies which have been effectively implemented. Early years' courses have helped to improve teaching and learning for younger children.

66.Induction arrangements for new staff are good and include a well-written staff handbook. Newly qualified teachers receive good support. This includes regular classroom observations and help from the headteacher, and the support of an experienced teacher as a mentor. As a result of effective induction procedures, the several new teachers have all quickly settled into the school this term.

67.The school's accommodation is good. The single storey buildings provide good access for pupils with physical disabilities. The school grounds are attractive and well maintained. The large playground, field and swimming pool provide sufficient play space and good support for physical education. A large library and a separate bookstore are easily accessible to pupils. Classrooms are generally of adequate size. Three large resource areas adjoin groups of classrooms, providing valuable extra space for practical lessons such as art and design technology. Storage space is good enabling equipment to be stored tidily and easily accessible. Good displays of pupils' work around the school enhance the welcoming atmosphere. The school is very well maintained and cleaned.

68. Learning resources are of good quality overall and easily accessible to pupils and teachers. Information technology resources have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now very good. Resources for English and mathematics are good reflecting the increased emphasis placed on these subjects. Resources for design and technology, a weakness in the last inspection, are now good. The provision for children under five is good, apart from the lack of large outdoor play equipment such as wheeled toys for physical and social development. The library contains a wide range of books. However, some are worn and reaching the end of their useful life. There are sufficient texts for religious education but the school relies on local loan services to supplement its inadequate supply of artefacts.

68. The efficiency of the school

69. The overall efficiency of the school has improved since the last inspection and is now very good.

70. Although there is no formal, overall written policy, financial responsibilities and procedures including delegated authority, budget controls and monitoring arrangements are very well understood and fully implemented. The finance working party draws up the school budget with the headteacher and presents it to the full governing body for approval. Prudence and good housekeeping are very evident, planning is carefully costed and due consideration is given to both current and future commitments. Recent expenditure priorities have correctly reflected national priorities of literacy and numeracy. The budget had a large surplus when the headteacher was appointed in 1996. This has been used sensibly to support school needs such as employing an additional teacher to reduce class sizes. Last year the budget surplus was reduced and planned expenditure for the current year shows that the school will retain a small but prudent contingency of around 5% of its budget. The school development plan includes full costing and clear success criteria to establish that money has been well spent. The plan gives a good overview of financial priorities over the next two years.

71. The use of teachers across the school is good. Teachers' qualifications and experience have been carefully considered and their deployment, including management responsibilities, suitably matches their professional and personal strengths. The effective use of support staff significantly contributes to the progress of pupils with special needs. Other support staff are deployed well to meet the changing priorities of the school. For example, when the reception year is fully settled, some support staff are re-deployed to assist in Year 2. Apart from computers, which are not fully utilised in lessons, the use of learning resources for most subjects is good. The use of accommodation is good both within and outside the school building. All areas were frequently used during the inspection.

72. The efficiency of financial control and school administration is excellent. The governors are fully involved in maintaining efficiency. They monitor and control the budget with great care. The finance working party meets and reports regularly to the governing body. The control of delegated and other funds is exemplary. The computerised financial system is thoroughly understood by the school administrator and very effectively utilised. Financial information is readily available for the headteacher and governors. Subject co-ordinators are involved in setting and monitoring their own budgets. Funding for pupils with special educational needs is appropriately spent. The last financial audit was positive and all its recommendations have been implemented. Other aspects of school administration are very well organised, efficient and unobtrusive, allowing teachers and support staff to focus on their teaching and pastoral duties.

73. The expenditure per pupil is broadly average when compared nationally with other primary schools. Pupils' overall attainment on entry to the school is average; by the time they leave, standards in most aspects of numeracy and literacy are above average. Taking other positive factors into account, including effective leadership, the good quality of teaching, and very

good moral and social development, the school provides good value for money.

73. **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

73. **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE**

74. Provision for children under five is good. The previous inspection report stated that children made a good start to their education and achieved steady progress. This has improved and children now make good progress in nearly all areas of learning. A baseline assessment is completed within the first few weeks of the children entering the reception classes, and the results show that their attainment is broadly average, although their writing and speaking skills are not as well developed. The current inspection findings indicate that, by the end of the school year, the majority of children will have reached the nationally recommended desirable learning outcomes, and many will have exceeded them.

74. ***Language and literacy***

75. Teachers place a strong emphasis on the early acquisition of literacy skills and children make good progress. They listen attentively in a variety of situations such as story time, and when the teacher is describing the next activity. Circle times are used well to develop speaking skills; children tell their news, and puppets are sometimes used to encourage contributions from the quieter members of the class. They are enthralled by William, the class teddy bear; they send him pretend letters and write their names with care. Children enjoy looking at the good range of quality books, reading them with the teacher and at home. Most children are beginning to use picture clues to help them read the text aloud. They make good progress in learning letter sounds and take practice sheets home on a regular basis.

75. ***Mathematics and numeracy***

76. A variety of activities enhance children's learning and they make good progress. They enjoy games and nursery rhymes involving counting and are well motivated by their visits to "Animal Zoo", where they meet new numbers through playing with a crocodile called "Snappy Six". Most children count carefully up to five objects, and many go beyond. Number work is effectively reinforced in other areas of the curriculum, for instance when placing six candles on a play dough cake, or using six straws to make a shape. Children learn correct mathematical language such as "one less than", and are developing concepts of time through sequencing days of the week and months of the year.

76. ***Knowledge and understanding of the world***

77. Children make good progress. They work enthusiastically with sand and play dough, making distinguishable models. A variety of good quality construction kits are used, through which the children act out life-circumstances, for example, when playing on the mat with model aeroplanes. They understand the passage of time by talking about their birthdays, what they did yesterday, or at the weekend, and most have learnt their birth dates. Children learn how the seasons change, for example how falling leaves indicate autumn. They use the computer and "listening centre" with increasing competence and enjoyment.

77. ***Creative development***

78. Children make good progress. They enjoy painting and drawing. The children carefully mix primary colours to make brown tree trunks, and add colourful leaves. Children enjoy poems, and sing number songs enthusiastically, using clear diction and reasonable pitch. They show increasing ability to use their imagination in role play, and explain what they see, touch and feel, for example, on the classroom Autumn display.

78. Physical development

79.Children make satisfactory progress. They confidently handle small tools such as spreaders and scissors. Children develop good hand-eye co-ordination when drawing, colouring and tracing and when building with construction kits. They run, jump, balance, stretch and dance with good co-ordination and control. At playtime children use balls, hoops and beanbags with confidence. However, the outdoor play area for under fives is limited, as there is no large equipment such as wheeled toys for co-operative play.

79. Personal and social development

80.The personal and social development of the children is very good. Although they have only been in school for six weeks, they are happy and secure. They settle quickly and adapt to the school's routines and rules for behaviour. Teachers put great emphasis on developing the children's self-esteem and social awareness. This results in good attitudes to learning and the children start each day eager to learn and explore the day's activities. The good relationships promote an atmosphere in which children flourish. The teachers and classroom assistants provide very good role models for social relationships.

81.The children are offered a broad, balanced curriculum which is well planned to ensure a progression of skills. Overall, teaching is good, and occasionally, very good. The teaching observed in literacy and numeracy lessons was good. In nearly all other lessons teaching was good, with particular strengths in personal and social development. The teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the needs of young children. They provide an interesting range of well-planned activities which reflect high expectations. For example, pupils are asked to be creative and practise counting when challenged to make six different shapes with play-dough. The teachers have very good behaviour management strategies based on praise, fairness and attention to small detail. Teachers use baseline assessment to set appropriate learning programmes for the children, and on-going assessment is used well to match work to the ability of each child. The classroom assistants share in planning and make a valuable contribution to the overall good progress of the children. Parental help is used to good effect with small group activities. All adults are good at developing pupils' vocabulary, for example when working with leaves pupils were encouraged to describe the texture using such words as "delicate", "rough" and "crunchy". The use of home-school books is good and makes a major contribution to parental involvement with their children's learning. Apart from large outdoor equipment, good resources ensure the pupils have a variety of experiences.

81. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

81. English

82.Pupils' attainment is broadly average on entry to the school, with some weaknesses in writing and speaking. The results of the 1998 Key Stage 1 tests showed that attainment in reading was well above average. In writing attainment was average when compared nationally and with similar schools. In the 1999 tests in reading and writing nearly all pupils attained the average level 2, which is an increase from 1998. However, the proportion achieving above average levels was lower in reading.

83.The inspection findings reflect these standards at the end of Key Stage 1. Standards of speaking are in line with expectations, but pupils' listening skills exceed them. For current pupils at Year 4, standards of reading are above average, writing is average, listening skills are higher than national expectations, and speaking is broadly in line with expectations. Taking all factors into account, overall attainment in English is above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4.

84.Overall, pupils make good progress in speaking and listening. From early in Year 1 pupils are taught to listen carefully to stories and instructions. They talk knowledgeably about their weekend activities. Year 2 pupils describe in detail how to make a milkshake, or the method

used when printing leaf shapes, whilst Year 4 pupils speak with good expression as they act out play scripts. At both key stages pupils listen attentively to teachers and to each other. Pupils apply their listening skills well in all subjects and this contributes significantly to their progress.

85. Pupils make good progress with reading. They read at their own level with enjoyment and confidence, either individually or during group reading. Books are regularly taken home for pupils to consolidate their reading with their parents. At Key Stage 1 pupils develop suitable strategies, including the use of phonics, to read unfamiliar words. "Big books" are used effectively during the Literacy Hour and pupils make rapid progress during these sessions. At Key Stage 2 pupils read for a variety of different purposes, including play scripts, recipes and instructions. They enjoy a range of fiction and non-fiction books. Many name their favourite authors. Pupils find information competently in the library and from information books. Boys' scores have not been as high as girls in reading in Key Stage 1 tests over the past few years. However, the school has taken care to provide reading material that will have an additional appeal to boys and overall they make good progress.

86. Most pupils make sound progress in writing; in spelling progress is good. For the highest attaining pupils past work shows that expectations have not always been high enough, and this has limited their progress. There are too few opportunities to extend the writing skills of pupils in English and other subjects. At Key Stage 1 most pupils understand the use of capital letters and full stops. A few above average pupils are already beginning to introduce speech marks into their work. Pupils make lists, label captions and write simple instructions such as how to make a jam sandwich. Year 3 pupils learn to give emphasis to their work by choosing different fonts on the computer. Year 4 pupils learn the conventions of play writing, understanding scene and setting. Spelling is systematically taught. From reception onwards, pupils take key word lists home to learn, and from Year 2, they have weekly spelling tests. The standard of spelling is generally above average but high achieving pupils in Key Stage 2 are not always sufficiently challenged. Teachers often correct pupils' spelling, thus limiting the importance of using dictionaries. Pupils' handwriting is satisfactory. From Year 1 onwards pupils are introduced to the cursive script. They are systematically taught to develop joining techniques, but the skills do not often follow through into writing in other subjects. Teachers do not always use the appropriate stage of cursive script when writing on boards and on pupils' work. Consequently, there is inconsistency in the presentation of work in books and folders.

87. Pupils make satisfactory use of literacy skills in other subjects. A particularly good feature is the learning of specialist vocabulary such as "flow", "sequence" in physical education, and "solubility", "evaporation" in science. There are good examples of pupils using their writing skills in other subjects, as for example, in history, when pupils write about their visits to a castle and describe artefacts seen in a local museum. However, past work shows that in a few classes the use of the same worksheet for all levels of attainment restricts the most able pupils' writing skills in other subjects.

88. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all year groups against targets set in individual learning plans. Their progress is enhanced by the good use of skilled classroom assistants who support them in their work.

89. Pupils' attitudes to English are good, and sometimes very good. They collaborate well in group activities, sharing resources, and listening to each other's points of view. They settle quickly to work and concentrate well on their tasks, showing perseverance in completing their work. All staff have a very positive attitude to behaviour management and lessons proceed with the minimum of fuss. English makes a positive contribution to pupils' cultural and social development, through the opportunities for paired work and through the wide variety of reading texts such as the "Jamaica Stories."

90. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good, with over three-quarters of the lessons seen being good or better. Most lesson plans are detailed and based on the model of the Literacy Hour. Learning objectives are specific and are effectively communicated to pupils orally and by displays on the wall. Apart from the weaknesses in writing for the most able, teachers have high expectations. Their knowledge of the subject is good and language terminology is taught well. For instance, Year 3 pupils are taught to use the term "calligram"

correctly and in Year 4 effective teaching enabled the pupils to correctly identify parts of speech, such as an adverb and an adjective. In several classes teachers set targets for improvement and these are made clear to pupils on a daily basis, often by writing them in pupils' books. This is good practice as pupils are made aware of how they can improve. However, not all teachers use them consistently well. Similarly there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking. In the best practice teachers make analytical comments related to the lesson objectives and pupils' targets. Homework is used effectively to develop pupils' reading and spelling skills. Writing tasks for older pupils are relevant and support the work in school, for example, in poetry writing.

91. The co-ordinator has ensured that the literacy hour has been successfully introduced. The school's effective strategy is reflected in the good quality of teaching observed during the inspection. The co-ordinator, supported by the headteacher, carefully monitors and evaluates the quality of teaching and pupil achievement. In addition, there is a significant amount of assessment data on pupils' progress. This information has revealed the need to improve standards for the most able in writing and overall presentation. Relevant targets in the subject's development plan had been identified before the inspection. The co-ordinator has produced a small portfolio of assessed work, but assessment of pupils' writing is an area for development.

92. There are a good supply and range of resources for English. The school library is well managed and contains a large variety of books although, as the school is aware, some are worn and nearing the end of their useful life. Many resources are new and of a high quality, for example, the sets of group texts and fiction, poetry, and non-fiction "Big books".

93. There have been many improvements in English since the last inspection. Standards in reading have risen significantly, progress in speaking and listening has improved and test results in writing have risen since the last inspection when they were below average.

93. **Mathematics**

94. Results in the 1998 national tests show that the pupils, then in Year 2, attained standards in line with national averages, although the number achieving higher levels was below average. This affected the overall average level, which was below that of pupils from similar backgrounds. However, since then pupils' attainment has improved. Test results in 1999 show an improvement on previous years as nearly all pupils attained national standards or above. Inspection evidence shows that attainment of the current Year 2 pupils is above average. The difference between the 1998 results and current attainment is explained by the school's successful participation in the local authority numeracy project. Changes in planning and teaching style, such as the increased emphasis on mental calculations, have contributed well to the improved test results. At Key Stage 2, in the first term, many current Year 4 pupils have already reached the level expected by the end of the year, and attainment is above national expectations.

95. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a secure grasp of number. They confidently add and subtract numbers up to 100 mentally, for example when subtracting 9 they first subtract 10, and then add 1. Pupils have a good understanding of place value, and higher attaining pupils use numbers up to 1000, for example when putting three digit numbers into correct ascending or descending order. Many pupils know multiplication tables for 2, 3 and 5, and higher attaining pupils know others such as the 7 and 9 times. Many understand the relationship between division and fractions, finding for example $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$ of 16 sweets. Pupils use decimal numbers when working with money. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to understand negative numbers, for example to find the answer to 15 minus 80. Pupils weigh objects such as pencils in grams, they measure length in centimetres, and use cups and beakers to measure volume. In work on shape, pupils know the names of common two and three-dimensional objects such as triangles and cubes, they identify right angles in shapes

such as squares, and they complete pictures using knowledge of symmetry. Pupils use and apply their knowledge of number well. For example, they explore patterns in multiplication tables, and know for instance that “odd times odd is odd”.

96. Year 4 pupils add and subtract numbers up to 1000, they know most multiplication tables, and they use their knowledge to carry out division, including when there are “remainders”. Pupils have good mental arithmetic skills. For example they explain techniques such as “near doubles” to add 43 and 45 as double 43 plus 2. Pupils have a good understanding of decimals. For example they calculate the change from £2 when buying 2 jigsaws at 65 pence each, and they write distances in different forms such as 118 millimetres and 11.8 centimetres. They use their understanding of measurement to measure and calculate the perimeter of simple shapes. Pupils understand the convention for plotting points on graphs. Pupils know the names of many two and three-dimensional shapes such as a parallelogram and a triangular prism, and they correctly identify shapes from a description of them using the number of edges, faces and corners. In work on data handling, pupils collect and record data using tally tables, which they then use to draw bar graphs, for example, to illustrate pet ownership in the class.

97. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in mathematics. They build systematically on their knowledge, skills and understanding as they get older. For example, pupils work firstly with numbers up to 10 or 20, and gradually extend the range so that in year four they are regularly using numbers up to and beyond 1000. Older pupils develop their understanding of number through the use of decimals and negative numbers. In some lessons progress is very good, for example in a Year 1 lesson where pupils developed their understanding of place value by putting numbers up to 30 in order of ascending and descending size. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They take a full part in the oral work at the beginning of lessons, and good support from teachers and classroom assistants ensures that they work productively in the remainder of the lesson and consolidate their learning.

98. Pupils make satisfactory use of numeracy across the curriculum. For example, they weigh ingredients for making bread and they measure materials before cutting in design and technology activities. In science experiments, older pupils measure temperature and draw graphs to show how it varies and they use co-ordinates in developing their understanding of maps in geography.

99. Pupils have good attitudes to mathematics and behave well. This enhances their progress. They are keen to show what they know, and enthusiastically join in oral and mental work by raising their hands to answer questions. In group work, many pupils concentrate well and work with minimal supervision for as much as 30 minutes. Older pupils learn to be increasingly independent and to use their initiative, which contributes well to their personal development. For example, in a lesson on shape, they used wall posters and dictionaries to help them to describe and classify shapes. However, work is often untidy, and the quality of diagrams is frequently poor. This sometimes affects pupils’ progress, since it leads, for example, to inaccurate measurements.

100. The quality of mathematics teaching is good throughout the school. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen, and more than one half were good or very good. Teachers question pupils well. For example, in the oral work at the beginning of a Year 3 lesson, the question “Why might we need to use millilitres as well as centimetres to measure a book?” challenged pupils’ understanding of different units and their appropriate use. Teachers use terms such as “multiple” and “doubling”, to widen pupils’ mathematical vocabulary. Teachers generally give clear instructions, so that pupils understand what they have to do. However, occasionally, unclear instructions cause pupils to lose time which slows their progress. The structure of the National Numeracy Project assists teachers in lesson planning, which they do well. Work is well matched to pupils’ abilities, lessons are a satisfactory mix of whole class, group and individual work, and time is well allocated to different activities as lessons progress. Most have

a good pace, but occasionally oral work at the start of the lesson is slow and pupils fidget and lose concentration. Teachers manage their classes well, and as a result, lessons are calm and purposeful. Teachers make good use of classroom assistants. They are well informed about their role, and consequently contribute effectively to teaching. Homework, including the learning of multiplication tables, is used effectively to support learning.

101.The co-ordinator, well supported by the headteacher, provides good leadership for mathematics. Lessons are regularly monitored to assess progress and the quality of learning. Useful feedback is given to teachers. The school has developed its mathematics curriculum, based on the local authority Numeracy Project and this has laid the foundations for the school's successful introduction of the national strategy this term. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. Teachers make effective use of assessment information in setting and reviewing pupil targets, and in helping to ensure that work is matched to pupils' abilities. Resources for mathematics are good and ensure pupils have a variety of experiences. Information technology resources are good but there were missed opportunities to use them during the inspection.

101. **Science**

102.The 1998 teacher assessments at Key Stage 1 show that pupils' attainment is broadly average when compared nationally and with similar schools. The 1999 results are not significantly different from those of 1998. For pupils currently at the end of Key Stage 1, and for those in Year 4, attainment is average. Overall, the pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. Pupils gain a sound knowledge of the factual elements of the subject but there are weaknesses in investigative science. There have been recent improvements, evident in the lessons observed, but the higher attaining pupils have made insufficient progress over time in this aspect of the subject.

103.By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils develop sound observational skills, for example when identifying materials and their use in buildings, or when watching how chocolate changes when it is heated and cooled. Pupils write about their work and record their findings on simple charts. By the end of Year 4 pupils make simple predictions, for example when testing materials to see which are the best for preventing heat from escaping. Although in the lessons observed at both key stages pupils were making sound progress in experimental work, past work shows there has been insufficient emphasis on this aspect. At both key stages most work has been set at one level with very little variation for the most able pupils. The expectations of these pupils are not consistently high enough. This has restricted their progress. At Key Stage 1, they are not taught more complex methods of recording in which to use their own ideas. At Key Stage 2, past work of the more able pupils shows little evidence of pupils carrying out fair tests or looking for patterns in their results. The use of worksheets for all levels of attainment restricts pupils' opportunities for extended writing.

104.Pupils gain a good knowledge of life and living processes. By the end of Key Stage 1, they identify the flowering parts of a plant, consider aspects of a healthy diet and describe differences between living and non-living things. This work is developed in Key Stage 2 where pupils develop a good understanding of the life cycle of humans and plants. Pupils make good progress in their understanding of materials and their uses. At Key Stage 1 they sort materials into groups by using such properties as rigidity, flexibility and texture. They describe how chocolate changes from a solid to a liquid when heated. By the end of Year 4, pupils distinguish between solids, liquids and gases. They compare the solubility of materials such as sand and salt. In their study of physical processes, pupils make satisfactory progress. By the end of Key Stage 1 they compare the loudness of sounds and use light bulbs in different circuits. At Key Stage 2 pupils know about forces, including gravity, and how they cause objects to change direction. The presentation of pupils' work varies from class to class and is at times of an untidy appearance.

105. Pupils' responses in science lessons are good overall. Their good behaviour, ability to listen attentively and concentrate on their tasks enhance their progress. They are willing to discuss their work in groups and share equipment sensibly. Occasionally, when they are waiting for the next stage in a lesson, pupils become noisy and talk about matters not relevant to the lesson.

106. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory at both key stages. Teachers have a sound understanding of the subject. They are careful to use the correct scientific terms such as "solution", "dissolve" and "force" which help to extend pupils' vocabulary. Occasionally, teachers' incorrect understanding leads to inaccurate science being taught, as for example, when the painted metal legs of tables are incorrectly classified as electrical "insulators" because they fail to make a bulb light as part of a circuit. The introductions to lessons are usually of a good quality. Questions such as "What do you think might happen?" and discussions about what a scientist does are used well to excite interest and to clarify the special nature of science lessons. Lesson objectives are made clear to the pupils. They are displayed on the walls and often put on the pupils' work. The use of ongoing assessment is not always used effectively to plan for the different levels of attainment. For example, in a Key Stage 1 lesson, the work sheet was suitable for the average pupils but not challenging for the higher attaining pupils who spent a few minutes talking while the rest of the class finished. In another lesson, one of the practical tasks, involving separating mixtures, was too hard for the younger lower attaining pupils. Classroom assistants work effectively with specified groups. Teachers promote positive attitudes and good levels of esteem amongst the pupils by teaching them that much can be learnt from "getting things wrong" and making mistakes. The quality of marking varies. In the best practice good analytical comments are made and in other cases work is just ticked.

107. A scheme of work ensures all the elements of science are taught within the school's main topics. Although the development of investigational science is embedded in the suggested activities, there is not clear guidance on the progression of these skills. A sound system for assessment is closely related to the learning objectives of each unit of work and enables a satisfactory record of pupils' progress to be maintained. The curriculum is enriched at Key Stage 2 by popular environmental and gardening clubs. Pupils' and teachers' voluntary work on the "wildlife" area and school pond makes a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of living processes. The school is committed to raising standards in science. The recently appointed co-ordinator has already undertaken a review of the subject, and has produced an action plan to address weaknesses such as those in investigative science. Standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection.

107. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

107. Information technology

108. Pupils' attainment in information technology meets national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1, and at the end of Year 4. Standards have improved since the previous inspection when the subject was a key issue for action. There has been a significant improvement in resources, with increasing opportunities for pupils to use computers. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress.

109. At Key Stage 1 pupils use computers purposefully. They write short passages of text such as "Birthday Memories", choosing font styles and sizes, and editing work before printing it out. Pupils explore the facilities in computer "art" programs, choosing suitable line widths and colours, and "painting in" areas to show for example, a simple plan of the school playground and field. They give short sequences of instructions to a floor "Roamer" to make it move forward and backward, and turn. Pupils enter data to draw bar charts such as those of pupils' hair colour. They use computers purposefully to support work in other subjects, for example developing their understanding of numbers to 20 and operating class listening "stations"

confidently when listening to taped stories.

110. By the end of Year 4, pupils use word processors to write, for example, reviews of books such as "The Chronicles of Narnia" and biographies of writers such as Beatrix Potter. They use CD-ROM references to look up information which they then include in their work. High quality word processing work on display in the library showed attention to detail. It was carefully edited to remove spelling mistakes, and good attention was given to the layout of the work. Pupils enter data into a prepared database, and follow simple lines of enquiry, for example listing all the pupils in Year 3 with brown hair. Pupils use programs to support work in subjects such as history, for example "visiting" a Roman archaeological site and "discovering" artefacts which they then investigate. In work on control, pupils write short sequences of instructions to draw shapes such as squares and triangles on the screen. A Year 4 class learned how to use the "find and replace" feature to change names in a play-script. In earlier work they used "cut and paste" to change the order of sentences in sequencing activities linked to design and technology. Pupils use computers to support work in other subjects, for example printing out graphic scores as part of their composition work in music. Pupils are beginning to consider the use of information technology in the world around them, for example, when comparing the use of a scanner in a shop, with adding up bills mentally.

111. Pupils' attitudes to information technology in the single lesson seen, and on the other occasions when pupils were observed using computers, were positive, although this is insufficient evidence to make overall judgements. Despite a program malfunction in the lesson seen, pupils behaved very well while the teacher tried to correct the fault. They contributed several sensible suggestions, and behaved responsibly, sitting patiently for several minutes. The small groups seen using computers at other times worked co-operatively.

112. Not enough direct teaching was seen to make an overall judgement about its quality. However, the observed lesson was well planned, and was an effective use of the short time available as it succeeded in developing pupils' word processing skills. Teachers missed many opportunities to use computers during the inspection. In some classes computers were switched on but remained unused during several of the lessons observed.

113. Pupils receive a well-balanced programme of study, covering all aspects of the subject. Good leadership since the last inspection has led to rising standards of attainment. Current action plans correctly focus on the more frequent use of information technology in lessons across the curriculum. The school is very well resourced and well placed to promote further development in the subject. There are two modern computer systems available to each class, with a wide range of high quality software to support all aspects of the subject.

113. **Religious education**

114. Pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus at Key Stage 1, but below those expected at Key Stage 2.

115. Progress at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. Pupils have devised class rules which are based on the importance of caring and sharing. They have reflected on the wonder and beauty of seasonal changes during autumn. Pupils know about the life of Jesus and how this forms the basis of the main Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter. Progress over time has been unsatisfactory for pupils at Key Stage 2. However, they made sound progress in the lessons observed. The quality and quantity of written work over the past year is unsatisfactory. Much of the recording is on worksheets with too few opportunities to write and consider the subject in appropriate depth. Pupils have not developed sufficient understanding of different faiths. In the lessons observed pupils were making appropriate connections between religious education, their own lives and the plight of others. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 discussed the story of Jesus and the Lepers. They understand that people can change, and give thoughtful answers to teachers' questions about changes they can make in their own

lives. The Harvest Festival has given pupils good opportunities to consider and help people less fortunate than themselves. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of other pupils at both key stages.

116. The majority of pupils enjoy religious education. They respond enthusiastically in lessons, and listen attentively to teachers and to one another. They show compassion, for example, when hearing about leprosy. Pupils' behaviour is generally good. Occasionally pupils become too talkative and have to be reminded to concentrate on their work.

117. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory at both key stages. In an effective lesson at Key Stage 2 the teacher had good subject knowledge and used questioning well to ensure all pupils were involved. The development of appropriate vocabulary such as "conscience", "trust" and "gratefulness" assisted pupils' literacy development. In a Key Stage 1 lesson on change, the teacher created a sense of wonder and anticipation at the start of a lesson when, in silence, she crushed a leaf in her hand. In a few lessons there was a lack of pace and pupils become fidgety when sitting on the carpet for too long.

118. Time allocation for the subject is below the recommendations of the agreed syllabus at Key Stage 2. This restricts the breadth of the curriculum. The school is fully aware of the need to improve standards and has appointed a new co-ordinator. In the short time she has been at the school the co-ordinator has taken appropriate action by consulting the local authority advisory teacher, reviewing planning and carrying out an audit of resources. There are enough books but the school has insufficient religious artefacts.

118. **Art**

119. Pupils' attainment in art was judged to be above national expectations at the last inspection. Evidence from art on display, past work and discussions with pupils indicates that standards are now those expected for the pupils' ages. Pupils make satisfactory progress, with good standards in some drawing and painting in Year 4.

120. At Key Stage 1, pupils develop a range of techniques using different materials. Pupils know how to mix paints and use them in their work. They develop appropriate skills when using scissors to make paper collages of trees, or when weaving with strips of paper. Older pupils use a range of papers and ink to vary the texture of their printing. Pupils show an understanding of the processes when they discuss their work. At Key Stage 2, pupils confidently use a range of materials such as clay, paint and textiles. They evaluate their work and give reasons for choosing materials. For example, a group of Year 4 pupils explained why they had chosen certain colours for their printing and how they would change the material to make a finer print. The work in sketchbooks varies between classes and is not always of a high enough standard. Where it is of good quality, pupils develop sound pencil techniques such as shading. For example, in Year 4 detailed drawings of one person were sketched from a variety of angles. Pupils learn about other artists such as Rousseau. Year 3 and 4 pupils produced a particularly effective composite picture of "The Tiger in the Storm".

121. It is not possible to make an overall judgement about teaching and pupils' responses in art as only two lessons were observed. In these lessons pupils enjoyed their work and displayed good levels of perseverance. They listened carefully to instructions and handled materials with care. When making a paper collage, Year 2 pupils shared resources and discussed their work well before making a group decision. Teachers planned their lessons carefully with clear objectives and well-organised resources. This allowed pupils choice and the opportunity of free expression, for example when printing. Good class management skills ensured pupils behaved well and took their work seriously. Pupils' work is valued in lively displays around the school.

122.The policy for the teaching of art details the activities for each year group. This ensures a balanced curriculum but there is insufficient reference to guide the non-specialist in the teaching of skills. A system of regular assessment, completed half-termly, gives teachers useful information to assist in lesson planning. The large work areas between classrooms are used well for art lessons and the good range of resources enables pupils to experience a variety of techniques and materials.

122. **Design and technology**

123.It was possible to observe only one lesson during the inspection. Additional evidence is drawn from past work including photographs.

124.At Key Stage 1, work is of a standard higher than expected for the pupils' ages and this indicates that they make good progress. There is evidence of pupils using a wide range of materials including textiles, construction kits and food. When designing and making a drinks "coaster", pupils take account of such factors as whether the material was waterproof, strong and big enough to put a cup on. Pupils write about how they make the coaster and evaluate whether it fulfilled the original purpose. In another project, pupils design and make attractive frames for a photograph. They use measuring skills to ensure the photograph fits in the frame and consider how to make it rigid and free standing. Pupils correctly use tools such as saws and clamps when making the frames. Written evaluations contribute to pupils' literacy development. At Key Stage 2, the work available is of a similar standard to that expected for the pupils' ages. However, there is not enough evidence to make an overall judgement about progress. When pupils make sandwiches, they consider the food's appearance and whether it is "healthy". They write about the process and evaluate the sandwiches' taste and appeal. A quiz board incorporating batteries and lights show how pupils have made good use of their scientific knowledge. Currently, pupils are learning to refine their "car" designs for the "Iron Man" and how to label the parts. Other evidence, such as the frames pupils made to hold batik work, shows that pupils are taught a balanced curriculum.

125.There is insufficient evidence to make overall judgements about teaching or pupils' responses. In the lesson seen the teacher had clear learning objectives, valued pupils' ideas and gave clear guidance on how to develop these into realistic designs. Pupils listened well to each other, shared equipment sensibly and persevered to solve their own problems. The subject is well managed; the curriculum planning gives good guidance to non-specialist teachers. Good assessment procedures enable teachers to record and monitor pupils' progress against clearly defined lesson objectives. Standards in the subject have improved significantly since the last inspection when the subject formed a key issue for action.

125.

125. **Geography**

126.Only two lesson observations were seen during the inspection, both at Key Stage 1. Judgements are therefore made mainly on scrutiny of pupils' work, examination of school documentation and discussions with teachers and pupils.

127.Pupils work at levels of attainment appropriate for their age, and they make satisfactory progress overall. Standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection. In Year 1 pupils understand what an aerial view is and have developed a simple map of the school grounds, correctly placing features such as the playground, hopscotch area and pond. They describe how they would improve the school grounds by re-siting some of the features. In studying "near and far" places, Year 2 pupils compare life in Stowmarket with places such as Palma in Spain and Mexico City. They know, for instance, that the severe 1985 earthquake in Mexico damaged many houses, and that hotter temperatures in Spain lead many people to take a siesta in the afternoon. Studying places nearer to home, they draw simple graphs to illustrate land use along Felixstowe's waterfront, and they draw diagrams to show the journey of a letter from posting to arrival.

128. At Key Stage 2, pupils develop their study of other places through work on India and Europe. For example, they describe daily life in a typical Indian village, and they use coordinates to locate features such as the school on a village map. Pupils correctly label the countries of Europe and position their capital cities. They draw diagrams to illustrate the water cycle, to show the path of a river from source to mouth, and label features such as waterfalls and the estuary.

129. Although work is set at an appropriate level at both key stages, maps and diagrams are often untidy and work sometimes lacks sufficient depth to challenge higher attaining pupils. For example, in studying changes to the local environment at Key Stage 2, where pupils were taught to draw plans of the recreation ground and suggest ways to sustain and improve it. However, their diagrams were badly drawn with little constructive use of colour. In the associated written work, pupils appropriately suggested changes they would wish to make. However, higher attaining pupils did not write in further depth, by for example explaining reasons for their decisions.

130. In the few lessons seen, pupils behaved well and had good attitudes to geography. They enjoyed the lessons and were well motivated by the tasks. Pupils discussed ideas and shared out the work among the group, for example when making a plan of the school grounds.

131. It is not possible to judge the quality of teaching overall. However, the two Key Stage 1 lessons seen were satisfactory. They were well planned and developed earlier work on maps and study of the local environment. Teachers used resources effectively, for example when preparing paper templates to represent different features of the school grounds such as the pond. Teachers made good use of vocabulary such as "aerial view", "plan" and "meander" which support pupils' literacy development. Work on co-ordinates and scale support numeracy work.

132. The scheme of work and topic cycle provide a satisfactory framework for planning, and good efforts have been made to maintain a broad programme of study from the National Curriculum. There are good assessment procedures, based on key learning objectives, and testing is carried out at the end of each topic.

132. **History**

133. Due to time-tabling it was not possible to observe any history lessons during the inspection. Evidence for standards in the subject is taken from a scrutiny of past work. This indicates that in their knowledge and understanding of history, pupils' standards are similar to those expected for their ages at both key stages and they make satisfactory progress. Much of the recent work at Key Stage 2 has been completed on work sheets which restricts the application and development of writing skills for the most able pupils.

134. At Key Stage 1, pupils develop a sense of chronology when learning how bicycles have changed. They visit a museum to study other vehicles and look for evidence of change, such as the development from solid to air-filled tyres. Pupils make good use of their literacy skills when writing about their visits and people's occupations, for example, a stoker on a steam train. At Key Stage 2, pupils compare life in the past with their own when learning about Romans and Victorians. Pupils learn that evidence can be obtained from a variety of sources including books, CD-ROMs, and local buildings. These include visits to Colchester Castle and to the museum adjacent to the school where first-hand study enhances the pupils' progress. The use of time lines helps to reinforce pupils' awareness of chronology and assists with the development of numeracy skills. Pupils' presentation of work varies and at times is of untidy appearance on loose pieces of paper.

135. No lessons were observed so it is not possible to judge teaching or pupils' responses.

Planning is thorough and ensures a progression of skills and knowledge. A good assessment system enables teachers to record and monitor pupils' progress against clearly defined objectives. Standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection.

135. **Music**

136. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, and in the aspects of music seen, work at the standard expected for their age. Progress in singing is good, especially for those in the school choir. Standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection.

137. At Key Stage 1 pupils develop their listening skills by describing their reactions to short excerpts of music. They know that the word "timbre" is used to describe the quality of musical sound, and they use words such as "metallic", and "jolly" to describe what they hear. In one class, pupils were asked to think of a colour to represent the music. They made good suggestions, such as "blue, because the music sounds like a river flowing". No work in performing or composing was seen at Key Stage 1.

138. At Key Stage 2, pupils understand that music needs to be written down, so that it can be performed later, and they develop simple graphic scores to illustrate the different components of their work. In one lesson on the theme of electricity, pupils practised their planned group compositions written down from the previous week. They made good progress in the short time available. Pupils followed the conductor closely, gaining confidence and improving the quality of their performance. Pupils recognise features in music such as repeated "ostinato" patterns, which they incorporate into their compositions.

139. Pupils sing well, in school assemblies or hymn practices and join in enthusiastically with appropriate actions. Pupils in the choir sing simple two part songs with confidence. For example they rehearsed singing "Frere Jacques" and "Three Blind Mice" simultaneously, and securely held their own part.

140. Pupils enjoy music and behave well in lessons. However, some younger pupils occasionally over-react and begin to fidget as music is being played. In the practical composing lessons seen, pupils worked well in groups and listened attentively while others were performing.

141. Too few lessons were observed to judge the quality of teaching overall. However, the lessons seen were either satisfactory or good. Teachers' planning follows the scheme carefully. Where teachers have a good knowledge of music or are confident performers, teaching is challenging. For example, in a Key Stage 1 lesson on "timbre", the teacher played a short musical extract, asking the class to focus on the percussion background and to think of words to describe it. Teachers extend pupils' vocabulary by the use of specialist words.

142. The newly appointed, well-qualified co-ordinator gives good support to colleagues in planning work. The schemes of work link well with the school's cycle of topics, and give good guidance to non-specialist teachers. Plans to further develop extra-curricular music are in hand, and include the establishment of a recorder group, and the choir taking part in a large concert next year. Resources for music are satisfactory overall and there is a wide range of recorded music from different traditions and times, which provides good support for pupils' cultural development. Music supports pupils' spiritual development well, for example through singing songs which celebrate the beauty of the world around them.

142. **Physical education**

143. Insufficient lessons were observed to make an overall judgement about teaching and progress in physical education. In a Year 1 games lesson, pupils were achieving standards higher than expected for their ages. These young pupils have a good awareness of space and

compete well in dodging and chasing games. They show good levels of stamina. In the gymnastics and games lessons observed at Key Stage 2, pupils' skills were similar to those expected for their ages. Year 3 pupils demonstrate a sound range of bat and ball skills. Year 4 pupils successfully join jumps, turns and balances with expected levels of fluency. Most pupils perform confidently and are beginning to refine the start and finish of their movements.

144. During the observed lessons, pupils had positive attitudes and responded enthusiastically to the challenges. Their behaviour was good and in one Year 3 lesson it was exemplary. Pupils worked in silence, listened attentively and fully focused on the quality of their work. This contributed significantly to their good progress.

145. Teaching ranged from satisfactory to good. In all lessons teachers make good use of specialist vocabulary such as "fluency", "avoiding", "flowing" and "sequence". This makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy skills. Teachers manage their classes well and ensure pupils follow rules and are actively involved. In the best lessons, where pupils made good progress, the lessons had a good pace maintaining pupils' interest as they were quickly moved from one activity to the next. In these lessons teachers gave opportunities for pupils to evaluate each other's performance and suggest areas for improvement. For example, in a Year 4 gymnastics lesson a pupil suggested how a jump might be improved. Not all lessons involved a period for pupils to cool down and, when pupils were recovering from vigorous exercise, opportunities were missed to discuss the changes in their bodies.

146. Effective management of the subject includes an action plan with targets for the next year. These correctly include the development of a more effective system for assessment. Good resources, a swimming pool and a large field enable the school to offer a wide range of activities. A very good range of clubs for Key Stage 2 pupils includes opportunities for competitive sport. Pupils have opportunities to participate in cross country running, football, swimming, dance and a general games club. Good links with the community further enrich the subject. For example, a county table tennis coach is running an after school course, and staff from Ipswich Town Football club have visited the school for coaching sessions. Although no overall judgements on standards were made at the last inspection, all the positive aspects of provision have been maintained.

146. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

146. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

147. The inspection was carried out over a period of four days for a total of 14 inspector days. A parents' meeting was held prior to the inspection and ten parents attended. Eighty-two families returned a questionnaire about their school. Information from parents was used to guide the inspectors' work. For the majority of time in the school, the inspectors visited classes and talked with individuals and groups of pupils. In total fifty-two lessons or parts of lessons were observed taking over thirty-seven hours. Samples of pupils' work from each year group were evaluated. Pupils from each year group were heard reading. Planned discussions were held with teachers, other staff, the headteacher and several governors. Many documents, including teachers' planning and assessment records, were scrutinised.

148.DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

| | Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent) | Number of pupils with statements of SEN | Number of pupils on school's register of SEN | Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals |
|---------|---|---|--|---|
| YR – Y4 | 222 | 0 | 26 | 22 |

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (YR – Y4)

| | |
|---|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent) | 9.58 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 23 |

Education support staff (YR – Y4)

| | |
|---|----|
| Total number of education support staff | 5 |
| Total aggregate hours worked each week | 69 |

| | |
|---------------------|------|
| Average class size: | 24.7 |
|---------------------|------|

Financial data

| | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Financial year: | 1998/1999 |
|-----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--|---------|
| Total Income | 323 060 |
| Total Expenditure | 334 665 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 1 528 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 51 108 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 39 503 |

PARENTAL SURVEY

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out: | 220 |
| Number of questionnaires returned: | 82 |

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school | 50 | 48 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren) | 73 | 24 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| The school handles complaints from parents well | 46 | 37 | 16 | 1 | 0 |
| The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught | 56 | 43 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress | 48 | 45 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work | 50 | 47 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons | 31 | 48 | 19 | 2 | 0 |
| I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home | 36 | 52 | 5 | 6 | 1 |
| The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren) | 57 | 41 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| The school achieves high standards of good behaviour | 45 | 53 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| My child(ren) like(s) school | 63 | 30 | 7 | 0 | 0 |

Other issues raised by parents

The possibility of extending extra curricular activities to Year 2.