

INSPECTION REPORT

IVY CHIMNEYS COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Epping, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115013

Headteacher: Miss J M Dimon

Reporting inspector: Jane Schaffer
23698

Dates of inspection: 14th – 18th February 2000

Inspection number: 191815

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Ivy Chimneys Road
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Essex

Postcode: CM16 4EP

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs S Mann

Date of previous inspection: February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Mrs J Schaffer | Registered inspector | Music | School's results and achievements |
| | | Religious education | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development |
| | | | How well are pupils taught? |
| | | | How well is the school led and managed? |
| | | | What should the school do to improve further? |
| Mr J Brasier | Lay inspector | | How well does the school care for its pupils? |
| | | | How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| Mr K Johnson | Team inspector | English | |
| | | Art | |
| | | Design and technology | |
| | | Under fives | |
| | | Equal opportunities | |
| Mr G Tompsett | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| | | Information technology | |
| | | Geography | |
| | | History | |
| | | Special educational needs | |
| Mr B McCann | Team inspector | Science | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
| | | Physical education | |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ivy Chimneys is a community school for infant and junior pupils. There are 305 pupils on roll which is an increase in numbers from the time of the previous inspection report. The school roll is increasing. The school is bigger than most other schools of this type. Nearly all pupils are of white United Kingdom heritage with five per cent of pupils coming from other ethnic groups. Fourteen per cent of the school population are identified as having special education needs which is a lower number than in most other primary schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a school which places importance on providing pupils with a wide range of opportunities for their learning. Good opportunities are provided to develop pupils' interests and learning in subjects such as art, music, history and geography and through exploration of the local environment. Pupils' attitudes are good and they learn at a good rate in most lessons. The introduction of a new project to develop pupils' skills in reading in the early years is a bold but well judged move to help all pupils succeed in literacy. The school is well placed to implement the changes needed to raise standards further in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils in the early years make a very good start to their education.
- By the time the pupils leave the school they have achieved a good standard in reading and are keen readers.
- The pupils have good attitudes to their work and are keen to come to school.
- There are very good systems for assessing pupils' achievements and these help teachers give pupils work which matches their levels of understanding.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported.
- The headteacher and staff are very committed to improving the school.
- The school's good partnership with parents is beneficial to pupils' learning.

What could be improved

- The quality of pupils' writing by the end of Key Stage 2 and the opportunities which teachers give them to write need to be improved.
- Pupils ability to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems and become more confident in constructing their own calculations.
- Extending the consistent approach to the good management of behaviour, seen in classrooms. to all other times of the day.
- Improving the delegation of responsibilities so that those with management roles can be effective in raising standards.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

At the time of the last inspection report, the attainment of pupils was judged to exceed the national average in national tests at the end of both key stages; the progress that pupils made was sound. Although the pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 was not above the national average in 1999 it was above average when compared to similar schools in mathematics and science, and the school has kept up with the rise in standards nationally in tests at the end of Key Stage 2. The school has been successful in developing a good programme of work throughout the school to help pupils become good, keen readers. The quality of teaching has improved significantly, especially in supporting those with special educational needs. The weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been addressed thoroughly with the exception of the development of the role of subject managers which still does not support pupils' learning as well as it might. Overall improvement has been satisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 |
| English | D | A | C | C |
| mathematics | C | B | C | B |
| science | E | D | C | A |

Key

well above average A
 above average B
 average C
 below average D
 well below average E

The school's results at the end of 1999 were average for all three subjects when compared to the results of all schools nationally. When compared to those of similar schools they were average for English, above average for mathematics and well above average for science. The school has set itself an appropriate target, just above the national average for 1999, for the current year in mathematics and pupils are making satisfactory progress towards that target. The target for English is set above the current national average. They are on target to reach this in reading but writing in Year 6 does not match this expectation. The standard of work of pupils in Year 2 in English, mathematics and science matches the national average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Pupils' attitudes to their work are good. They are keen to come to school. They listen to their teachers attentively and work hard. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Behaviour is generally good in and around the school, especially at assembly times. However, on the playground and before and after school behaviour sometimes lapses when pupils who enjoy rough play do so, but do not understand that others may not. |
| Personal development and relationships | There are good relationships between adults and pupils and pupils show a mature understanding of the need to respect the feelings and beliefs of others. Pupils carry out tasks willingly and show initiative when the opportunity arises. |
| Attendance | Good. Most pupils arrive punctually. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons. It is good or very good in 67 per cent of lessons, nine per cent being very good. Three per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory and these were in English and science. In the reception classes the quality of teaching is nearly always good with significant strengths in the teaching of language and literacy and numeracy and children's learning is good. In Key Stages 1 and 2, basic skills such as using letter sounds to read and spell are generally taught well and pupils learn at a good rate to read. Sometimes pupils' progress in writing is too slow. Pupils learn at a satisfactory rate in mathematics. Teachers plan work very well for pupils with special educational needs and their learning is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | A relevant and very well planned curriculum is provided for the children under five. In Key Stages 1 and 2, there is careful planning to ensure that a varied and stimulating curriculum is offered to all pupils, and that planning reflects the needs of the different ages in mixed age classes. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | The progress made by pupils with special education needs is monitored very closely and adjustments made to the plans for their individual learning if needed. This together with other good aspects of support makes provision for these pupils very good. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good. The main emphasis on the school's provision is in providing pupils with a secure understanding of right from wrong and this is done well. Pupils are given good opportunities to take responsibility and this increases appropriately as pupils move through the school. Music, art and other curriculum areas improve pupils' awareness of culture well. However more could be done to improve the pupils' knowledge of non European cultures. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | The school keeps very good records of pupils' academic performance and personal development and many other aspects of its care are good. However, the school needs to improve its policy for maintaining good behaviour at all times. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Satisfactory. The headteacher and members of the senior management team are very committed to improving the school and they plan well for improvement. However, co-ordinators responsible for improving standards in a subject are not always well placed to do so. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Good. The governors are knowledgeable, well organised and very aware of the extent of their duties. They take good steps to find out for themselves about the school. They need to be more helpful in ensuring that the responsibilities of staff with management roles are more suitably allocated. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Satisfactory. The headteacher, senior staff are diligent in monitoring the achievements of the pupils. There has been some monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning, but more needs to be done. |
| The strategic use of resources | Good. Systems for financial administration are good and the finances of the school are used well to support pupils' learning and the school's planned improvements. |

There are an adequate number of appropriately qualified staff to teach the curriculum. The support staff are well trained. They make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, particularly in the reception classes and for the support of pupils with special educational needs. Voluntary helpers and parents are experienced and have had training from the school and this also supports pupils' learning well. There are two attractive and well thought out play areas, one for the reception classes and one for the older pupils. The school has good resources for English, but resources for religious education are unsatisfactory. The accommodation has been very well adapted to provide access for pupils with wheelchairs.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teaching is good. Their children are given good values. All children are helped to make progress no matter what their ability. Children like coming to school. The school still offers an interesting curriculum, a good rounded education. The teachers are approachable and concerns are listened to. The school reports are of good quality and they particularly like the newly introduced targets and the way they are followed up. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The size of classes. Some parents said that there was still bullying even though the school had taken steps to prevent it through the anti-bullying policy. Some parents were not happy with the range of extra curricular activities. The nature and amount of homework. |

The inspection team agreed with all the positive points raised by parents. The class sizes are large but the school has taken good steps to ensure that any ill effects are limited by employing a greater number of classroom assistants and this has been successful in limiting the ill effects of large classes. The extra classroom which is almost finished will improve future class sizes. The inspection team agreed that the anti-bullying policy had been put in place and that in some respects it was effective, but that there was still a need to do further work towards cutting out rough play and making aggressive play unacceptable. There is a satisfactory range of extra curricular activities and homework is used well by teachers to develop pupils' learning in the classrooms.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils' performance matched the national average in English, mathematics and science. In comparison with those of similar schools the results are average for English, above average for mathematics and well above average for science. In the 1999 tests, girls' achievements were higher than that of boys but in the previous year the performance of boys was better than that of the girls and so the difference is likely to reflect the difference in cohorts for those two years rather than the school's provision. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels in English and mathematics was similar to the national average and in science it was above.
- 2 In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1, the school's results were similar to the national average in reading and writing but well below the national average for mathematics. Teacher assessments in science show that the pupils' attainment in science was below the national average. The majority of the pupils were in the middle band of achievement and too few achieved the higher levels.
- 3 On entry to the school the attainment of children is similar to what is generally expected for children of this age. They make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics in the early years classes so that by the time they are five nearly all have achieved the expected level of learning for this age, and some will have achieved a higher level. Children can recognise and make the correct sounds for many of the letters of the alphabet and they can put them together to spell out simple three and four letter words. Some can write their own words in a sentence using the knowledge they have of sounds and the words they can see in the classroom. Most can count objects to at least 12 and many can go beyond. They have made a good start in understanding addition and subtraction using correct terms such as "I need one more" in their games. The rate of learning and standards achieved in the Early Years has improved over the past year.
- 4 Taken over a three year period, the results at the end of Key Stage 1 show that pupils' reading has exceeded the national average, writing was close to the national average, but slightly better for boys than girls and in mathematics the results matched the national average for boys but exceeded it for girls by a high margin. The school identified the need to improve pupils' writing in Key Stage 1 and are taking steps to improve this. In Key Stage 2, there have been wide fluctuations in results in English and mathematics with 1998 being a particularly good year for achievement in these two subjects. Standards in science have steadily increased as a result of improved planning and teaching. The trend over a four year period shows that at the end of Key Stage 2 the school is keeping pace with the improvement in national standards.

- 5 The school has set itself an appropriate target for attainment in National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 for mathematics. It is just above the national average for 1999 and the pupils' current work suggests that the school could reach this target. The target for English is well above the national average for 1999 and although the pupils are possibly on course to meet this target with reading, the pupils' attainment in writing is well below this target.
- 6 In Year 2, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is above expectations. Their attainment in reading and writing matches the national average. They speak clearly and confidently and can explain their thoughts and ideas in well constructed sentences. Nearly all pupils read stories confidently at a level appropriate for their age and attainment and can use a number of strategies to determine the meaning of an unknown word. Their understanding of stories and books is good. For example, many can retell stories and pick out details about characters. They write simple pieces using a good number of words they can spell themselves. Some can use basic punctuation in their independent writing but few have progressed further than full stops and capital letters. They write at sufficient length but are not yet using a good variety of sentence structures, and few pupils are beginning to show an awareness of the reader in their work.
- 7 Pupils' attainment in mathematics and science in Year 2 matches the national average and this is an improvement on the results achieved in 1999. Improvement has come about because in science the school has focused on developing planning so that pupils cover the work in sufficient depth and in mathematics the numeracy hour has been implemented effectively. Most pupils have an understanding of the properties of numbers and number sequences at a level expected for this age. For example, they can count to 100 in twos, fives and tens. They are beginning to use correct mathematical language, for example in explaining how they have folded a shape into two equal halves. In science pupils have a good understanding of how to identify the properties of different materials and are able to suggest reasons why certain materials are used for different purposes. They have covered in some detail work on life processes including the life cycle of plants and humans. This was an area of science in which pupils did not achieve well in the 1999 assessments and pupils' achievements this year are an improvement.
- 8 In Year 6, pupils' attainments in speaking and listening and reading are above expectations. Pupils speak clearly and confidently when addressing the whole school audience. In discussions they put forward their own opinions well and listen and respond to the thoughts and opinions of others. They read a wide range of authors and express preferences knowledgeably. They use skills such as scanning well to research information both in books and on CD ROM. Their reading is generally expressive and fluent. Pupils' attainment in writing is similar to the national average but few are achieving the higher levels. Their writing does not match their achievements in reading. They have a satisfactory knowledge of the rules and conventions of spelling and most are beginning to be aware of and to use a good range of grammatically correct sentence constructions. Pupils of higher attainment write imaginative pieces with some interesting choices of vocabulary, but there are not many examples of adventurous language used well to enliven descriptive pieces. Pupils of average attainment do not extend their ideas sufficiently and quite a number use dialogue which adds little to the value of the piece, except to extend it. Few pupils make use of paragraphs successfully.

- 9 In mathematics and science pupils' attainment in Year 6 matches the national average. There are a few pupils who are working within the higher levels (levels 5 and 6) of the mathematics programme of study and the school is providing them with suitable work so that they can aim to achieve level 6, although currently their attainment matches level 5.
- 10 In a lesson on organising and interpreting data pupils of highest attainment understood well how to construct a line graph, find intermediate values, and interpret their findings in relation to the facts underlying the graphs. The majority of pupils in Year 6 can use their knowledge of place value to multiply numbers with two decimal points by ten; a few can multiply by 100. They have begun to understand the equivalence between fractions, decimals and percentages. However, many pupils do not explain their own methods of working out a calculation well. In science pupils have gained a good knowledge of the life processes of humans and plants; for example, they are able to identify the major organs of the human body and the main function and purpose of the skeleton. They have a satisfactory understanding of the nature of scientific enquiry and that evidence must be collected systematically. They recognise the need for a test to be fair. Some pupils are able to explain why only one factor should be changed in a test but quite a few have difficulty in doing this well.
- 11 At the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils' attainment in information technology is above what is generally expected for eleven-year-olds in communicating, data handling and the use of word processing. They access stored information well and can use CD ROM and the internet to do research. However their attainment in control technology is below expectations which means that overall attainment is in line. In religious education the pupils' attainment was judged against the locally Agreed Syllabus and is above expectations. In history and art standards are better than is usual for eleven-year-olds. In all design and technology, geography, music and physical education attainment is as expected for this age.
- 12 At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in history is above what is usually expected for seven-year olds. They have a good understanding of the passage of time and of how life in earlier times differed to their own. In all other subjects, including religious education their attainment is in line with expectations.
- 13 In both key stages pupils learn at a satisfactory rate overall. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in mathematics and English. They have clear specific targets in their individual programmes and good support which helps them achieve their targets. In Key Stage 1, pupils' rate of learning to read and write is satisfactory. The teaching of letter sounds is successful and this is having a good effect on their rate of learning to read and spell. Progress with writing composition is less, and is only just satisfactory. In Key Stage 2, pupils progress well with reading. Their writing skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar progress satisfactorily but, as in Key Stage 1, progress in written composition is only just satisfactory. In mathematics pupils rate of learning is satisfactory and sometimes good. In science pupils learning is good in those classes where teachers provide investigations which lead pupils to put forward a hypothesis, carry out an investigation with care to limit the number of variables appropriately and draw conclusions. Pupils of ethnic minorities are well integrated and their progress is similar to other pupils.

- 14 The pupils with special education needs make good progress. Their needs are identified well and work and support is provided appropriately. Teachers keep detailed records of their achievements and check their progress frequently, making adjustments to plans when necessary. The pupils of higher attainment are provided with extra work and in most lessons they make similar progress to the other pupils in the class. However, on occasions they would benefit more if they did not do the same tasks as other pupils and work was provided specifically to match their needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 15 The children under five understand their class and school routines very well. Their independence in the use of the resources in the class is very good. They respond to adults requests willingly and make their own choices about where to work or play with confidence. Their play often shows that they have learnt to negotiate with each other well.
- 16 In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils are keen to come to school and at the end of a break are ready to start back at their work willingly. Lessons are characterised by a quiet and purposeful working atmosphere. A very few pupils have difficulty in controlling their own behaviour appropriately both in lessons and occasionally on the playground or around school. In lessons unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively and both the needs of the pupil whose behaviour is a problem and the needs of the rest of the class are promptly met. On the playground and around the school, pupils who enjoy rough play are not always sufficiently controlled and this leads to incidents which are unacceptable. This is a relatively new situation and the school recognises that steps need to be taken to address this. The school has had one permanent exclusion during the past year. An exclusion has never occurred before.
- 17 In lessons pupils have a good understanding of what teachers expect and of the routines of the class and they respond very positively. In Key Stage 1 pupils get on with their work well when it is necessary for the teacher to leave them to work on their own in order to concentrate attention on a different group. Pupils are polite to each other and to adults and offer help on their own initiative. They are courteous and trustworthy. Pupils form good relationship with each other and with the adults in the school. From discussions with pupils, it was clear that most understand what to do if they were bullied.
- 18 Whilst appropriate responsibilities are given to younger pupils, the older pupils are rightly singled out to take a lead in the school. They do so willingly, for example putting out chairs for assembly, taking care of younger pupils during wet play and leading the school council. Pupils are confident and put forward their own ideas to adults about aspects of school life where it is appropriate for them to do so.
- 19 Attendance is good and very few pupils are absent from school without informing the school of an appropriate reason. Most pupils arrive at school on time and are keen not to miss the start of the school day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 20 The quality of teaching throughout the school is never less than satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons. It is good or very good in 67 per cent of lessons, nine per cent being very good. Three per cent was unsatisfactory. In the reception classes the quality of teaching is very good with significant strengths in the teaching of language and literacy and numeracy. There was one unsatisfactory lesson in each key stage and some lessons which, although adequate, had areas where improvement was needed. The overall quality of teaching in English, mathematics, science, history, music and physical education is good. In art teaching is good in Key Stage 2 and satisfactory in Key Stage 1. Teaching in religious education, information technology, design and technology and geography was satisfactory in both key stages
- 21 In the early years classes, teachers' knowledge and understanding of how young children learn is very good. The classroom environment, structure of the day, and planned tasks are used effectively to give children the opportunity to learn through active participation, and so their motivation to learn is high. Teachers, class assistants and voluntary helpers intervene very effectively to further learning as children work and play. The teaching of letter sounds and reading is based on a new project which has recently been introduced by the Local Education Authority. Teachers and learning assistants, who have had specialised training for this work, are enthusiastic about the benefits and children are learning letter sounds at a very fast rate. Formal and informal assessments are frequently made and used to make sure that work matches the children's needs.
- 22 In Key Stages 1 and 2, subject knowledge is often high particularly in, history, art and on occasions in science. Some teachers have good knowledge of how to teach basic skills in English, particularly phonics. In these lessons planning develops pupils' learning from their previous knowledge and is ambitious in the amount of learning expected. For example, in a science lesson the pupils were given the opportunity to tests for themselves the presence of air in different soils. Specific questions were answered knowledgeably and the teacher was able to lead the pupils towards making a reasonable prediction about possible outcomes. Careful questioning, both during the investigation and in the summing up session at the end of the lesson helped pupils to question their findings and on occasions to modify them. In mathematics subject knowledge is less pronounced. Although work is carefully planned and activities are satisfactorily matched to pupils' level of attainment, expectations are sometimes moderate and opportunities are missed to extend pupils' thinking. They were given exercises to show their understanding when many would have relished the challenge of solving problems using their new knowledge.

- 23 In both key stages, the teaching of letter sounds and the basic skills of arithmetic is generally good and pupils learn skills at a good rate. Both aspects are successfully planned and organised to reflect the requirements of the national strategies. Whole-class introductory sessions appropriately ensure that pupils can demonstrate the knowledge they have already acquired before moving on to tackle new learning. For example, in a lesson in which the teacher planned for pupils to learn to spell words using the string of letters that make up the sound "est", pupils were asked to list words using the letter string they had learnt the previous week. This good strategy to increase pupils' learning moved at a good pace, but on occasions checking pupils understanding at the start of a lesson moves at too slow a pace and pupils lose interest.
- 24 In literacy, good texts are often presented in a stimulating way. This helps to promote pupils' interest and understanding of reading, particularly in the older classes in which pupils need to gain a greater understanding of how to interpret what they read. In numeracy lessons correct mathematical vocabulary is used satisfactorily by teachers and pupils but more emphasis needs to be placed on providing the language for pupils to explain their thinking.
- 25 In both literacy and numeracy lessons, and other subjects, teachers identify in their planning clear objectives for the lesson. In good lessons all the activities promote those objectives and teachers focus on them well as they question and assess what pupils are learning. In these lessons the last part of the lesson continues this process well and sums up for both teachers and pupils what they have learnt and how well. In one class the teacher displays the learning objectives for the week in both literacy and numeracy and pupils are involved well in trying to achieve those objectives. In some lessons objectives are too broad and so it is difficult for teachers to assess whether they have been achieved and the last part of the lesson is not used well. This slows down pupils' learning. Teachers plan extension work for pupils of higher attainment but few lessons indicate the objectives for these pupils' learning, the assumption being that they will learn at a faster rate and will produce better quality work, for instance greater accuracy in recording. Sometimes harder work needs to be planned for pupils of higher attainment. The planning for pupils of lower attainment is good and in nearly all lessons they are given work which is well matched to their level of attainment. Work is marked carefully and useful comments help pupils to see where improvements can be made.
- 26 In all classes there is mutual respect between pupils and teachers and good relationships are developed. Appropriate class routines are well established and pupils know what is expected of them. In the Early Year and Key Stage 1, pupils understand the need to work for a reasonable period of time without the teacher's attention and this allows class teachers to effectively focus on one or two identified groups. In the older classes teachers stress the importance of self-discipline and pupils have begun to understand the need to organise and present their work themselves. In the youngest classes the skill and understanding of classroom assistants makes a very significant contribution to pupils' learning. Parents and voluntary helpers are generous in the time they give to school and their support is planned very effectively by teachers to develop the learning of pupils in particular group. There is also very well organised and effective support planned for pupils with special educational needs, including work on the computer which develops their learning very well. Homework is used effectively to extend the learning undertaken in class. The projects set in the older classes make a good contribution to pupils' independent learning.

- 27 Work for pupils with special educational needs is planned very well and they learn at a good rate. Their individual education plans are carefully constructed to ensure that the needs of the pupils are met and that the work is integrated into that of the class as far as possible. The pupils who speak English as an additional language are not at an early stage of English language acquisition and are integrated well into all class activities. Support staff know the pupils well and are well trained in providing the encouragement and teaching that pupils need.
- 28 The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection report. There are fewer unsatisfactory lessons. The proportion of good lessons has increased as has the amount of very good teaching. Teachers' planning and assessment of pupils' achievements has improved markedly. The key issue to ensure that teaching matches the needs of all pupils has been met in the main although there is a need for some further improvement so that more lessons provide enough challenge for higher attaining pupils.

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

- 29 The school continues to offer its pupils a good range of opportunities in all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Although the time available for some foundation subjects has been reduced to allow for the introduction of the literacy and numeracy hours, pupils still experience a good and interesting, varied and balanced programme of work at all ages. The curriculum for children under five covers all the national Early Learning Goals. It is planned very effectively and there are good curriculum links between the Reception and Key Stage 1 classes to ensure that the progress children make as pupils start school is not hindered by unnecessary repetition of topics.
- 30 Since the previous inspection a considerable amount of thought and effort has been given to the content of the curriculum within each subject to take account of the mixed age classes. Schemes of work are now in place for all subjects. Planning has been reviewed and improved. The whole-school framework is clear and teacher's termly planning is monitored regularly by the curriculum co-ordinator. The school has also begun to address the role of subject co-ordinators that was raised in the previous report. They now check the planning in their particular areas of responsibility and there are plans for subject co-ordinators to spend one morning or one afternoon, on a rolling programme, supporting colleagues by looking at the occasional delivery of lessons in the classroom. Teachers currently work closely together within 'bands' for example Key Stage 1, Years 3 and 4, Years 5 and 6 to make sure that duplication does not occur and to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, for whom provision is good, have full and equal access to the curriculum. Individual Education Plans are detailed and effective in meeting the needs of particular pupils. The help given by learning support assistants and other adults, including parents, is particularly good and is a strength of the school.
- 31 Satisfactory strategies are in place for teaching literacy and numeracy. The school reflects the National Literacy Strategy well in many respects but there has not been a sufficient focus on writing composition to improve the standard of pupils' written work. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra curricular activities mainly after school. These involve sport, music and a French Club. During the inspection all such activities were well supported by groups of enthusiastic and committed pupils.

- 32 The curriculum includes provision for personal and social education. Policies are in place for health education, sex education and for providing information about the misuse of drugs. The school is supported in this work by visits from the community liaison police officer and the 'Life Skills' programme. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on spiritual matters through regular assemblies which are thoughtfully presented and to which the pupils respond with interest and respect. Assemblies are also used to celebrate other events for examples pupils' birthdays. The curriculum in religious education also contributes positively to pupils' spiritual awareness. The importance of environmental issues feature strongly in the life of the school. A nature area is currently being set up with the support of Epping Forest Country Care. Pupils have planted trees around the boundary and the area includes nest boxes, bat boxes and hedgehog homes. From an early age pupils are taught to distinguish between right and wrong and the school places much emphasis on the way in which pupils should treat one another.
- 33 The provision the school makes for social development is good. Some older pupils help the younger ones at lunchtimes, as well as undertaking more routine tasks very sensibly. There is also a School Council involving pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 whose names and photographs appear on one of the noticeboards. Pupils are encouraged to realise that they are part of a much wider community by contributing to a number of different charities. They do so very generously and letters of thanks are displayed from organisations which include Operation Christmas Child, the NSPCC, the Toybox Charity and the Sargent Cancer Charity. Recently a small group of older pupils visited a neighbouring Old People's Home to sing for a lady who was celebrating her one hundredth birthday. Various subjects of the curriculum, particularly English, history, art and music help to give pupils a good understanding of their own culture. Other aspects of the curriculum especially geography, religious education and dance help to increase their knowledge and awareness of other cultures. This aspect of the curriculum is also supported by visits to various London museums including the National Gallery.
- 34 Teachers make good use of the immediate area to widen pupils' curricular experiences. Visits to places like St.John's Church, Bell Common, Hobbs Cross Farm, Epping Town and Hayes Farm all help them to appreciate the value of their local surroundings. Some pupils are also contributing to a mural at the new Epping Hall. Wall displays in all areas of the school are of a very high standard and make a further contribution to the delivery of the curriculum as well as celebrating the efforts and achievements of pupils in a meaningful, stimulating and informative way.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 35 The school successfully provides a high level of care to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety in many respects, as it did in the last inspection. There are some areas where improvements are now needed, for instance monitoring the school's behaviour policy, but others, such as the very good monitoring of pupils', academic and personal development, where the school has made marked improvements since the last inspection.
- 36 The procedures for ensuring that children under five settle quickly into school routines are very good. Parents are contacted at an early stage before children start in the early years through a home visit. This is followed up by good initial assessment of children so that their needs can be met effectively. All staff and voluntary helpers are involved in assessing children, ensuring that the planning for children's personal and social development meets their needs.

- 37 In Key Stages 1 and 2 good behaviour is very well promoted through the role models of the school staff. The school policy for behaviour is based on the expectation that behaviour will be good and this is understood well by most pupils. Pupils know that the headteacher and staff have high expectations of their behaviour and in nearly all respects pupils respond to this well. Teachers have effective procedures in place which are well understood by pupils to ensure that classrooms and other learning areas of the school such as the library and the computer bays are orderly places for learning. However, classroom practices to promote good behaviour do vary, and whilst many pupils can cope successfully with this, the few that find controlling their own behaviour difficult find this a challenge. Some teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of how to support pupils whose behaviour continues to be unacceptable over a period of time and this knowledge needs to be shared more widely.
- 38 Whilst the behaviour policy works well within the classroom situation, it is less effective elsewhere, particularly at lunchtime and during the period when pupils leave school, when boisterous and sometimes aggressive play occurs. Mock fights where boys wrestle with each other on the ground sometimes get out of hand. Pupils know what to do if bullying occurs and many feel confident that bullying is something that they do not have to worry about. However, there is a need to improve the school's procedures for developing pupils' understanding of school as a caring community where aggressive behaviour is not tolerated.
- 39 The school has all necessary safety checks and precautions in place. Child protection procedures are in place and all staff are aware of the requirements to report to the designated member of staff for child protection any concerns. The designated member of staff has received adequate training but the recent recommendation for increased training for all staff has not yet been undertaken. The school's programme of personal, health and social education is good. It encourages pupils to look after themselves and develop a responsible attitude to the challenges of growing up.
- 40 Good attendance is well promoted. Attendance data is well monitored and the distinction between authorised and unauthorised absence is well understood. There is appropriate concern and action if a pupil's absence is not explained on the first day.
- 41 Assessment procedures in all subjects are very good and teachers maintain them to a good standard. Monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development is very good which is an improvement on the time of the last inspection report. For each pupil there is a record, up-dated each term, of levels achieved in each of the core subjects and of achievements in skills such as spelling. Pupils' profiles are maintained very well and provide a continuous record from class to class of the standard of their work. There are good procedures in place to ensure that, when making assessments, all teachers adopt the same standards in assigning levels to pieces of work. Pupils' personal development is also diligently recorded but could be further improved to include a record of attributes such as persistence or co-operation when working with others. Pupils are given good individual advice on their personal achievements as issues arise within the day-to-day work of the class. Achievements are acknowledged through praise and merit awards and parents are involved appropriately in sharing in their success, for example in merit certificates being set home. Day-to-day assessments of pupils' work is often good but not all teachers use the final part of lessons successfully to help pupils understand how much progress they have made in the lesson.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 42 The school's partnership with parents is good. It is a major strength of the school as it was at the last inspection. Parents believe that their children are receiving a good education as a result of good teaching and hard work; school helps children to mature and they love coming to school. Parents have criticisms of the extent of extra-curricular activities, and of the amount of homework (although opinions are divided between too little and too much) and they would like more information about their children's progress. The inspection team agrees that teaching is good and that pupils make a good effort in class. Inspectors did not agree that the amount of homework was inappropriate; teaching staff make good use of homework to extend the learning pupils have done in class. Overall, there is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular opportunities bearing in mind that the school does not have a large number of staff. Information about children's progress is provided termly through open evenings and reports. Parents do not come into school to leave or collect their children, but are free to come in for a discussion after school without an appointment, and several do so every day. Parents attend review meetings for pupils with statements of educational needs and there are also meetings and reviews for parents with children on the lower stages of the special needs register. The reports for these meetings are sent well in advance.
- 43 Parents give very good support in the school, often providing the extra pair of hands that allows a wider choice of activity or provides extra help to those who need it, thus enriching the education provided. Parents are invited to assemblies and many take up the offer. Volunteer parents accompany school trips to provide escorts.
- 44 The information provided for parents is good. Reports are good. They have factual information on attainment, targets for improvement, good descriptions of the work tackled, detailed information on absences, but lack information on how parents may help their children. Parents are invited to make appointments to discuss their children's reports. The number of evenings for parents to discuss their children's progress are appropriate. Parents are given good opportunities to find out about the curriculum and the methods being taught in the school. For instance an evening explaining the methods of the government's Numeracy Strategy was held during the week of the inspection. There are good newsletters, an informative prospectus, and a good annual report to parents from governors. The pupils themselves produce a newspaper of which they are very proud. There are good induction procedures, including a home visit for every child.
- 45 There is a lively Parents' Association which holds social events and raises valuable funds for the school. Community functions are held on school premises and attended by parents and pupils.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 46 The headteacher and governors provide satisfactory, effective and efficient leadership and management of the school in some respects, but in others there is need for improvement. Good aims have been established and the headteacher shows considerable commitment to ensuring that these are reflected in all aspects of school life and this is appreciated by parents.

- 47 The governing body is well organised and are very aware of the extent of their duties and the manner in which they should oversee the work of the school as was noted at the time of the previous inspection report. Governors ensure that statutory obligations are properly met. The chair of governors and many of the other governors are well-known in the school and have developed very good working relationships with the headteacher and the staff. The whole staff and governors contribute to the identification of areas for development, which helps to ensure that planning for improvement is effective. A good example of this working well is the recently introduced Early Reading Research project in the early years, which is leading to rapid progress in pupils' learning of letter sounds. The school improvement plan has a manageable number of priorities, so that staff have a realistic amount of time to implement developments and this has resulted in some good quality improvements in the past, for example the planning of the curriculum and the assessment of pupils' achievements.
- 48 The previous inspection report identified a number of improvements needed in leadership and management of the school which were; the need to establish means of judging whether developments were successful or not; procedures for monitoring the work of the school; and involving curriculum managers in that monitoring. The school has addressed these issues well, except that co-ordinators do not yet make a sufficient contribution towards raising the standards in the subjects they lead because they are not getting into classrooms and talking to teachers about best practice. Pupils' achievements are assessed and the results of assessments are analysed carefully. The school knows many of its own weaknesses and makes appropriate plans to address them. However, the important questions of why results are as they are and what needs to be done to improve them are not always tackled effectively. For instance the governors did not ask for an explanation of the low results in mathematics in Key Stage 1 tests in 1999. The headteacher is responsible for the management of two important subject areas. This is an unreasonable amount of work to undertake when consideration is given to the need to improve the work of the school as a whole. The governors have set targets for the headteacher, as required by the government, but these targets are more appropriate for a subject manager and in effect deflect the work of the headteacher from identifying, supporting and improving the strengths and weaknesses within the whole school staff.
- 49 Subject co-ordinators for English and mathematics have done some monitoring of teaching and learning during the past year but this has not resulted in clear action plans which would address some of the variations in practice which are currently occurring class-to-class. The deputy headteacher is the co-ordinator for special education needs and the management of this area is good. However, the deputy has no other area of responsibility for management and so is not making a full enough contribution to ensuring that school policies are reflected in practice. The process of appraisal is in place and makes a satisfactory contribution to the staff's awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses. However, staff are at an early stage of sharing their strengths with colleagues, and of helping each other put right weaknesses.

- 50 The school's financial planning is good and specific grants are used well. The headteacher and the school administrators use information and communications technology effectively to support the smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis. The special educational needs co-ordinator has transferred the pupils' records to a computerised system which helps to eliminate unnecessary paper work. The chair of finance committee is well aware of the principles of best value for all spending decisions and takes appropriate steps to ensure that this is reflected in decisions on spending and ordering procedures.
- 51 There is an adequate number of appropriately qualified staff to teach the curriculum. At the moment class numbers are over thirty in Key Stage 1 and this has been a concern of parents. This should be resolved in the immediate future as a new classroom has been built in order to accommodate the rise in numbers. The school has little extra space, both inside and outside but makes the best use it can of the space available, for example an outside play area for the children under five has been developed alongside a much used pathway because there is nowhere else it could be sited. There are attractive grounds with an environmental area and a very good play area. Good resources in English are helpful in supporting pupils' progress in reading. In most other areas resources are satisfactory, except in religious education where they are unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52 The governors, headteacher and senior management of the school should draw up a post-inspection plan to:-

i) Improve the quality of pupils' writing by the end of Key Stage 2; (paragraph references: 8, 73)

by providing a clearer focus on the range of opportunities for writing suggested in the National Literacy Strategy; (paragraph references 31, 76)

by providing opportunities in other lessons for pupils to write and widening the range and purposes for writing; (paragraph references: 100, 107, 121, 126)

ii) Improve pupils' attainment in mathematics by challenging them to solve problems and explain their own calculations; (paragraph references: 10, 22, 81, 83)

iii) Ensure that the anti-bullying policy is monitored, evaluated and put into practice in all areas of the school; (paragraph references: 16, 38)

iv) Identify, evaluate and make best use of the staff's strengths so that they have the opportunities they need to lead improvements; (paragraph references: 48, 49, 77 87, 108, 127).

53 The report identifies another weakness which the school should consider: That is:-

Provide training for all staff in child protection procedures in line with new requirements. (paragraph reference: 39)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 68 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 37 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
| 0% | 9% | 57% | 31% | 3% | 0% | 0% |

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

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Nursery | YR – Y6 |
|--|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | n/a | 295 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | n/a | 32 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| Special educational needs | Nursery | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | n/a | 3 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | n/a | 41 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 2 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 20 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 18 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 5.2 |
| National comparative data | 5.6 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.0 |
| National comparative data | 0.5 |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 19 | 19 | 38 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|--|----------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 16 | 14 | 14 |
| | Girls | 19 | 19 | 18 |
| | Total | 35 | 33 | 32 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 92 | 87 | 84 |
| | National | 82 | 83 | 87 |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| | Girls | 18 | 16 | 18 |
| | Total | 33 | 32 | 35 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 87 | 84 | 92 |
| | National | 82 | 86 | 87 |

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 18 | 18 | 36 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|--|----------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | 12 | 11 | 13 |
| | Girls | 13 | 12 | 13 |
| | Total | 25 | 23 | 26 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 69 | 64 | 72 |
| | National | 70 | 69 | 78 |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | 12 | 11 | 13 |
| | Girls | 12 | 12 | 13 |
| | Total | 24 | 23 | 26 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 67 | 64 | 72 |
| | National | 68 | 69 | 75 |

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 2 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 0 |
| Pakistani | 2 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 |
| White | 254 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 1 |

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 11.4 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 26 |
| Average class size | 30 |

Education support staff: YR – Y6

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 10 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 163 |

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

| | |
|--|-----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | n/a |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | n/a |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | n/a |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | n/a |

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Number of pupils per FTE adult | n/a |
|--------------------------------|-----|

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Financial year | 1998/99 |
|----------------|---------|

| | £ |
|--|------------|
| Total income | 464,124.00 |
| Total expenditure | 453,961.00 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 1,509.00 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 4,236.00 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 14,399.00 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 500 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 106 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 57 | 39 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 46 | 48 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 38 | 50 | 7 | 2 | 4 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 31 | 50 | 13 | 4 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 58 | 37 | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 44 | 43 | 10 | 2 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 61 | 29 | 4 | 6 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 57 | 42 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 40 | 48 | 8 | 1 | 4 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 42 | 48 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 48 | 44 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 26 | 40 | 18 | 6 | 10 |

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 54 Children are admitted to the early years classes in the September before their fifth birthday. A reception class is made up from children whose birthdays fall in the autumn term and in the earlier part of the spring term. Younger pupils, many of whom do not reach the age of five until the summer term, make up an early years class. The youngest of this group attend morning sessions only. Baseline assessments indicate that attainment on entry to school is broadly in line with expectations for children of their ages.
- 55 The children make good progress so that nearly all are on course to achieve the expected standard for five-year-olds and many will exceed them in language and literacy and mathematics. The rate of learning for children in language and literacy and in mathematics has improved over the past year because of the good planning and enthusiastic teaching in these areas. New methods of teaching in both areas have been introduced and new staff have arrived who work effectively with the established staff. There has been good improvement in provision since the last inspection.
- Personal and social development
- 56 Provision for children's personal and social development is very good. At the start of the day children come into school confidently. They know the daily classroom routines well. Younger pupils are responsible for their own 'registration' and for hanging up their coats properly in the cloakroom. Children can dress themselves for physical education lessons and put their shoes on the right feet. They develop good relationships with one another and share their news enthusiastically while waiting for the day's instructions. Children's independence is encouraged through role play. In both early years and reception classes children dressed as three bears to re-enact the story and went on 'bear hunts'. Younger children enjoyed exploring the bears' 'dark den' in their classroom, while older children showed good presence of mind in recruiting the help of the teaching assistant when they found themselves short of a 'Goldilocks'. Children work well in groups and sustain concentration for a considerable time, as for example when learning letter sounds through the Early Reading Research programme. Personal and social development is very well promoted at snack time, when children peel and cut up fruit to be shared amongst the class.

Language and Literacy

- 57 Children make good progress in acquiring early language skills. Speaking and listening are strongly promoted through play and interaction with teachers and assistants in the classroom. Children speak clearly and express their ideas confidently. They listen to and follow instructions carefully. The use of the Early Reading Research (E.R.R.) project has a positive impact on children's reading development. Children learn their letter sounds systematically and blend the sounds to make complete words. Younger children in the early years class for example recognise the letter sounds for 'jump'. They pick the letter cards from a board and arrange them correctly to spell the word. Children's language is enriched by the extensive range of books available in the classroom. Children enjoy story time. Their re-enactment of Red Riding Hood demonstrates their understanding and the pleasure they gain from that story. Children's writing is developed well. Letter formation is practised in school and at home. Younger children trace letters in sand for example or practise emergent writing in the 'office', set up in the classroom. Some children in reception class begin to write independently, spelling simple words correctly. For a small number of children the starting point for letter formation is still not secure and the sizes of letters are not well controlled.
- 58 Teaching of language and literacy is very good. Teachers are skilful in supporting and encouraging children's spoken and written language because of their very good understanding of how children learn. Activities provide interest and challenge and are planned carefully to build on what children already know. The teachers and classroom assistants are well trained and knowledgeable about how to teach letter sounds using the methods of the newly introduced reading project. Time is used well and teachers' management skills ensure that all children have the opportunities they need to progress. There has been a very significant improvement in the teaching of literacy since the previous inspection,

Mathematical development

- 59 Children's development in mathematical skills is very good. Those in the 'under fives' class sort and match shapes and most count objects to at least 12. In one activity for instance, a child counted confidently the forty one discs it took to cover the his teddy bear picture. More able children use counters to help develop the concept of adding and subtracting, for example by joining sets of two and three and recognising 'one more than'. Children begin to understand and use mathematical language such as 'circle' and 'square'. One child correctly referred to a 'cylinder'. Children in reception class have a very good range of planned activities which effectively extend earlier skills. In one activity for example a group used a die to select numbers of plastic bears until they totalled fourteen. Children consolidated their skills by counting their bears and sharing information such as 'I only need one more'. Their understanding of weight and balance is developed when they investigate the number of cubes it takes to balance the teddy bear. They record the information accurately.
- 60 Teaching in this area of learning is very good. Teachers question children effectively requiring them to think about what they do. Praise and encouragement are used well to build children's confidence. The teacher's intervention is purposeful and moves pupils on when they are ready for more challenge. Because teachers have implemented the methods and planning for reception children from the National Numeracy Strategy very well children's learning is increasing at a good rate.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 61 Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developed well through the good range of meaningful opportunities provided. They establish a sense of their own identity and talk readily to adults about their pets or favourite toys at home. They gain awareness of cultures other than their own by talking about festivals such as the Chinese new year, and of past events, when comparing old and new toys. Children explore natural and man-made objects. They test wood and shells for in the water tray observing sinking and floating qualities, and distinguish between rough and smooth surfaces when using sandpaper on wood. Teachers have planned the theme of the Three Bears well to provide opportunities such as making porridge, developing pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as those connected with science. Children recognise seasonal weather changes and make good use of opportunities to explore these, for example by observing the effects of frost or rain on the outside area. Children experiment creatively with a wide range of materials such as sand, water and dough and enjoy tracing letters in the soft mud outside of the classroom. They select from a range of fabrics and other collage materials and handle scissors competently when cutting and shaping. Children approach the computer confidently and begin to develop good skills with the mouse when using appropriate software packages.
- 62 Teaching in this area of learning is good. A wide range of understanding and purposeful activities is provided. Resources are organised well to encourage independent activity. Teachers and classroom assistants work very well together to ensure the children's development.

Physical development

- 63 Children's physical development is managed well through a good range of activities. In physical education lessons children hop, skip and run appropriately for their ages and show good balance when holding a shape in stillness. They develop good awareness of space and of others working close to them when playing chasing games or in movement lessons. Children manipulate small tools, pencils and paint brushes well. They use whisks when playing in the water tray, join materials using paper fasteners and thread beads for example to improve their co-ordination and control.
- 64 Teaching is good. The outside play area is used whenever possible and makes an effective contribution to pupils' physical development. Physical education lessons are planned well and activities are linked effectively to the current theme in the classroom. The variety of activities chosen stimulate children's interest and enthusiasm. Occasionally tasks in the hall are too demanding and children lose interest because they are not able to succeed.

Creative development

- 65 The youngest children explore a good range of materials to express their creativity. Collage materials of different textures and hardness are used effectively to make teddy bear pictures. This theme is developed well when pupils cut out and assemble the different parts of a 'moving teddy' using paper fasteners. They apply paint confidently in different ways, using for example brushes, sponges and fingers. Children in reception class apply glue carefully to make a bear collage with furry material. Their paintings of trees show an increasing awareness of shape and colour. Children recall the words of simple rhymes and songs and explore the sounds of percussion instruments such as a Chinese drum as well as those they make themselves. They listen carefully to repeat rhythmic patterns by clapping or beating a drum.

- 66 Teachers provide good opportunities for creative development and children are encouraged to explore colour through paint and pastels. Basic skills of cutting, sticking and holding implements correctly are taught well, enabling children to work with increasing confidence.

ENGLISH

- 67 At the end of Key Stage 1 standards reached in speaking and listening are above expectations. Pupils attain standards in reading and writing which are in line with expectations for their ages. At the end of Key Stage 2 attainment in speaking and listening and reading is above average and pupils attain average standards in writing. However, although standards in English match the national average overall, pupils of all levels of attainment are not making as much progress as they could in writing, and standards are lower than they should be.
- 68 At the time of the previous inspection standards were similar to now. The range of pupils writing in Key Stage 1 was found to be satisfactory but in Key Stage 2 need for improvement in developing pupils choice of language and style was noted. This is still the case.
- 69 The National Curriculum tests for seven year olds in 1999 showed attainment broadly similar to that seen during the inspection for reading and writing. Pupils' attainment was average when compared with schools nationally and with similar schools. The Key Stage 2 results for 1999 showed a drop in standards from 1998. In that year results were well above the national average. The school explains this difference by the difference in cohort. In 1999 there were a larger than usual number of pupils with special educational needs and a significant number of pupils who joined the school part way through their primary education. Inspectors agree that this explains the difference in part but also feel that the school has not used the literacy project sufficiently well to develop writing nor given pupils enough opportunities to write in other subjects and so improve their attainment in writing
- 70 Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are good at the end of both key stages. By the time they are seven, pupils listen attentively and talk confidently about things which interest them. They express ideas clearly during class discussions and respond thoughtfully to questions. Pupils in Year 6 speak confidently in a wide range of contexts. They are articulate when expressing opinions and ideas. They read aloud to audiences confidently and speak clearly when making announcements to the whole school. During class discussions they listen carefully to others and ask questions, for example about the literature they are reading or science activities, in order to develop their ideas.
- 71 At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils of higher and average attainment read stories accurately and fluently. They recognise most of the words in their texts and use a good range of strategies to work out unfamiliar words. They have a confident approach to reading and can recall details from books they have read. They use expression well, demonstrating their understanding of the text. They talk about characters and plot of stories they have read and name their favourite authors and titles. Pupils of lower attainment can read simple texts accurately and use sounds well to help them with their reading. They are confident and enjoy reading. Only a few pupils still require support and read hesitantly.

- 72 By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils read a wide range of texts accurately. They recognise punctuation and read with understanding and expression. Pupils have clear views about what they do and do not enjoy and speak confidently about authors and poets such as Enid Blyton, Anna Sewell and A.A. Milne. They express opinions about the books they read and refer to the text to support their views about characters. Nearly all pupils retrieve information from reference books effectively. Pupils throughout the school show positive attitudes to reading as demonstrated by the extensive list of pupils who take part in the 'Reading Safari' organised by Epping Library during the summer holiday. There are simple but effective systems to check and record pupils' progress with key words in Key Stage 1.
- 73 Pupils attain average standards in writing at Key Stage 1. Sentences are sequenced logically and convey some meaning. Most pupils spell simple words correctly and make good attempts at unfamiliar words when they apply their knowledge of letter sounds. The use of capital letters and full stops is reasonably consistent and some attempts are made at speech marks and question marks. Pupils develop appropriate understanding of grammar. This was demonstrated in a Year 2 lesson where pupils recalled that verbs are 'action words'. They were able to choose the correct form of the verb to complete their sentences. Handwriting is mostly legible though there are inconsistencies in size and letter formation. Pupils produce a satisfactory volume of writing but the range of independent writing is limited. At the end of Key Stage 2 a few pupils achieve the higher than expected level but most pupils attain standards which are average. They have satisfactory knowledge of basic grammatical rules and spelling is mostly accurate. Pupils express ideas clearly in joined and legible handwriting, using appropriate punctuation. Extended imaginative writing is structured logically, though the use of paragraphs is inconsistent. A significant minority of pupils still show inaccuracies in use of grammar, spelling and punctuation. There are insufficient examples of adventurous language being used to heighten effect. For all pupils the range of writing is too narrow. Pupils do not explore sufficiently the many forms of writing or write independently about subjects which interest them. Other subjects such as history and religious education are not used enough to extend pupils' writing skills.
- 74 The quality of teaching in literacy lessons is good overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory. This enables detailed planning with a clear focus on what pupils are to learn. In one lesson where these objectives were shared, pupils clearly understood what was expected of them and work purposefully to achieve the targets set. Basic literacy skills are taught effectively and pupils' skills in reading and writing are developed at a satisfactory pace. However, in Key Stage 2 teachers give pupils too few opportunities to develop longer pieces of writing so that they learn how to organise their ideas in writing in different ways. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the literacy strategy but need to use it more effectively to improve pupils' writing. Planning is effective in Key Stage 1 where pupils are set in ability groups. In a Year 2 lesson for example the pace of learning was good because planning was focused accurately on the particular needs of that group. All teachers manage pupils well.

- 75 The positive relationships established between teachers and pupils promote respect and good order in classes. As a result pupils work collaboratively, sharing ideas well. In a Year 5 and 6 lesson for example, pupils benefited from mutual support when writing a parody of an H. G. Wells extract. Marking of pupils' work is good. Teachers' comments are evaluative and helpful to pupils by suggesting ways to improve their work. Whilst there are good features of teaching there are also weaknesses in some teaching which result in less effective learning for pupils. In some lessons teachers spend too much time talking to pupils. This causes pupils to fidget and lose interest, besides leaving less time for them to improve their writing skills. Although learning objectives are planned for lessons, these are not always made clear to pupils in order to set targets and establish expectations for achievement. Nor are they referred to at the ends of lessons in order to allow pupils to understand and teachers to assess what they have learned. Teachers' expectations of pupils are not always appropriate, resulting in too little or too much challenge for some.
- 76 Implementation of the Literacy Strategy is satisfactory. There is a good reflection of the methods advised in the strategy for teaching basic skills, reading, grammar and punctuation, but there is a need to focus more on the requirements outlined in the sections on writing composition. The school has built up good resources for the literacy hour in the form enlarged texts and guided reading materials. At the end of Key Stage 2 the time allocated to literacy is stretched beyond that which is recommended. The extra time is not always used profitably to provide appropriate challenges for pupils of different abilities.
- 77 Management of English by the subject co-ordinators is satisfactory. There is a strong commitment to improving standards. Some monitoring of teaching during the literacy hour has been done but there is no subsequent development plan or strategy for improvement. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment levels are good. Results of national tests are analysed well and targets are set for individual pupils. The library is well stocked with books of a suitable range and quality.

MATHEMATICS

- 78 The pupils' performance in the national tests in 1999, at the end of Key Stage 1, was well below the national average, and in comparison to that of pupils in similar schools. However, in 1996 and 1997 the school's results were well above average. In 1998 they started a downward trend, which resulted in the low achievement in 1999. The school has now effectively implemented the national numeracy strategy in Key Stage 1 and this is improving pupils' learning throughout the classes. The pupils currently in Year 2 received a good start in Year 1 and good teaching in Year 2 has now brought up the standard at the end of this key stage. Current attainment of pupils in Year 2 is similar to the national average, an improvement on the previous year.
- 79 At the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils' performance was similar to the national average, but above average when compared to similar schools. Over a four year period in Key Stage 2, the school has maintained standards in line with the improvements made by schools nationally. In 1996 and 1998 the school achieved higher standards. These differences should be expected in a school where the number of pupils taking the tests are not large. At the time of the previous inspection attainment at the end of both key stages was given as "sound" which is similar to the level of current attainment at the end of both key stages.

- 80 Pupils in Year 2 have begun to use mathematical language well, for example when describing the properties of two dimensional shapes. They can talk about fractions correctly when folding paper shapes. Most pupils are making good gains in their ability to make mental calculations. For example, they can count up and down to 100 in twos, fives and tens, and recall addition and subtraction facts up to 20 and some can go on to some number facts to 30. However, choosing the correct number operation for themselves to solve a problem is not done so well. Pupils know the properties of common shapes but are less secure on understanding angles. They have secure knowledge of standard units of measurement. Throughout the key stage pupils are making satisfactory gains in their learning, including those with special educational needs. For example, pupils in Year 1 can use numbers up to 20 in addition and subtraction when supported by aids such as a number line or counters. Most can recognise coins and add them up to a total of 20 pence.
- 81 In Year 6, some pupils are working in the higher levels of the programme of study. They can construct a line graph and interpret their findings in relation to the facts underlying the graph (a level 5 expectation). In a challenging lesson on investigating patterns in multiplication a good number of pupils could make a hypothesis to explain the pattern they had found. Pupils have begun to understand the equivalence between fractions, decimals and percentage. Most can multiply successfully numbers up to two decimal places by ten and some by 100. However, pupils need to gain more confidence in the construction of their own calculations and to use their own calculations in solving problems. Pupils' learning throughout Key Stage 2 is generally building satisfactorily on their previous knowledge. In Year 3 pupils know their three, five and ten times tables and can double and half numbers up to 100 mentally. Some can do this at a good speed, others need longer and do not always achieve a correct answer. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 can mentally multiply numbers up to 100 by a number up to ten. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress. Those from different ethnic minorities are integrated well and they learn at a similar rate to others. The school has identified pupils with special talents in mathematics and they are confident in their work, especially in mental calculations and are making satisfactory gains in their learning.
- 82 Pupils are attentive in mathematics lessons and are eager to tackle the tasks that teachers set them. The newly introduced mental calculation sessions are enjoyed by most pupils. They show real determination to get their answers right. Sometimes there is restlessness when work is not challenging enough as in a lesson on time in Key Stage 1 in which most of the pupils could already achieve the objectives for the lesson but usually work is well matched to pupils' needs and their attention is good.
- 83 The quality of teaching was good overall and never less than satisfactory. Teachers' planning is satisfactorily based on the numeracy strategy and most teachers are setting good objectives for pupils' learning. All teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge and some have good knowledge and are able to extend the learning of pupils' with higher attainment by providing activities which stretch their thinking. In the best lessons there is a sense of urgency in the mental sessions and pupils are challenged to improve their mental calculations. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop pupils' skills in mental calculations by asking questions which will help them to explain how they have worked out a sum. Teachers are helping pupils to understand their errors by marking work well but not all teachers are using the final part of the lesson effectively to assess pupils' learning and to help them understand how well they have progressed.

- 84 Classroom assistants understand the objectives of lessons well and are able to support the learning of pupils with special education needs effectively, and they often supply valuable support to other pupils as well. Pupils of higher attainment in Year 6 are provided with a session which extends their learning well. However, in some lessons higher attaining pupils spend too long on work which is too easy and are only given extension work when this has been completed. This slows their learning.
- 85 The school carries out thorough assessments of pupils' achievements and uses these to set targets for future work. However, although results of tests are analysed there is not always a clear focus on what aspects of teaching could be improved.
- 86 Information and communications technology is often used well to develop pupils' understanding of mathematics. For example the database for history developed in Years 3 and 4 provides a good opportunity for pupils to develop their mathematical competencies in data handling. The results of the survey carried out by pupils are used to create graphs and charts.
- 87 The numeracy strategy has been implemented effectively in many respects but as yet the school has not had an opportunity to take up all proposed training. The co-ordinator provides valuable guidance to other teachers but the monitoring of teaching and learning which is planned has not yet been implemented.

SCIENCE

- 88 Lesson observations, scrutiny of work and conversations with pupils, indicate that the levels of attainment of pupils in Year 6 and Year 2 in science are broadly in line with the national average. This picture of attainment is supported by the 1999 teacher assessments at Key Stage 1 and the statutory assessment tests at Key Stage 2 both of which showed a good improvement over the previous year. The pupils' performance in 1999 matched the national average and compared to that of pupils in similar schools was well above. The school has returned to the standards achieved at the time of the last inspection report after a significant fall in the test results in 1997 and results which were still below in 1998.
- 89 At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils can explain the difference between various materials and they understand that all materials have different uses according to their particular properties. Pupils can offer sensible suggestions as to why certain materials would be suitable for making particular objects and others not. They are also able to identify objects that have something in common, for example the 'see through' properties of glass and tracing paper. They have developed a satisfactory understanding of the processes of life, for instance in a study on what seeds need to grow. Some pupils are able to record their views accurately in written form but others find this difficult and require a great deal of support.

- 90 Younger pupils at Key Stage 2 extend their earlier work on electricity and understand how switches are used to control devices. They know how to represent circuits by means of drawings and diagrams. Pupils in Years 4/5 can successfully investigate the amount of air contained in different soils whilst older pupils can recognise and explain differences between solids, liquids and gas. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have gained a good knowledge of many aspects of life processes. The use of scientific vocabulary well, for example, when explaining the several different purposes of the human skeleton. They have a good understanding of the need to record data and their findings accurately and did so when testing the effect of an increase in physical activity on their own pulse. However, they are not confident in their understanding of the need to vary only one factor when making a fair test.
- 91 In most individual lessons teaching and learning are good and on occasion they are very good. One lesson was unsatisfactory and another had elements of needing improvement. In most lessons pupils gain knowledge in well-planned steps and can apply that knowledge to practical investigations. A minority of pupils still have difficulty in recording their information in written form. Older pupils understand the idea of fair tests and they can also make predications and explain what they discover from their work. The majority of pupils throughout the school show positive attitudes towards the subject and apply themselves conscientiously to the tasks set. During the inspection several pupils spoke very enthusiastically about what they were doing and their gains in knowledge were clearly apparent. Pupils listen attentively and many are eager to answer questions. Almost all co-operate with their teachers and with each other very effectively. Pupils with special educational needs are extremely well supported in class and this support has a very positive impact on their learning.
- 92 In the majority of lessons teachers use questions perceptively to assess and develop pupils' understanding and to provide support where necessary. In good or very good lessons teachers' expectations have a positive impact on pupils' attainment by offering them challenges to which they respond very well. This was particularly so in the Year 1/2 lesson on materials, the Year 3/4 lesson on electricity and the 4/5 lesson on soil. Lessons are carefully planned and well organised. Resources are used effectively, relationships are positive and there is a constructive working atmosphere within the classroom which encourages learning. Occasionally teachers' knowledge is less secure and pupils are not given the opportunity to develop their understanding of scientific processes systematically. In two lessons class management was inconsistent, leading to time being wasted and objectives not met.
- 93 The school is currently following an appropriate national scheme linked to its own scheme of work, and will evaluate its impact at the end of the present academic year. The issue about experimental and investigative work that was mentioned in the previous report has been partly addressed, although the school recognises the need for further development in relation to this attainment target. Pupils are now offered more opportunities to express their opinions in the light of their findings and many do so confidently.
- 94 In the absence of a co-ordinator for science at the present time, the headteacher has assumed responsibility on a temporary basis. The challenge for the school now is to appoint a full-time co-ordinator to become actively involved in monitoring and evaluating the quality and standards of provision throughout the school. This should ensure that the improvement that has occurred over the past year is consistently maintained.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 95 Standards at end of Key Stage 2 are above levels expected of eleven year olds in several aspects of information and communications technology (ICT). However, pupils have not had sufficient opportunities to develop good knowledge and experience of work in control technology which brings their overall attainment in the subject down to match general expectations. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is that generally expected of seven-year-olds.
- 96 At the time of the last inspection attainment was found to be in line with nationally expected levels for word processing but other areas of the programme of study were unsatisfactory. The national expectations in ICT have become much more demanding than at the time of the previous report and so, although there are areas where improvement is still needed, in general the school has moved forward well in Key Stage 2.
- 97 Pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 are able to use ICT to present both written work and art work to a high standard. They have, for example produced imaginative and thought provoking "cut-and-paste" images using pictures they have obtained from the internet. They are able to transfer information in a variety of ways and to save or to retrieve it as they require. They understand the use and benefits of a number of devices such as a scanner. They can select data and present it in different forms, such as a graph, and add to it or amend as necessary. Most use the internet with confidence. The weakness in their knowledge is in their experience of framing sets of instructions to control an outcome using ICT.
- 98 Pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 have had some experience of using control technology when giving simple instructions to a programmable toy. They have developed a simple understanding of how ICT can be used to sort and classify information, for example by contributing information to produce a class graph. They can use a mouse satisfactorily and the keyboard. They understand the purpose of some of the keyboard controls such as, the return key and delete key. They can save and print work with support from adults.
- 99 Pupils respond well to opportunities to work in ICT. They use computers and other equipment with care. They are happy to work co-operatively together when it is necessary to share a machine.
- 100 Teaching is never less than satisfactory and often good. Pupils in both key stages are generally being taught the skills they need to become independent users of computers and other ICT equipment. Teachers in Key Stage 2 link ICT effectively to pupils' learning and interest in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in one year group in history pupils have built up a good database on the conditions in the locality during World War 2. The use of ICT as a tool for research is being presented well to pupils and is making a good contribution to their reading. However, there is little use of ICT during literacy lessons to help support pupils learning for instance, about editing their writing or making good vocabulary choices, for which the computer is well suited. Teachers' knowledge is sufficient to respond to pupils' questions and provide support when things go wrong. Pupils' work and understanding is assessed regularly. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is supported well by the use appropriate programs during short but effective sessions on the computer with a classroom assistant or volunteer helper.

- 101 The school is aware that there are insufficient programs to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of control technology in Key Stage 2. The subject is well led but current difficulties with the quality of the machines is taking up too much time and the subject manager has to "trouble shoot" rather than monitor the learning which is going on.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 102 At the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils are achieving a good level of knowledge and understanding for eleven year olds which exceeds the expectations for eleven year olds of the locally Agreed Syllabus. However, they do little written work and the standard of this does not reflect their knowledge and is barely satisfactory. In Key Stage 1, the pupils are achieving a satisfactory level of understanding and knowledge for pupils aged seven.
- 103 At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils retell the story of the birth of Christ with a good amount of detail, including the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. They can identify the other major festival of the Christian year and explain that it was at Easter time that Christ died. They are not able to provide any details of the Easter story. They are able to talk about the classroom display and explain that people in China have a different calendar and a different New Year. They have begun to develop an awareness of how people "talk to God" through prayer and of spiritual themes such as sharing and thinking of the good of others.
- 104 At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can identify their recent experiences at the New Year with the time which has passed since the birth of Christ and explain what this means to Christians. They have a secure knowledge of the names and some of the main features of the major world faiths. They can describe some of the aspects of the life of Christ and retell some well known parables and the miracles performed by Christ, such as the feeding of the five thousand. During a lesson on the significance of food in religious festivals and observances, they show that they are beginning to understand that spirituality presents choices for the individual.
- 105 In Key Stage 1, pupils listen to teachers' explanations well and in a lesson on clothing for special occasions many have asked their parents if they can bring items of clothing into school. Pupils in Key Stage 2, have good attitudes to religious education. They listen well to teachers' explanations about other faiths. They show respect for the different customs which are taught to them and are able to discuss in a mature way moral and spiritual issues.
- 106 Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Teachers plan well to develop pupils' interest and thinking on religious themes. Care is taken to provide good resources which help make the lesson come alive. For instance in Year 5 and 6, teachers provided a loaf baked at home from a Jewish recipe, unleavened bread, and the wafers used in Holy Communion. In a Year 1 and 2 class a collection of clothes used in ceremonies of different kinds had been brought in by parents. Introductions and explanations provide pupils with good opportunities to think for themselves and put forward their own ideas. Pupils' learning in religious education and their skills in speaking and listening is developed well. However, on occasions discussions become too lengthy and pupils begin to lose concentration, especially in the younger classes. Opportunities to develop pupils' responsibility and independence are sometimes missed. For example, teachers generally lead discussions and in one lesson in Year 5 and 6 the teacher gave out the bread for pupils to taste instead of allowing pupils to do this, and thus promoting understanding of service to others.

- 107 In Key Stage 1, pupils have written about the Christmas story and have produced writing and pictures for displays about the millennium and about Chinese New Year. In Key Stage 2, some good writing about churches and temples of other faiths has been done by some Year 4 and 5 pupils, but in the main, in Key Stage 2 pupils have done little written work in religious education. They have not, therefore, had the opportunity to express in writing their own thoughts and feelings about spiritual and moral issues or to practice the skills they have acquired in literacy.
- 108 The position for the subject has improved since the last inspection as pupils' knowledge is greater by the time they are in Year 6. The subject is led satisfactorily but the subject manager has had little opportunity to offer more than advice to teachers. There are good plans to develop the subject and it will be the focus of school development in the coming year. The school's range of resources is unsatisfactory, as noted at the time of the previous inspection.

ART

- 109 Standards seen in art are in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and better than those seen in most schools by the end of Key Stage 2.
- 110 As they progress through the school pupils experience a wide range of media for sculpture and two dimensional work. They learn a good range of techniques which they apply with increasing confidence.
- 111 At Key Stage 1 for example younger pupils practise printing skills by using blocks of Chinese characters. Skills are developed when pupils use polystyrene to cut their own blocks. Later they use materials such as string to design relief patterns on card, which they then use to create prints. They improve their knowledge and understanding of the work of artists such as Henri Rousseau, applying colour and form imaginatively to their paintings in his style. Pupils at Key Stage 2 build well on their earlier knowledge and skills to develop their work. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 for example work with a wide variety of materials including fabrics and clay. They use these skilfully to create scenes reflecting Viking and Roman life in collage and mosaic designs and in work depicting millennium celebrations. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 linked information technology, literacy and art very well as part of a millennium project sponsored by a supermarket chain. They created collages in the style of Magritte and used a digital camera to photograph and import their work adding their own text to the final presentation. Pencil portraits showing good understanding of tone, wire sculptures representing the 'Millennium Garden' and work inspired by Breughel further demonstrate the standards achieved.
- 112 The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Art lessons are well organised. Teachers have secure subject knowledge which enables them to plan interesting and stimulating activities which build well on skills already learned. Pupils are encouraged to plan their work and select their own materials from the good range provided. Pupils who have special educational needs are effectively supported by working with peers or by activities better matched to their own abilities. During lessons pupils work hard, sustaining interest and creativity. They apply colour and materials thoughtfully and are justifiably proud of the results.
- 113 The recently appointed co-ordinator has identified some areas for development such as stronger focus on three dimensional work. The current scheme of work supports teachers' planning effectively, nevertheless a review is planned in the light of the revised curriculum.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 114 Pupils attain standards in design technology which are in line with expectation for their ages at both key stages.
- 115 Year 2 pupils use scissors competently for cutting and shaping materials. They assemble and join the materials appropriately. When making glove puppets for example, pupils stitched the pieces of fabric together, after practising stitches on Binka. The puppet dresses were attractively finished with buttons and sequins. Pupils followed their original designs closely and linked the activity to literacy very well by using bullet points to write step by step instructions. Different methods were seen in another class where pupils used papier mache to build up puppet heads. They were completed by adding well made puppet dresses. Years 4 and 5 pupils test different structures for strength, before designing and making air raid shelters. Their knowledge of history and of materials is reflected in their designs, which are detailed and clearly labelled to show methods of construction. Pupils are gaining a satisfactory understanding of the process of design. Some of Years 5 and 6 pupils enthusiastically took up the challenge of building a bridge using a potato and cocktail sticks. Others cut and assembled wooden frames accurately using appropriate methods to strengthen corners, in order to build stands for model skeletons.
- 116 No design and technology lessons were seen at Key Stage 1 due to the organisation of the timetable. At Key Stage 2 teachers' planning is detailed and activities are chosen carefully to interest and extend the pupils. An appropriate range of materials is available for pupils to work with. Teachers encourage pupils to work collaboratively to solve problems. Although learning objectives are stated clearly in teachers' planning they are not always referred to sufficiently during the lesson. As a result the focus of the teaching is lost and pupils do not learn from the lesson all that they could. For example a lesson was planned to explore the reasons why triangles strengthen structures but this was not made clear to pupils, so their models were less successful than they may have been.
- 117 Management of the subject by the co-ordinator is satisfactory. Resources are maintained at an adequate level. The current scheme of work ensures that there is a well-balanced programme of study which enables pupils to develop their skills satisfactorily. There are plans to review the scheme in the light of the revised curriculum for September. Although standards overall have been maintained since the previous inspection there is insufficient monitoring of the quality of work and of teaching, in order to identify areas of action for improvement.

GEOGRAPHY

- 118 There were only three geography lessons observed during the inspection. Inspection findings are therefore additionally supported by scrutiny of the pupils' work, displays in the school, discussions with pupils and staff and the many examples of past geography topics and journals from school trips.
- 119 The attainment in geography is in line with national expectations at both key stages. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching was never less than satisfactory and overall good. In geography, Year 5 and 6 pupils show good knowledge and understanding of the local area. They are able to locate and give grid references for photographs they have taken in Epping. Year 1 and 2 pupils are able to discuss the simple features of settlements and transport in remote imaginary areas of Britain and see the contrasts to their own town.

- 120 Teachers' planning indicates good use is made of local resources and visits. There is a good range of appropriate resources available and teachers use these well. The pupils' response to the teaching of geography is very good, they are interested in the subject.
- 121 Since the last inspection standards have risen. The geography co-ordinator is very effective in managing this area of the curriculum. However, the subject does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in writing and in information and communications technology. The scheme of work written by the co-ordinator is very good. It is used alongside a published scheme and provides a good geographic experience.

HISTORY

- 122 The attainment of pupils at the end of both key stages is above the levels expected for pupils at the ages of seven and eleven.
- 123 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have developed a good understanding of how historical knowledge is gained from a range of sources such as books, artefacts, stories or eye-witness accounts, museums and the internet. This is because the school provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about different periods using all these means. Pupils use a time-line effectively and can place events and major historical periods within a reasonable chronological framework. Their recent learning and the school focus on the end of the millennium has had a good effect on their understanding of chronology. Pupils in Year 6 are currently studying the Aztecs of South America and are able to show a good understanding of the customs and life of ordinary people in this far off time and period.
- 124 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a good understanding for their age of how life was different for people living in the past. They can compare and contrast the toys that they have today with those of previous generations. They are able to identify that different materials were used and that toys were more simple and did not have the benefit of movement from batteries and such. They are beginning to understand that we refer to different periods of time such as the "Victorians" and they can talk about 100 years as a century.
- 125 Pupils listen well to their teachers. They are interested in history, particularly when they are given the opportunity to carry out research as in a Year 3 and 4 class when pupils finding out about the Vikings, excitedly shared information they had "discovered" with each other and with their teacher.
- 126 Teaching is good in three quarters of the lessons seen. Owing to time tabling arrangements no lessons were observed in Key Stage 1 and in Year 6. Teachers plan well to give pupils a good range of experiences within the topic they are covering. Good links are made with other areas of the curriculum such as art and design and technology and this makes the subject come to life. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subject and how to develop pupils' skills and understanding. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop reading skills and some opportunities to use writing, but more could be made of this. Work is assessed well and pupils' learning from year to year builds well on their previous knowledge and understanding.

- 127 The subject is well led with the co-ordinator giving good guidance on year group planning and monitoring the standard of pupils' work. As yet there has been no opportunity to monitor teaching but this is prioritised for next term on the school development plan. Resources, especially outside visits make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Standards have risen since the previous inspection.

MUSIC

- 128 Standards in singing by the end of both key stages are above levels expected of seven and eleven year olds. During the inspection timetabling arrangements made it difficult to observe a music lesson in Key Stage 1, so a judgement about pupils' attainment in other aspects of music could not be made. Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 in all aspects of music except singing are at the level expected for eleven year olds.
- 129 During assembly times and for school productions, pupils sing very well both accompanied and unaccompanied. They have good diction; sing tunefully and understand the need to pay regard to phrasing and the tempo of a song. When asked to sing during assembly times as a whole school, all pupils are aware of the need to have an eye on the conductor. They are able to perform in two parts a song with a challenging rhythm.
- 130 Pupils in Years 5 and 6 listen thoughtfully to music and make good suggestions about the mood of the piece. Some have begun to relate musical conventions to social or cultural contexts for example suggesting that a piece sounding like a polka might come from Poland. Pupils work together to compose a piece of music using the varied sounds produced by instruments they have designed and made themselves. They make their own choices about a number of musical elements. The rhythms they choose are simple and few make alterations to these as they work together. They are more confident in their choices about the dynamics and tempo they are using and they make changes to these.
- 131 Pupils take part in music lessons well. They are attentive and respond to teachers' requests well. During assembly times pupils are given good opportunities to perform in front of an audience and it is clear that they enjoy performing and do so without inhibitions.
- 132 Teaching is generally good. In the class where pupils composed their own rhythmic pieces pupils were very motivated to learn because they had made their own instruments and they were proud of the sounds they made. In a lesson in Year 6 on the composition by Mussorgsky, "Pictures at an Exhibition" pupils' learning and interest was developed further because the teacher provided prints of the actual paintings.
- 133 The subject is satisfactorily led. The subject manager has provided teachers with a useful scheme and guidance on how to make the best use of the limited time now allocated to this subject. Pupils have the opportunity to learn to play the recorder and there are visiting teachers to provide lessons in brass, woodwind and strings. Resources are satisfactory and music continues to play a good part in the life of the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 134 It was possible to observe only three lessons in physical education during the inspection and a late change to a class timetable meant that it was not possible to see a lesson at the end of Key Stage 2. However the evidence of the other lessons and the extra curricular activities observed indicates that pupils' standards in physical education in gymnastics, dance and games have been maintained since the last inspection and in line with those expected from pupils of their respective age groups. No athletics or swimming was seen during the inspection
- 135 In dance pupils at Key Stage 1 are able to move in different ways in response to ideas expressed on the audio tape. Most are confident in their movements and they can stretch, jump and curl with good co-ordination and control. Most are beginning to understand the idea of using space and the majority are able to recall and repeat movements successfully. In gymnastics pupils are able to link sequences together involving different ways of travelling and balancing. Progression is seen at Key Stage 2 where pupils in Years 4/5 can work very effectively with a partner, producing symmetrical and asymmetrical sequences and transferring their floor work on to the apparatus. Skills in football and netball, where pupils show a ready willingness to improve through practice in their extra curricular activities, are well developed.
- 136 Pupils' attitudes to physical education are very positive throughout the school. They join in all activities with a clear sense of commitment and enjoyment. Their standard of kit is excellent with staff providing good role models in this respect. The school obtains the services of outside coaches to support the extra curricular programme. This includes football, netball, cross country running, dance and gymnastics. All such activities observed during the week of the inspection were purposeful and were very well attended. Pupils also have the opportunity to compete against other schools in several sports at different times throughout the year.
- 137 Teaching is never less than satisfactory and overall is good. Objectives are clear, relationships between teachers and pupils are positive, activities are progressive and resources are used well. Lessons begin and end in a very orderly way and pupils are made fully aware of all aspects of safety. In lessons involving gymnastics and dance pupils are given the chance to plan aspects of their work, but there are insufficient opportunities for them to make simple comments on the work of others. On occasions teachers could intervene more to highlight examples of particularly good work and use such demonstrations to influence the quality of performance of others in the class.
- 138 Resources for physical education are good but space in the hall is limited given the size of some of the classes. Although swimming appears in the scheme of work for Year 2 the outdoor nature of the available pool means that delivery is inconsistent. On occasions is it not possible for pupils to make sufficient progress in this important aspect of the subject. Staff have indicated that they would benefit from in-service training opportunities particularly in relation to dance and athletics.