

**CONFIDENTIAL  
INSPECTION REPORT**

**Earls Hall Infant School**

Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex

LEA area: Southend

Unique reference number: 114725

Headteacher: Mrs H Foster

Reporting inspector: Alan Andrews  
6436

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> December 2001

Inspection number: 194214

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Carlton Avenue Westcliff-on-sea
Postcode:	SS0 0QN
Telephone number:	01702 344334
Fax number:	01702 390241
Name of chair of governors:	Mr George Taylor
Date of previous inspection:	12 <sup>th</sup> May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
6436	Alan Andrews	Registered inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? How high are the standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13981	Doug Binfield	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
7694	Martyn Richards	Team inspector	Science Religious education Equal opportunities English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?
24627	Jill Pullen	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	

10090	Kath Beck	Team Inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Music Geography History Physical education	
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The inspection contractor was:

Quinset

Draycott  
Chappel Road  
Great Tey  
Colchester, Essex.  
CO6 1JP

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>13</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>30</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Earls Hall is an average sized infant school situated in Westcliff-on-Sea. It is housed on the ground floor of a large building, the first floor of which is occupied by its partner junior school. There are 207 full-time children on roll aged four to seven years, including 27 in a reception class. In addition, there are a further 61 part-time children in reception classes. Overall, there are approximately the same number of boys and girls, although the boys outnumber the girls significantly in Year 1. Thirteen children are learning English as an additional language and this represents a higher percentage than in most schools. Five of them are at an early stage in learning English. The percentage of children identified as having special educational need is below the national average, but includes six children with specific statements of special educational need which is above that found in most schools. The percentage of children known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national picture. Children's achievement on entry to the reception is similar to that expected nationally.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Earls Hall is a very good and effective school. The headteacher and staff promote a very good climate for learning. Together with the governors, they work successfully to raise standards that are very good in English and science and good in mathematics. There are examples of high quality work in information and communication technology. Overall, teaching is good. It is especially strong in the Foundation Stage. Parents have a very high regard for the school and its work. Children's spiritual, moral and social development is promoted really well. The school provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Very good standards in English and science, good standards in mathematics.
- Leadership and management is very good, especially that of the headteacher.
- There are examples of high quality work in information and communication technology.
- Good teaching. Particularly strong in the Foundation Stage.
- Very good provision for children's spiritual, moral and social development.
- Relationships are excellent. Children's behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good.
- Parents hold the school in high regard.

#### **What could be improved**

- Better use of information gained from assessment procedures to plan more precisely the work for children with special educational needs or English as an additional language.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Key issues from the previous inspection and developments since 1997 have been tackled effectively and standards of attainment, teaching and learning have risen significantly. The headteacher's role in this has been pivotal. Music has been given a higher profile within the curriculum and staff who lacked expertise have received in-service training. A teacher with a keen interest now teaches the subject one day a week. Class teachers attend these lessons and follow up the work later in their classrooms. This thorough approach has paid dividends because standards have risen sharply and are now better than in most schools. The school's policy for teaching and learning has been completed and implemented fully. Together with a structured approach to the assessment and recording of children's progress it is successfully helping to drive up standards. Teachers' planning has been developed well and national schemes of work have been adopted. The introduction of national initiatives on literacy and numeracy has also assisted teachers' planning. Brighter children are challenged and extended, but more progress needs to be made on using the information gained from assessment to help plan work for children with special educational needs or English as an additional language. The school's procedures for marking children's work are now applied consistently. The marking helps children know how to improve. Currently, the school has no newly qualified teachers, but has adopted the local authority's induction programme.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven year olds based on the average points score in National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	A	A	A	A
Writing	A	A	B	B
Mathematics	A	B	C	C

**Key**

well above average      A

above average          B

average                    C

below average          D

well below average      E

The table shows that at the end of Year 2 the school's results in national tests for reading have been well above average for the last three years. When compared to similar schools, the 2001 results in reading were also well above average. The results in writing have also been consistently high. Although they dipped in 2001, they were still above the national average. When compared to similar schools, they were again above average. In mathematics, the results in 2001 were average when compared to both the national scene and similar schools. The school tracks children's progress carefully and was not surprised by the 2001 results. In recent years its performance in mathematics has been good and it is working hard to drive the results back up again. This is paying dividends because inspection evidence shows above average standards in mathematics for the current Year 2 children.

The school's published targets for the 2000 national tests in reading, writing and mathematics were all exceeded. The targets for 2001 were exceeded in writing and mathematics and just missed for reading. However, in both years, fewer children reached the higher levels than expected. The school is working hard to improve this and is well placed to do so.

Lesson observations and scrutiny of work of children in the present Year 2 show that standards in science are very good. There are examples of high standards of work in information and communication technology. Standards in art, design and technology, history and music are good.

Many children in the Foundation Stage are on course to exceed the early learning goals, especially in personal, social and emotional development and achieve the early stages of the National Curriculum by the end of the reception year.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children concentrate hard and take pride in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Children respond really well to teachers' high expectations of good behaviour so that there is a calm purposeful, working atmosphere in school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent. Children's personal development is very good. They take on responsibilities around the school in a sensible way.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school has worked hard to improve attendance levels.



Children are enthusiastic to come to school and they arrive punctually. Their positive response in lessons helps them to learn well. They show a high degree of co-operation when working together and they benefit from sharing ideas, equipment and responsibilities. The happy atmosphere in the school is a very significant strength. Children are polite and helpful to staff and visitors. They show respect and care for each other. They are encouraged to take on responsibilities and do so with enthusiasm. The school has rightly worked hard to lower the levels of unauthorised absence.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good

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

Overall, teaching is good. It is often very good in the Foundation Stage and this gives children a really secure start to school. Teachers have a clear understanding of the needs of children of this age and work very well together to benefit them. Tasks are imaginatively presented and capture children's interest and enthusiasm. In Years 1 and 2, the quality of teaching varies according to the subject being taught. Almost half the lessons seen were good and a small number of others were very good. Some good teaching of information and communication technology was seen, but not all teachers feel entirely confident in this subject area and they find it more difficult to develop the skills of the children. The literacy and numeracy lessons are often taught well with a good emphasis on basic skills. Strengths in teaching stem from excellent relationships, secure subject knowledge and high expectations of what children can achieve in the time available. In some lessons, however, teachers do not always use the information gained from assessment to help them plan work to meet the precise needs of children with special educational needs or English as an additional language.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Rich and varied, especially in the reception classes.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory in the infants where work is not always planned to meet their needs in lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Children are enabled to settle successfully into school. They undertake the same range of activities as the other children, but in the infants, work is not always planned to meet their needs in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good for spiritual, moral and social development. Arrangements for children's cultural development are satisfactory overall. Literature has a strong place in the curriculum.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Children's health and general welfare is catered for really well.

Parents hold the school in high regard. Their involvement in the work of the school and contribution to children's learning at home is playing a significant role in raising standards. The Foundation Stage curriculum successfully promotes children's independence, social, literacy and numeracy skills. The infant curriculum is a good mix of practical and written tasks extended by an appropriate range of extra curricular activities. Assemblies are very good and make a valuable contribution to children's spiritual development. The curriculum provides a varied experience of the visual arts, dance and music, but more still could be done to reflect the varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children. All children's personal well-being receives considerable attention. Teachers check individual children's progress regularly. They are beginning to use this information to set targets for them. Assessment procedures

are thorough, but the results are not used to full effect when planning work for children with special educational needs or English as an additional language.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Strong leadership by the headteacher in collaboration with governors and key staff is having a substantial impact on raising standards. A really positive climate for learning encourages children to do their very best.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Data is analysed carefully to judge the school's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Money is directed well towards raising standards.

Strengths in leadership stem from the headteacher's positive and strong approach to team building, implementation of national initiatives and emphasis on high standards and quality in children's work. Some coordinators are new to their responsibility, but all are keen to raise standards further in their subjects. Accommodation and learning resources are good. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. Governors and staff are alert to the importance of securing the best they can for the children from the resources available. Overall, the school gives very good value for money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children are given every support and like school.</li> <li>Behaviour standards are high.</li> <li>Good teaching enables the children to progress well.</li> <li>The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>The good relationships with parents.</li> <li>Improvements made. For example, extra learning support assistants, the computer suite and playground facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No significant concerns</li> </ul>

Inspection evidence fully supports parents' positive views.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Standards have risen rapidly since the last inspection when they were judged to be in line with most schools. Children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress and many are on course to exceed the early learning goals in all the areas of experience by the end of the reception year. Some are expected to begin work as set out in the early stages of the National Curriculum. Children do particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development. This is because teachers have very high expectations that children will work together happily and concentrate well. The classroom environment promotes children's confidence and the praise and encouragement children receive raises their self-esteem. As a result they are confident to express their ideas and talk confidently to each other and adults.

2. Children in the infants continue to build effectively on the very good start made in the Foundation Stage. At the end of Year 2, standards in English and science are very good and in mathematics they are good. These standards reflect:

- the school's determination to raise standards;
- good implementation of national initiatives in literacy and numeracy;
- excellent relationships and the creation of a very positive learning environment;
- good teaching that includes an emphasis on the development of basic skills.

3. The school has been doing very well in national tests since the last inspection. Its results for children aged seven have been well above average in reading for the last four years. When compared to similar schools, its 2000 and 2001 results in reading were also well above average. The results in writing have also been consistently high. They were well above the national average in the three year period 1998 to 2000. Although they dipped in 2001, they were still above most schools. When compared to similar schools they were again above average. The results in mathematics have been more variable. During the three year period 1998 to 2000, they were either above or well above the average. The results in 2001, however, were average when compared to both the national picture and similar schools. The school tracks children's progress carefully and was not surprised by these results. It is determined to push standards back up again. Its efforts are paying dividends because inspection evidence shows standards are above average in mathematics for the current Year 2 children.

4. The school is putting considerable effort into analysing data to find reasons for its results and so improve standards. Children's progress is checked carefully and the information gained is used to help plan programmes of work. The school has made good use of this system to show that boys generally achieve similar standards to girls and that more able children progress well. However, the information gained from the analysis of data is not always used effectively enough to help plan the work of children with special educational needs or those with English as an additional language and consequently they do not make as much progress as they could.

5. Children's speaking and listening skills are very good. Almost all children speak confidently and communicate meaning clearly. They have a wide range of vocabulary and use it well. At seven, many offer opinions and express preferences. Teachers have high expectations that children listen attentively, and they do so consistently. This means they often acquire new knowledge and skills quickly.

6. The school gives a strong emphasis to the importance of literature and this is reflected in the significant number of children aged seven with a high level of reading skills.

Younger children are encouraged to use letter sounds to tackle new words and they do so successfully. Children read regularly at home and at school, which increases their rate of progress. They generally have a good knowledge of authors and their research skills are developing well.

7. Children's writing skills at age seven are good, but not as high as in reading and speaking and listening. The school is aware of this and is working hard to raise the level of children's achievements. Children's understanding of basic sentence structure is developing well. Spelling is usually correct and they take care in the presentation of their work. There are examples of good use of vocabulary in children's writing, but they are not always as productive as they could be and it sometimes lacks imagination.

8. Standards in mathematics are good at age seven. Children are often confident in the subject and keen to learn more. All aspects of the mathematics programme are covered thoroughly. Children make good progress in both their written and practical work. However, in some lessons the 'mental warm up' sessions are not sharp enough to develop children's speedy recall of numbers.

9. Very good standards in science stem from the challenging and enjoyable activities presented for children to do. Their knowledge of light, electricity, the human body, life processes and living things is very good indeed. They carry out investigations carefully and explain their findings in a clear and sensible way, often applying them to real life.

10. Overall, standards in information and communication technology are good. The newly established computer suite is having a positive impact on children's progress and some work of high quality was seen. An example of this was the writing of a simple program in control technology by Year 1 children. Standards in art, design and technology, history and music are good. Children enjoy a broad range of musical experiences, including composing and performing. Standards in physical education are similar to those found in most schools. In religious education, standards are in line with the expectations in the syllabus used. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards in geography.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

11. Children's attitudes and behaviour in the Foundation Stage are very good. The stimulating and challenging activities provided by staff, help children to become engrossed in their learning. They make the most of opportunities to try and write words, letters and numbers without help. Staff praise of these efforts motivates children to try even harder and this has a positive impact on their progress.

12. Children in the Foundation Stage are enthusiastic to come to school because there are exciting things for them to do. They carry out their activities with relish and in role-play take on imaginatively the different characteristics of, for example, *an air traffic controller*, *an airline pilot*, *an estate agent* and *a travel agent*, as well as characters in traditional stories.

The children have a very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others as they take it in turns when playing games or wait patiently for their turn to talk. They applaud each other's successes and show respect for their values and beliefs. Relationships between the children and adults are excellent so that the children can use their initiative, grow in maturity, make decisions about their work and look after their personal hygiene. In addition, children are confident in their discussions with adults which helps them to develop their personalities. They have very good manners, share their sense of humour and contribute to class discussions unafraid to make a mistake.

13. At the infant stage, children's attitudes to learning are very good. They enjoy school and show an enthusiastic approach to their work. During lessons they readily understand the need to concentrate and their positive response enables them to learn well. Children listen carefully, contribute well to discussions and work hard on written and practical tasks. An impressive feature is the high degree of co-operation shown when working in small groups. Children benefit by sharing ideas, equipment and responsibilities. They take pride in their work and in the way it is presented.

14. Behaviour is very good during lessons and as children move in and around the school. They are familiar with the school rules and are quick to respond to instructions from teachers and other staff. Children are polite, helpful to visitors and well mannered in the dining hall. High standards of behaviour were observed in the playground helped by careful supervision and by the recent improvements made to the outside environment. Bullying very rarely arises and there were no exclusions last year. Parents are rightly pleased with the high standards of behaviour.

15. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Teachers and other staff are friendly and approachable. This helps to set an extremely good example and children respond well during lessons and other activities. They readily support and help one another as they undertake different tasks. A particularly impressive feature is the gentle and caring attitudes shown to other children. The confident and happy atmosphere in the school is a very significant strength. This reflects an improvement on the already very good relationships mentioned in the previous inspection report.

16. The provision for children's personal development is very good. They take part in a wide programme of activities that helps to widen their experience and improve social skills. Examples include participation in school concerts, support to charities, educational visits and the varied programme of visitors who speak on a variety of topics at assemblies or in class.

17. Children are encouraged to take on responsibilities such as helping with minor tasks in classrooms, assemblies and in the dining hall. The personal, social and health education programme is wide ranging and includes opportunities for children to talk about their own experiences and views in whole class discussions.

18. Attendance is satisfactory. The school has worked hard in recent years to improve attendance levels, particularly the incidence of unauthorised absence. In 2000/01, both attendance and unauthorised absence was in line with the national average for primary schools. Children arrive punctually. Lessons and other activities start and finish promptly, thereby ensuring that good use is made of time throughout the school day.

19. Children show respect and care for each other in lessons and in the playground. They are alert to each other's feelings and have a good understanding of what is right and wrong to do or say. They say sorry when in the wrong and are courteous to teachers and visitors. They take evident delight in many of their lessons, showing wonder at natural objects and at the process of growth and change. They identify with characters they meet in stories and in history, deepening their appreciation of human feelings and reactions. They

enjoy the cultural opportunities offered, singing, dancing and painting with enthusiasm and satisfaction.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. Teaching is very good at the Foundation Stage and good at the infant stage. More than two thirds of the lessons seen were good or even better. Of these, a significant number were very good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when less than half the lessons were judged to be good and only a small number were considered to be very good. The number of learning support assistants has been increased and they make a valuable contribution to children's learning. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is very good in all the areas of experience and this is consistent across all three reception classes. The features of this very good teaching include:

- very secure knowledge and understanding of the needs of children of this age;
- very good teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy so that children begin to read, write and count well;
- high quality planning which identifies what children are to achieve and how they are to learn. This enables all adults in the Foundation Stage to work well together to benefit the children;
- very high expectations that children can learn quickly, behave well, sustain their interest and work happily together. This teaches children to work productively, make important decisions about their work and complete tasks well;
- the provision of imaginative tasks that capture children's interest and encourage them to think hard and try to do things for themselves. These challenge children's intellectual, physical and creative efforts. In addition, teachers make very good provision for children's spiritual, moral and social development. For example, children experience the wonder of the world in science and learn right from wrong by discussing moral issues in fairy tales such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*;
- activities that enable children to understand that what they are learning is linked to daily life;
- excellent relationships with the children so that there is fun and humour in learning and children respond very well to requests from all the adults. Interactions with children that help them to know how well they have done and what they are going to learn next. This gives the children considerable confidence to try out their developing literacy and numeracy skills in the role-play and free writing areas;
- very good use of assessment to plan work to meet children's needs, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language;
- involvement of parents in homework to enhance children's learning in literacy and knowledge of the past.

21. Lessons at the infant stage are prepared carefully. They usually begin with an explanation of what is to be learned and how this links with previous work. Weekly learning objectives are displayed on the classroom walls for children to see and this helps build their awareness of what is to be done. Relationships are excellent and appropriate resources are readily available when required. Teachers have an expectation that children will:

- work hard and consistently do their best;
- behave well and help to create a pleasant atmosphere in which to learn;
- listen attentively so that they know what they have to do;

- work together co-operatively.

Children respond positively to these demands and are pleased with their achievements.

22. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are taught well. National initiatives in these areas have been introduced effectively. In particular, teachers ensure that literacy skills are reinforced in other subjects. Good teaching in science has contributed significantly to an improvement in standards. Teachers often present work in an imaginative way and they draw skilfully on the knowledge children bring to school with them. Good use is being made of the newly established computer suite. Children often enjoy the lessons in the suite very much and are making good progress in their learning. The teaching of music is good. Activities are chosen well and children are enthusiastic about the work.

23. There were examples of very good teaching in English, mathematics, history and physical education. Features of this high quality teaching include:

- imaginative and demanding tasks that appeal to children's interests and challenge them to think hard;
- high expectations of what children can achieve in the time available;
- well organised group work that enables children to share and learn from one another;
- very good questioning that assesses children's progress and deepens their knowledge and understanding;
- on-going feedback to children so that they know how to improve;
- a sense of enjoyment and real purpose.

24. The teaching of children with special educational needs and of those with English as an additional language is satisfactory. Some is carried out by the special educational needs coordinator, but most is undertaken by class teachers who are often helped by learning support assistants. Relationships are excellent and children are keen to please and to do well. Their self-esteem is maintained successfully and they are usually enthusiastic to complete their work. However, teachers do not always use the information gained from the school's assessment procedures to plan work for these children and, as a result, their progress is sometimes slower than it might be.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

25. The school offers a rich and varied programme of activities for the children especially in the Foundation Stage. This represents a continuation of the good provision noted at the time of the last inspection. The school has made improvements in its music provision as required in that inspection. Significant improvements have also been made in the way programmes of work are planned and lessons organised, although more needs to be done in this area if children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are to make the best possible progress.

26. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is a very good one. It offers the children a rich and varied range of activities that motivate them to reach high standards in all the areas of experience, especially emotional, personal and social development. The curriculum also effectively takes into account the need for activities in and out of the classroom.

27. Teachers in the Foundation Stage are fully aware that children learn in different ways and help them to deepen their understanding through high quality, challenging tasks. These involve practical work in mathematics, role-play, talking, observing, planning, testing, repeating, exploring, touching and reflecting. High quality direct teaching sessions in which



children acquire literacy and numeracy skills are built on by providing situations in which they can try to write letters, words, numbers and read without the help of an adult. Very good plans show a clear understanding of the purposes of the activities and intended learning. They also indicate what the children will do. Support staff know their role well and how they are to help the children. Many of the tasks allow children to make the most of them whatever their ability. The classroom environments are colourful, stimulating and reflect the high value teachers place on children's efforts. This too enables children to do as well as they can within a warm, secure, friendly and caring environment.

28. During the inspection, the outside area for the Foundation Stage was timetabled so that each class could make use of it at different times of the morning. This is because it is not directly outside two of the classrooms. Different activities are planned to take place over time, but these are not always as well structured as tasks planned for inside. The school has identified this as an area for development and has plans to improve the provision within the near future.

29. The school's programme for the infant stage lays proper emphasis on the crucial skills of literacy and numeracy, but combines these with a broad range of opportunity in other subjects. All required National Curriculum subjects are taught and religious education is provided in accordance with a nationally recommended programme of work. The new computer suite has greatly improved the opportunities open to the children in this area of work. Lessons across the curriculum are often enriched by the imaginative activities teachers plan. Real objects are used to support learning in subjects like art and religious education, while practical investigations have a prominent role in science. Visits to places of interest, and visitors to the school, also extend and enrich children's learning. Lessons include teaching about safety, personal health and relationships. The school is in the process of reviewing its approaches to sex education and to teaching about safe and unsafe substances.

30. Staff are aware of the importance of making sure all the groups of children in the school gain the full benefit of what it offers. There is a significant number of children in the school for whom English is a second, and sometimes third language. Some of them are still at an early stage in this learning. In many respects provision for them is good. They work alongside the rest of their class, undertaking the same range of activities and achieving success across the curriculum. Where necessary, adult help is provided to make sure they understand the work they are doing. The school makes good use of the advice it receives from the local authority in helping these children settle successfully into school. Books and equipment to meet these children's needs are being acquired, but slowly.

31. This said, the school is not yet precise enough in identifying these children's particular language needs and in making sure lessons address these needs through careful planning. The daily literacy lesson for example, while useful in extending some of their skills, does not focus sufficiently directly on the things they most need to do and to know.

32. The school is a tolerant and harmonious community with no evidence whatever of racial tension. Nevertheless, it is important to put in place systematic checks to make quite certain its ethnic minority and refugee children are able to play the fullest part in school life, as well as ensuring their progress in learning is as good as it can be. Such monitoring should include a range of home and school issues such as whether:

- they play a full part in out-of-lesson activities such as clubs, outings and school events;
- they undertake responsibility roles in school;
- they have friends to play with at breaks and lunchtimes;
- their parents are happy with arrangements for lunches, for school meals, for assemblies and for school dress;

- parents understand school documentation and letters and whether some translation provision might be needed;
- parents understand how to help with children's homework;
- parents feel confident to help in school, join the PTA or the governors;
- the school should do more to celebrate and learn from the impressive bilingual skills of these children, and the rich cultural experience they bring with them;
- school documentation is sufficiently forthright in stating its principles of racial tolerance;
- written guidance to staff on dealing with incidents with a racial undertone is used effectively.

33. The percentage of children on the school's register for special educational needs is below that found nationally, but it includes a high number of children with statements of special educational needs. Most of these children have been admitted only recently, but have settled quickly. The school has a part-time special educational needs coordinator who manages the provision well. Children's individual education plans are detailed and contain precise targets for the children to achieve. Most of the support is given within class lessons and relies heavily on the programmes of work provided by class teachers. Relationships are excellent and children are motivated to do their best. The work of the learning support assistants is valuable in helping the children. They receive good guidance and training from the special educational needs coordinator. However, class teachers do not always use the information gained from school's assessment procedures to ensure that work is matched precisely to children's needs and, as a result, they do not make as much progress as they could.

34. The school now has good assessment systems in place to allow the progress of each child to be tracked as he or she moves through the school. This system also allows the progress of different groups to be checked to make sure they all do equally well. The school has made good use of this data to show that boys generally achieve similar standards to girls. This assessment system also shows that more able children progress well. This was an issue of concern in the last inspection, and the school has made major improvements in providing for these children.

35. The school provides a small but appropriate range of extracurricular clubs for the children, including gardening, computer and mathematics clubs. A range of local people, such as the vicar and the local policeman, visit the school to talk with the children and they make a good contribution to their learning. Home visits prior to entry to the Foundation Stage also help establish good community relationships. The school has good links with its feeder playgroups and junior school, as well as with a local secondary school.

#### **SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

36. The school provides very good opportunities for the development of children's spiritual, moral and social skills. These were among the school's strengths at the time of the last inspection, and remain so now. Parents are rightly appreciative of these aspects of the school's work. Very good assemblies in particular boost spiritual awareness. They are quiet and reflective times when children appreciate the good things in their lives and show real sympathy for the less fortunate. Lessons too give opportunities for thinking about the human condition. For example, the wonder of growth from baby to child as seen in photographs in science work, or the pain of those who lost their home and family in history lessons on The Great Fire of London.

37. The school day offers many occasions for extending and reinforcing children's sense of right and wrong. Reception class children discussed whether *Goldilocks* was right to eat the *bears' porridge*, or *Hansel and Gretel's* parents to take them into the dark wood. Children

are expected to apologise when they are in the wrong and teachers set a good example by apologising themselves when they make a mistake.

38. Children are expected to work well together in small groups, sharing tasks and responsibilities. They discuss classroom rules for good behaviour and take on small jobs in a responsible way. The school's regular collections for children's charities introduces a wider appreciation of social responsibility.

39. The arrangements made for cultural development are satisfactory overall. Children have a varied experience of the visual arts, dance and music. Literature has a particularly strong place in the curriculum. However, the school would benefit if even more were done to reflect and share the rich and varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds of its children.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

40. Very good arrangements are in place for children's guidance and welfare. The school provides a friendly, secure and supportive environment. This is much appreciated by both children and parents.

41. Children are provided with extensive guidance by their class teacher and are also supported well by learning support assistants and midday assistants. The personal and social education programme provides regular opportunities to learn about personal health and safety. This includes talks by the school nurse and by the community police officer. A good example of children's learning occurred in a Year 1 lesson when children were able to identify an adult who had helped to make them feel safe and to describe to others the way in which such help was provided.

42. A strong emphasis is placed on health and safety arrangements. Governors ensure that safety inspections and fire drills are undertaken regularly. Accidents and illness are dealt with competently by staff trained in first aid and there is good liaison with parents when necessary. Child protection issues are handled in a careful and sensitive manner.

43. There are very good systems for promoting regular attendance. Expectations are made clear to parents in the prospectus, newsletters and at meetings. Over the last few years, attendance levels have been an important concern to governors and the headteacher. The persistent emphasis on such issues has resulted in improved attendance and a reduction in the level of unauthorised absence. Registration and follow-up procedures are undertaken efficiently. Any unexplained absence is followed up early on the first morning it arises. This not only acts as a safety check, but reminds parents of the need to keep the school fully informed. The school works in close collaboration with the education welfare officer in dealing with any individual problems that arise. There is a computerised recording system in operation that enables management to have an accurate view of overall attendance issues throughout the school year.

44. Very good systems are in place for promoting high standards of behaviour. The school's 'golden rules' and 'playground rules' were formulated after detailed discussions with the school community. Copies are prominently displayed and children quickly learn to respect such rules. The behaviour policy, including anti-bullying procedures, has recently

been reviewed and is awaiting approval by the governing body. There is a strong emphasis on promoting good behaviour under the popular rewards scheme. Children receive stickers, 'stars of the day', recognition at weekly assemblies and the 'class of the week' awards from each year group. There are appropriate sanctions for dealing with misbehaviour, including bullying and racism, although in practice serious issues rarely arise. Effective behaviour management during lessons and in the playground is a highly commendable feature.

45. Children in the Foundation Stage are cared for very well. Very good induction procedures involving home visits help them to settle quickly into school. Staff assess the children well when they first start school and build effectively on what children know and can do.

46. Procedures for the monitoring of academic performance and personal development are good. Extensive work has been undertaken successfully on developing a system to track children's progress from joining the reception class to the end of the infant stage. Children's skills in numeracy and literacy are assessed carefully within two weeks of starting school and again at the end of the reception year to give an indicator of likely attainment and of value added. The school has begun to use this information well to set targets for children. This good practice is reinforced by half-termly reviews and fixing of new targets. The assessment process devised by the school is particularly strong in that it shows base line information, the amount of value added, progress and the end of key stage targets. In addition to numeracy and literacy, the school has devised thorough assessment records for most foundation subjects within the National Curriculum. Class teachers maintain records about the personal development of each child. Such information is very helpful for discussions with parents and in the preparation of the annual written reports. However, the results of the school's assessment procedures are not always used to full effect, particularly for children with special educational needs or English as an additional language.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

47. Staff in the Foundation Stage work very well with parents. They build successfully on the links they forge during home visits before the children start school. A very useful booklet for parents gives them clear guidance about what the children will be learning and achieving. Parents contribute substantially to children's learning, for example, sharing books at home and providing photographs of family members or family trees to help children understand time passing. Staff greet the children at the door each morning with a warm, friendly and welcoming smile, exchanging information about each child's welfare.

48. There are good relationships with the parents and they are very pleased with the school. This is reflected in the really positive replies to the inspection questionnaires and the complimentary remarks made at the parents' meeting. Parents indicate that the children like school and are provided with extensive support and guidance. They feel the good teaching enables children to progress well and that behaviour standards are high. Parents state that the school is well led and managed.

49. The school has very good links with parents. The arrangements for children joining the reception class are particularly helpful. They include a home visit by a teacher, an

induction meeting for parents and, during the first term, a feedback to parents on the initial assessments for their child. All parents are encouraged to raise any concerns informally with the class teacher or other staff. The headteacher is readily available to deal with any particular issues that arise. The system for open appointments to discuss children's progress has been extended so that every parent is invited to meet the class teacher in the autumn term. This facility is also available to parents during the rest of the year. The annual written reports give helpful information on the child's achievement and progress during the year. Parents are pleased with the consultation arrangements and feel they contribute well to the co-operative relationships with the school.

50. Parents are given written advice about the main areas of work that their child will undertake in the forthcoming term. Helpful newsletters are issued about school events and other items of interest. The prospectus provides comprehensive details for parents concerning the school's facilities, expectations and procedures. The well-written governors' annual report provides an interesting account of the work of the governing body and of the school's achievements.

51. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is very good. This reflects the strong emphasis that is placed in working closely with parents. Several parents help with work in classrooms. Open evenings, concerts and meetings about the curriculum and children's progress are well attended. The school produces written advice to parents on helping with learning in English and mathematics. This enables them to provide valuable support for the work that children undertake at home. Daily contact is maintained through the effective home school reading diary system. The Friends of Earls Hall Schools organise a very full programme of social and fund raising events. The proceeds are donated to the infant and junior schools to improve facilities and equipment, for example tree planting and improvements to the playground environment.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

52. At the time of the previous inspection the headteacher had not been in post long and was in the process of initiating considerable change. The inspection found that she shared with a committed and hard-working governing body, a clear vision for the future direction of the school. Since then the headteacher has continued to manage change with sensitivity and clarity of thought. Leadership is now very good and parents hold the school in high regard. A culture of improvement has been established and standards of attainment, learning and teaching have risen significantly since the last inspection. The headteacher's role in this has been pivotal. Strengths in her leadership stem from an energetic, positive and strong approach to team building, successful implementation of national initiatives and emphasis on high standards and quality in children's work. The interests of the children are always put first and the school's capacity to improve still further is very good.

53. The governing body has appropriate committees that meet regularly. It has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and an effective working relationship with the headteacher and staff. This is one of the reasons for the school's success. Governors are closely involved in the formulation of the school development plan that sets out realistic priorities for the future. Progress on the agreed priorities is considered carefully at every governors' meeting. The school analyses its performance in national tests.

Governors ask challenging questions and, together with senior staff, reflect on why results are the way they are and how the school can do even better. Targets for improvement are set and everyone works hard to try and achieve them. There is a very clear, shared educational direction for the school that enables children to do their best at all times and achieve high standards. Parents value the expectation that children will work hard and develop good attitudes to learning.

54. Day to day management of the school is very good and enables everyone to get on with tasks without unnecessary hindrance. Visitors are made to feel welcome and are dealt with in a very pleasant manner. Staff and governors are proud of the atmosphere and environment in which children work. The school's ethos of effort and enthusiasm and of caring and sharing is reflected very successfully in its daily life and excellent relationships. This helps to promote high standards and a real sense of purpose. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities effectively and monitors the performance of the school well.

55. The headteacher rightly places emphasis on the importance of monitoring, evaluating and developing further the quality of teaching. She has undertaken a programme of observation of lessons and given feedback to teachers that has included targets for improvement. This is part of the school's drive to raise standards and quality of education. It is clearly paying dividends, but the headteacher recognises that there is still work to do, building on the teachers' determination to be even better and increasing their skills so that all teaching is at least good.

56. Subject coordinators are keen to raise standards further in their areas of the curriculum. However, some are newly appointed and, as yet, are inexperienced in monitoring and evaluating standards in their subjects. They have made a good start in evaluating resources and provision, but are at an early stage in their careers and need to build on this start to enhance their skills in their new roles. Policies and schemes of work are updated regularly and give good guidance to teachers about programmes of work. Particular importance has been placed on literacy and numeracy and this has helped bring about improvements, particularly in literacy.

57. Leadership in the Foundation Stage is very good and is having a significant impact on improving standards in this area of the school. New staff have been inducted well. There is a really clear vision about what children should achieve and how they should achieve it. This is linked to a very good level of teamwork between all members of staff. Very good provision in the Foundation Stage is one of the reasons why the children are able to make rapid progress and achieve high standards by the age of seven.

58. The school shares its site with its partner junior school and occupies the ground floor of the main building. All the space has been put to good use. It is clean, bright and well looked after. Good use is made of communal areas, for example the main corridor has book displays with seating and small work areas. Specialist areas include a newly established computer suite and a special educational needs base. These are organised and resourced very well. Outdoor areas are maintained effectively and have some interesting features, such as a pagoda in the playground offering seating and shade. The outdoor area for the Foundation Stage is attractive but small for the number of children who need to use it. However, staff make best use of the space available and have plans to extend and improve it.

59. The school's resources are good and this has a positive impact on children's progress. There are an appropriate number of teachers and together they provide the necessary curriculum coverage. Since the previous inspection the number of learning support assistants has been increased and shared across all classes. Their contribution to the general life of the school, as well as to children's attainment and progress, is substantial.

60. The required performance management systems are in place and the school rightly gives high profile to staff training. The local authority's induction programme for newly qualified teachers has been adopted and used in recent years.

61. The school manages its finances well. Its development plan is based on a comprehensive assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and funds are well directed towards raising standards. Money the school receives for particular purposes is correctly applied and day-to-day financial administration is sound. Good use is made of computerised accounting systems and a recent cash audit confirms the effectiveness of the school's financial controls. In the current year, the school forecasts a small deficit, to be met from the substantial sum carried forward from the previous year. This ensures that children in the school now get the full benefit of its available resources, while retaining a small but sensible sum for unforeseen circumstances. The governors and staff are committed to raising standards still further and have a very sharp understanding of how the school's performance compares with that of similar schools. They seek competitive tenders whenever appropriate for goods and services. They are exploring more systematic ways of involving parents in decision making about the school's priorities for development. Overall, they are very alert to the importance of securing the best they can for the children from the available resources.

62. Taking into account the school's high standards of achievement, the very good leadership, the good and often very good teaching, together with its costs, the school gives very good value for money.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

63. The headteacher, governors and staff should build further on the many strengths of the school by:

ensuring that, at the infant stage, information gained from the school's assessment procedures are used to plan more precisely the work of children with special educational needs or English as an additional language.

Paragraphs: 4,24,25,31,33,46,83

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	29

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	9	21	13	1	0	0
Percentage	0	20.45	47.7	29.54	2.72	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]*

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	238
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	22

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	16

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

### Attendance

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
%	%



School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.6

School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.5

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

### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	52	38	90

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	48	52	50
	Girls	36	38	37
	Total	84	90	87
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (95)	100 (98)	97 (99)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	48	50	43
	Girls	37	37	34
	Total	85	87	77
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (95)	97 (98)	86 (97)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	168
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30
Average class size	30

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y2**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	295

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0
Number of pupils per FTE adult	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	618,344
Total expenditure	593,807
Expenditure per pupil	2,337
Balance brought forward from previous year	18,231
Balance carried forward to next year	42,768

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	270
Number of questionnaires returned	101

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	26	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	31	0	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	66	32	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	48	7	4	1
The teaching is good.	71	27	0	2	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	37	11	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	26	6	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	30	2	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	49	39	10	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	62	33	1	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	36	2	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	33	15	2	34

## **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**

64. All children start school in the September of the academic year when they become five. They attend full-time or part-time depending on when their fifth birthday occurs. At the time of the inspection reception classes were organised by age. Children whose birthdays fall between:

- September and December, attend full-time;
- January and March, attend part-time for one term and full-time from January 2002;
- April to August, attend part-time for two terms and full-time from Easter 2002.

65. Children receive a very good education and very secure start to school in the Foundation Stage. The standard of teaching is very good in all three classes and children make very good progress. Many are on course to exceed the early learning goals, especially in personal, social and emotional development and achieve the early stages of the National Curriculum by the end of the reception year. Children with special educational needs and English as an additional language are catered for well and helped to play a full part in activities. Close links with parents help the children to settle into school. Dual language books are used effectively to help children learn to read and share books together. Planning for the Foundation Stage curriculum is meticulous to enable all children to enjoy a wide range of appropriate and exciting learning experiences. Teachers assess children's progress and use the information well to plan work that meets their needs. This is a very good improvement since the previous inspection.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

66. Staff place strong emphasis on teaching this aspect of the curriculum really well so children make very good progress. They provide exciting activities that motivate children to want to learn. This develops their confidence and independence and, as a result, they concentrate well because their interest is engaged. A particular strength is the way in which adults working in the Foundation Stage enable children to express their ideas and develop their personalities. They do this by listening carefully to the children and showing an interested response. This helps the children to become confident, try out new ideas and show their feelings. In addition, photographs help children to become independent as they help children to remember;

- the activities available for them to work on;
- what they have to do as they move from one to another.

67. Children have a keen sense of right and wrong. This is taught in many different ways, but one very good example was the use of the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* to explore why Goldilocks' actions were wrong. Teachers have high expectations that children will play together very well and they do, taking it in turns, making up stories to play together in role-play and sharing materials.

68. Children are taught good manners. At *snack time* children say *please, thank you* and *may I get down from the table?* This is carried over into other areas of the classrooms when children can be heard speaking politely to their friends when they are playing together. This continues in other areas of the school as children move along the corridor sensibly and stand back to let other children pass by.

## **Communication, language and literacy**

69. Skilful teaching enables children to communicate effectively. *Snack time* is used very well to engage children in social conversations with adults and other children. They enjoy talking about their news, discussing what they have been doing during the morning, or asking each other questions about their likes and dislikes. In role-play situations such as the *travel agent, estate agent, doctor's surgery or office*, children learn to communicate clearly for specific purposes. They invite visitors, confidently, to join them in their games. Most speak clearly and audibly. Stories, poems and rhymes enhance children's pleasure at playing with words as well as developing their confidence to talk in small or large groups.

70. Many children know that print conveys meaning. Teachers share their enthusiasm for books and stories which inspire the children. All children like to read books they have made as well as published books, sharing them eagerly with adults and each other. They take books home to share with their parents too and make a very positive start with reading.

71. Children are encouraged to write as soon as they wish. The role-play situations encourage children to write for different purposes, to book holidays, write prescriptions and to put dates in a diary. A class noticeboard in each room enables children to post their messages to one another or their teacher. This values the children's efforts as they receive praise for what they have done from everyone in the class.

## **Mathematical development**

72. High quality teaching enables children in each of the classes to make very good progress. Teachers use a wide range of strategies, including direct teaching, where children learn to recognise and count numbers in sequence up to 10 and beyond if they are able to. Children play games, match numbers, make them in soft dough, and write them down correctly after following the teacher's instructions. In small groups, children play games with an adult involving a dice so that they are carrying out simple addition or subtraction sums. Outside, they use number mats with numbers up to 25. Staff encourage children to jump from number to number counting forwards and backwards in twos. Such methods, which involve children in learning through using all their senses, are very effective. Children are enthusiastic about their activities in mathematics and eagerly demonstrate their ability to count up to 20.

73. Children know about the names and properties of two dimensional shapes, such as circle, square, rectangle and triangle. They use these to make *shape people and houses*. Children know how to collect information about how they travel to school, the colours of eyes and colour of hair. They use this information well to make simple graphs which adults help the children to interpret. This helps them to understand differences in nature and numbers.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

74. Teaching in this aspect is very good. It is taught thoroughly and does much to enhance children's spiritual, moral and social development. Children were involved in a recent science week, where the school worked with a local secondary school. Children were amazed when they touched a simple generator and their hair stood on end. The photographs of this event serve as a good reminder of this exciting time. Children experimented and learned about the properties of magnets, the magic of mirror writing and making simple circuits by trying out the *Steady Hand Game*. This is based on the popular game where children try to move a hoop on a handle around a piece of wire in the shape of a hand. If the hoop touches the wire a circuit is made and a bell rings. In recent weeks, children have learned about the wonder of plants growing from cuttings.

75. Children use computers to enhance their mathematical skills in recognising numbers, making repeating patterns and moving blocks around the screen to build towers and shapes. Information and communication technology skills are taught specifically. Children know that when they click the mouse they are giving an instruction to the computer. They learn to control their actions on programs where they *dress the teddy*, create a room for *the three bears* or draw pictures of fairy tale characters.

76. Parents contribute significantly to this area of children's learning. In a recent project about families, to help children understand about time passing, parents loaned pictures of members of their families and some organised photographs in the form of a family tree going back to a great, great, great grandma. Children know about old and new toys. They know how they have grown up and have changed since they were babies. They also know about different kinds of homes, such as a house, a bungalow, a flat and that some homes are bigger than others. One child described a block of flats as *houses stacked on top of each other*. The idea of a role-play estate agency is an imaginative idea to enable the children to understand the different kinds of houses in their locality.

### **Physical development**

77. Teaching is good in this area of the curriculum and is an important factor in children's development of physical skills. Children can run, jump, balance and climb using the equipment in the outside area. They have a very good sense of the needs of others and the space around them. These are extended by additional physical education lessons in the hall where there is a different range of large climbing apparatus and small equipment, such as hoops, balls and skipping ropes for children to use. There is less opportunity for children to use the outdoor space for prolonged periods of time as it is not directly outside all the classrooms. This area is timetabled for use at different times of the day. However, children cannot move in and out of the building without supervision. This limits opportunities for greater development of physical skills. Staff make the most of the area and have put together an action plan to develop it further.

78. In addition, there are many opportunities for children to cut and stick paper and material, mould soft materials into different shapes, cut out shapes and generally use their finer movements very well.

### **Creative development**



79. Creative development is taught very well. Staff provide many opportunities for children to express their ideas and personalities. For example, they:

- join in with the children's role-plays to help them extend their imagination and vocabulary. As a result children are very able in role-play and sustain their characters for long periods of time;
- encourage children to paint pictures, mixing the colours well;
- help children to compose their own music, sing tunefully and expressively;
- provide a wide range of media, pastels, collage, paper for children to make individual or class pictures;
- allow children to make cards for birthdays and select their own materials;
- make provision for children to sew. The Christmas stockings were a very good choice at this time of year.

In the outside area, children successfully make up their own games, choosing from tricycles, scooters, doll's prams, climbing frames, musical equipment and skittles.

80. On other occasions, children are invited to express themselves in a variety of ways. For example, they may answer the register in different voices. On one occasion, children were asked to answer in one of the voices of the *three bears* for the children to guess who they were. This provoked children into responding in a way they found amusing and they really enjoyed it. One child answered in his home language and the teacher replied, *An Albanian Daddy Bear, how wonderful!*

81. The classrooms are colourful and stimulating, full of children's good quality creative work. Children's self portraits, paintings of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, homes for animals and *Lego* models are just some examples of the good quality work done by the children.

## ENGLISH

82. Standards in English have risen significantly since the last inspection when they were judged to be in line with most other schools. Currently, at age seven, standards in speaking and listening and in reading are very good. Standards in writing are not quite as high, but are still good. The school's performance in national tests shows a similar picture. Over the last four years the results in reading have been consistently well above the national average. The results in writing have been just as high until 2001 when they dipped slightly, but were still above average. The school is far from complacent about this and is working hard to raise standards in writing further.

83. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work show children continue to build effectively on the very good start made in the Foundation Stage. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good and many children progress well, including the more able. Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make mainly satisfactory progress. The help provided for them by learning support assistants is good. The children's self-esteem is maintained well, but teachers do not always plan group work that is linked closely enough to their individual needs. This means that these children could sometimes make more progress than they do.

84. The National Literacy Strategy is firmly established and helping to raise standards. Class texts are chosen well and appeal to the children's interests. Teachers ensure that literacy skills are reinforced in other lessons. For example, in a Year 2 art lesson children

were praised when they used words such as 'setting' and 'background' to describe pictures they were about to draw. This helped their language development.

85. Many children are articulate. They speak confidently and communicate meaning clearly. They listen attentively, answer questions sensibly and contribute well to class discussions. An example of this was seen in a Year 2 lesson on repetitive poems. Some children used their own experiences to illustrate a particular point they wanted to make. Their very good listening skills do much to enhance their learning in all subjects. They listen carefully to introductions to lessons and know what they have to do. This means time is used productively and work moves forward at a good pace. Children are pleased to talk to visitors about what they are doing and they show pride in their achievements, although some are rather shy at first. By the age of seven, many children are able to offer opinions and express preferences. This is clear when they were talking about their favourite books and giving reasons for their choice. They use a wide range of vocabulary well, including appropriate subject terminology, such as in science, mathematics and information and communication technology.

86. Many children read very well. They enjoy books and listening to stories. Teachers give appropriate emphasis to the use of letter sounds to tackle new words and this is clearly paying dividends because most children make good progress. The importance of letter sounds is reinforced well in other word work. For example, in a Year 2 lesson children identified rhyming words and then suggested alternatives and considered the spelling. Children read regularly at home and at school. Home school reading diaries are used very effectively as a means of dialogue between parent, child and teacher. This encourages children to read and helps them to know how to improve. Children like reading aloud together in lessons and teachers set a good example in the way in which they read to the class. More able children predict story outcomes and suggest alternatives. They have a good knowledge of authors and are able to express preferences. By the age of seven a significant number of children read fluently and with increasing emphasis on expression. They have favourite stories and show good understanding of main characters and story lines. Children's research skills are developing well and many children know about the use of an index and a contents page. Throughout the school a strong emphasis is given successfully to literature. Currently, it has an impressive collection of books about Christmas that are attractively displayed and available for the children to read.

87. Children write for a range of purposes and show good skills when doing so. Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection, but are currently not as high as in reading and speaking and listening. Children know how to sequence events in the right order and their understanding of basic sentence structure, including the use of capital letters and full stops, is developing well. Spelling is usually correct and most work is presented neatly. There are examples of creative thinking and imaginative use of vocabulary in some written work. For example, when writing a diary about The Great Fire of London in the style of Samuel Pepys a Year 2 child wrote:

*Today I went to the window and I saw a great big fire. I went to help with a big bucket, but that did not work.*

However, in class work children are not always as productive as they might be and their writing could be more imaginative.

88. The quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory and in more than two thirds of the lessons observed it was good or even better. All teachers show a secure understanding of the National Literacy Strategy and share their subject knowledge effectively with the children. Lesson plans are usually clear about what children are to learn, although they

sometimes do not take enough account of children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Children have very good attitudes towards the subject and behave really well. This helps their progress. The good teaching stems from:

- very positive relationships and an expectation that children will try hard to do their best;
- good control and management which ensures that children stay on task;
- well chosen texts that appeal to children's interest;
- reminders about previous work and how it links to what is to be done next;
- an emphasis on basic skills such as letter sounds;
- effective questioning that assesses what children understand and challenges them to think hard;
- a sense of purpose and good use of time.

89. An example of very good teaching was seen in a Year 2 lesson in which the teacher used a poem about Noah's ark to develop children's understanding of rhyming words, plurals and the use of past and present tense. Tasks were presented in an imaginative way, as when children were asked to clap when a rhyming word appeared. The teacher successfully reinforced the link between reading, spelling and writing. Children worked hard and learning built very effectively on previous knowledge and understanding. Time was used really well and the teacher had high expectations of what the children could accomplish.

## **MATHEMATICS**

90. Staff build effectively on the very good start children make in the Foundation Stage. Progress is good in Years 1 and 2 and standards are good at the age of seven. This was reflected in the scrutiny of work and lesson observations. It is also borne out by the results of national tests in 2001, where 97% of children reached nationally expected standards. The number of children achieving appropriate standards has risen considerably over the last four years and the recent slight 'dip' is because four children in the whole year group did not achieve the expected level. Close analysis of the results indicate that a significant number only just reached the expected level<sup>1</sup> and the school recognises that there is some work to do to enhance the progress of some children.

91. These good standards stem from good teaching of basic skills and the children's very good attitudes. Teachers plan work well and in line with the National Numeracy Strategy. Tasks are varied, sometimes new and practical, which take children forward in their learning. At other times they consolidate previous learning. In Year 2, children are set in groups according to their ability on two days a week. This is an effective strategy which enables teachers to challenge children appropriately to work harder at tasks which meet their needs well. In Year 1, tasks are not always matched as effectively to children's needs to take them forward at a good rate.

92. Many children, especially at age seven have good knowledge of:

- addition, subtraction, multiplication and division;
- numbers over a hundred;
- measurement in metres and centimetres;
- time, especially o'clock and half past. This is linked well to work on digital clocks as well as fractions;

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<sup>1</sup> The expected level for children aged seven is level 2. This is divided into level 2C (the lowest) 2B and 2A ( the highest)

- money up to and beyond £;
- two dimensional and three dimensional shapes;
- collecting information to construct, read and interpret graphs.

Children can also estimate weight, capacity, length and height.

93. Children with special educational needs and English as an additional language make satisfactory progress with the help of learning support assistants. At the present time, teachers' lesson plans do not take sufficient account of the targets set for these children in their individual education plans. There has been an increase in the number of children with special educational needs in Year 2 and this is important if standards are to remain good. Learning support assistants work effectively with the children in group work in lessons.

94. Teachers ensure children cover a substantial amount of work in each lesson and over time. Teachers' secure subject knowledge enables them to give very clear explanations about what children are to learn and how they are to learn it. As children listen intently, they take on a lot of new knowledge quickly. Children record their newly acquired knowledge well, taking considerable pride in setting out their work neatly so that they can work accurately. During lessons, teachers give children clear guidance about how to improve their work so that they have a good idea about how well they are doing. Some teachers confirm this when marking children's work giving a clear idea of what needs to be done next.

95. Teachers use mathematical vocabulary correctly and expect children to do the same. As a result, children are confident about the subject. Teachers' enthusiasm is shared effectively so many children say they enjoy mathematics and want to learn more. Children respond very well to teachers' high expectations that they will concentrate and work hard. Very good relationships allow children to learn from each other as they share ideas when they get stuck. In turn, children persevere at challenging tasks until they get them right.

96. Many children are confident in counting in twos, fives and tens, and draw on their broader mathematical knowledge to solve problems or play mental arithmetic games. However, the 'mental warm up' session at the beginning of each lesson sometime lacks the sharp pace required for children to develop thorough and speedy recollection of numbers. Some teachers provide many opportunities for children to share their ideas for solving problems and so enhance learning of other children. In other lessons, there are fewer opportunities to do this. Teachers use a commercial scheme, on occasions, to help children consolidate their learning. These tasks are usually undemanding. Filling in the missing numbers or colouring shapes does little to take children's learning forward, especially in Year 1.

97. A particular strength in the mathematics programme is the way teachers cover all aspects thoroughly and link children's learning to real life. Practical work, such as in the classroom 'shop' or 'café', cooking and measuring things, makes learning real for the children. Numeracy is included in other subjects, such as literacy and art. For example the story of *Sleeping Beauty* was used very well to investigate numbers to 100. Patchwork squares and triangles were used to construct the patchwork quilt for the Princess' bed helping children to see that some shapes fit together to make patterns. Resources in lessons are used very effectively for children to learn through practical and written tasks.

98. The coordinators for mathematics are enthusiastic and have identified the areas, similar to those found during the inspection, for improvement. They have yet to analyse results of previous tests to find the areas children find more difficult.

99. Children's enthusiasm for learning is captured through the interesting and broad curriculum teachers provide for them. This, together with high expectations that children can do well, gives children the confidence to do their best and achieve good standards.

## **SCIENCE**

100. Children progress well in science and standards are very good. The school has improved on the good levels of attainment noted in the last inspection. This is borne out by the results of national assessments over the intervening years, showing that standards have been consistently higher than those in most schools and have risen year on year. They also show that in most years many more children have reached levels above those expected for their age than is generally the case. Even when compared to similar schools, standards are higher than average. The most recent assessments in 2001 showed a slight drop in the proportion of children reaching the nationally expected level. This resulted from weaknesses, now rectified, in the way in which the school assessed the children and is not a reliable indicator of their attainment. This year too, however, a very high proportion of the children reached the higher levels of attainment.

101. Children work very hard and enthusiastically at this subject because teachers plan challenging and enjoyable activities for them to do. Their programme covers all the required areas of the National Curriculum. Most of the work seen during the inspection was about forces, with children learning about light and about electricity. Most work earlier in the term had been about the human body. Nearly all the older children can explain how electricity is used in the home. Given a box of simple components, they can make simple circuits to light a bulb, or sound a buzzer. Some can explain very clearly what would happen if components are moved about in a circuit, or if additional devices are added. Through their work on the body, they know what humans need to grow and thrive, how they change as they get older and how to protect their own health. Photographs of themselves as babies, and today, provoke delight and wonder. Children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language also make good progress in science. They receive adult help when they need it and teachers sometimes adjust the writing demand of a lesson to ensure less confident writers still successfully learn the new science ideas. Some children learn science very quickly and lessons do not always include tasks to provide such children with the challenges they need.

102. Good teaching lies behind the high standards reached. Lessons are planned with care and with a very clear view of what new learning is expected each time. Good questioning makes the children think hard and explain their ideas. For example:

Q "What would happen if some water got in a plug?"

A "The electricity would all come out."

Q "But how could it get out; there's no wire sticking out for it to go along?"

A "I think it can go along the water like along a wire."

103. New ideas in science are often presented in imaginative ways, drawing well on the general knowledge children bring to school with them. In a Year 1 lesson, children learning about light, tested variously coloured paper strips for reflective properties by using a torch under a blacked-out classroom table. They had to put strips in order according to how much light they reflected. They applied their findings to real life, talking about the safety clothing worn by the school crossing patrol and by cyclists. Some of these very young children can even explain why a light reflective patch set in a dark background is attention-catching even in daylight.

104. In the present term, the science coordinator is able to work alongside other teachers in science lessons several afternoons a week. This enables her to give specialist advice and help, but also means she has a very accurate perception of the quality of science lessons across the school and of the standards reached. She has been instrumental in broadening the school's approach to science. Major improvements have been made to outdoor facilities to extend work on life processes and living things. The school has joined the British Association Youth Section, using some of their excellent materials for classroom investigations. A lively 'Science Week' was held recently, with activities led by governors, parents and secondary school pupils. Children were thrilled by the "steady hands" game, and by making their hair stand on end with a simple generator.

105. The breadth and ingenuity of the science programme, both in lessons and in additional activities, accounts for the children's enthusiasm and confidence in the subject. This in turn leads to very good levels of concentration and application to their work, and thence to the high standards they achieve.

## **ART AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

106. Three lessons were seen during the period of the inspection, two in Year 1 and one in Year 2. Judgements were also informed by teachers' planning, an interview with the coordinator for the subjects and a review of children's previous work. The programme of activities is often lively and interesting and children are building skills systematically as they move up through the school. By the age of seven, they are achieving above the level expected for their age. This is a similar finding to the previous inspection in art, but represents an improvement in design and technology because the last inspection judged standards in the subject to be in line with most other schools. Design and technology is currently a priority within the school's development plan and has been allocated additional funding. This focus on the subject is clearly paying dividends in terms of helping to raise standards.

107. Children's learning is good in lessons and over time. They are successfully developing their confidence in handling a variety of materials. Their manipulative and control skills are mostly good, for example when using scissors and glue to cut and join materials together. They generate a range of ideas and successfully plan the design and making of products, some of which have moving parts. For example, children in Year 2 have built models with moving axles and wheels to transport well-known imaginary characters. They are constructed well and with a sense of fun. They include a *Bugs Bunny* car in the shape of a carrot and a vehicle to take *Beauty and the Beast* to the castle. Most children have used sliding mechanisms successfully to create animated pictures. During the inspection, children in Year 1 were incorporating this device into the making of calendars for Christmas. Many children are beginning to understand the importance of refining what they make in order

to bring about improvements. They think carefully about the order of their work and consider the materials and tools needed. Particular attention is given to safety and children are sensible about this, for example they are mindful of others when using scissors. Effective links are made with other areas of the curriculum, especially literature. Children often make good models and figures to illustrate the stories and fables they have read.

108. Children show good skills in drawing, painting and colouring. This helps them to illustrate work successfully in other subjects. For example in history, children have produced some really imaginative drawings and paintings to illustrate the Great Fire of London. Good opportunities are provided for them to experiment by mixing different coloured paints. Children in Year 1, for example, have found out what happens when you add white or black to a colour. Children's work also includes weaving, collage, batik, pottery and printing. Children in Year 1 have tried simple wood burning to make Mendhi patterns and the results are pleasing. Displays around the school show children have a growing awareness of colour, texture, shape and size. Their observational skills are good and their work shows an increasing understanding of proportion. Examples of this were seen in portrait paintings in Year 1 and pastel drawings of fruit in Year 2. Good links are made with information and communication technology and children have produced a range of pleasing computerised pictures. Appropriate attention is given to the work of well-known artists. Children copy their styles effectively, such as when Year 2 children considered the work of Piet Mondrian and made computerised patterns using straight lines. These studies help children appreciate the wide variety of ways different artists represent their feelings and experiences.

109. Teaching overall is good. Lessons are prepared carefully with appropriate resources to hand. This helps to ensure that time is used effectively because children can get on quickly with the tasks. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm with the children well. This has a positive impact on their progress. Good opportunities are provided for children to work together and this helps build their social skills. An example of this was seen in Year 2 when children were working successfully in groups to produce a story board about the nativity. Teachers ensure that children build up skills systematically. Lessons begin with reminders about earlier work. Questions are used skilfully to draw out what children know and understand. During the practical sessions, teachers sometimes stop the whole class in order to share a child's success and give ideas to others. This is good practice because it helps children to feel that their efforts are valued and enables them to learn from one another. All children have very good attitudes towards their work and behave really well. They enjoy the tasks and consistently do their best.

110. Displays of work around the school are often of a high standard. They celebrate children's achievements effectively and help develop their visual awareness.

## **GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY**

111. The last time the school was inspected, standards in geography and history were similar to those found in most schools. There were no schemes of work or systems to check children's progress in these subjects. These have been put in place and reviewed again recently to bring the curriculum and assessments in line with new guidance.

112. The school's curriculum plan shows that geography is not taught in Year 2 in the autumn term. There is a strong focus on history. Geography is taught in Year 1, but much of the work is practical. As a result, there was not enough evidence to make a judgement about

standards in geography. Scrutiny of teachers' plans show that in Years 1 and 2, children learn:

- where to find other countries in the world;
- how to find their way around school and give directions to others;
- the characteristics of the seaside and immediate locality;
- ways of travelling around.

113. The situation is different in history and children make good progress building on the very good work done in the Foundation Stage. The standard of work is now better than that found in most schools and represents good progress since the last inspection. The introduction of a clear curriculum plan and good quality teaching has paid dividends. Children's current work in Year 2 reflects a thorough understanding of The Great Fire of London. Children throughout the school know about time passing from studying their family trees, looking at old and new toys, homes now and in the past and how these have changed since they were born. They also know that events happen in a sequence by looking at the different events that take place during the day, over a week and over a year.

114. In Year 2, children have a good understanding of the way history is interpreted. They raise questions from pictures and know that books and pictures are secondary sources. They have studied the life of Samuel Pepys and recognise that we know a lot about The Great Fire of London from his diary. They also know that he buried some of his belongings to protect them from the fire and uncovering such objects may provide information from the past.

115. In addition, children's very good literacy skills significantly enhance their learning, especially when showing clear empathy with historical characters that were alive at the time of The Great Fire of London. In writing a diary, as if they were Samuel Pepys one child wrote expressively, *On the third day the fire was still ablaze. WHAT SHALL WE DO?*

116. In the two lessons observed, both in Year 2, one was satisfactory and the other very good. In the very good lesson, imaginative ideas enabled children to understand events that occurred over 300 years ago. By asking children to imagine that they had gone back in history and that a new person from 1666 had entered the classroom, children were able to develop their own questions to ask about that time. In addition, children entered imaginary conversations based on their good knowledge. Children learned much from the effective use of books, videos and pictures and shared this information clearly with their friends. To extend their vocabulary, the teacher prepared a very good selection of key words on the whiteboard. Words such as, *rampaging, timber-framed, long ago, finally, first and eventually*.

117. The scrutiny of work and lesson observations show that children have very good attitudes to learning. They take considerable pride in writing and presenting their work imaginatively. In discussions they listen attentively to their classmates, deepening their understanding and feeling sympathy, empathy, fear and relief as details of the work unfurls. The imaginative and effective teaching methods in the very good lesson observed, caught the children's interest so well that they became engrossed in the events of 1666, challenging their creative and intellectual effort. The satisfactory lesson enabled children to demonstrate much of what they knew, but was presented in a less imaginative way.

118. The coordinator for history and geography is newly appointed. A complete review of the subject provision has been carried out. The next step is for the coordinator to acquire skills in monitoring the provision to sustain standards.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**



119. The school has addressed effectively the key points for action identified in the last inspection. It now has good assessment procedures of children's progress to inform future planning and good progress has been made in the development of control technology. In addition, the newly established computer suite is making a positive impact on the work the children do. It is resourced well and put to good use. There are sufficient computers for whole class activities and a projector and screen to enable clear demonstrations of particular computer skills.

120. Children achieve standards above those expected nationally. By the age of seven many are skilled in the use of the keyboard and mouse. They sometimes produce work of a high quality. For example, Year 1 children were able to write a simple programme in control technology. In the same class, children created simple sequences of instructions to control devices and achieve specific outcomes. Children are able to generate and amend work as well as plan and give instructions to make things work. They can use a 'paint' programme to produce Christmas cards of their own design, many of them with text as well as pictures.

121. The quality of teaching seen varied according to the confidence and expertise of the teacher. Overall it was satisfactory and half of the lessons observed were good. Where the teaching is good, teachers are thoroughly confident and able extend their skills to children effectively. However, there was also a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching due to lack of confidence in the subject. Teachers are receiving training and their skills and confidence are improving as a result. Of note, is the practice of a specific information and communication technology learning support assistant who offers very good support for three afternoons each week.

122. The coordinator for information and communication technology is knowledgeable about her subject. She models lessons, oversees plans and monitors work in the school to good effect. There are plans for further training for teachers, including the senior management team and support staff. An information and communication technology club is run for children at lunchtime and is well attended. There are plans to develop a similar club for parents.

123. Children are interested and enthusiastic during lessons. They behave well and follow instructions attentively. They work cooperatively together in groups to share ideas and solve problems. They edit the results of what they do and try to improve. They take pride in their work particularly when they are able to produce a hard copy.

124. Staff are very aware of the importance of using the possibilities presented by information and communication technology in other subjects right across the curriculum. Good examples of this were seen in art and history with children producing designs in the style of well-known artists and pleasing pictures linked to The Great Fire of London. Whilst links with other subjects are satisfactory, the school acknowledges that they could be developed still further.

## **MUSIC**

125. Good teaching, in-service training for staff who lacked expertise and a higher profile for music within the curriculum has impacted standards significantly. These are now better than in most schools and this represents very good progress since the last inspection. Music is mostly taught one day a week by a teacher with a keen interest in the subject. Class teachers attend these lessons and follow up the work done later in their classrooms.

126. Good teaching, using well-chosen materials and activities enable children to make good progress as they move up through the school. The youngest children listen to and

appraise music moving in time to the speed and rhythm of it. They know about high and low notes and repeat simple rhythms clapping their hands or tapping their feet. The children found this hard at first, but persevered until they were successful.

127. Children are successfully enthused about learning music. Children in Year 1, quickly learned the words of a new song about fishmongers', butchers' and bakers' shops. Children listened very carefully and this, together with a high standard of behaviour, contributed much to their rapid progress. The song was a good one as it captured the children's interest because it was amusing and also extended their vocabulary. Once they had grasped the words, children accompanied their singing with musical instruments keeping to the rhythm well. This was built on, so that by the end of the lesson, children sang the song in two parts as questions and answers and played their instruments effectively. They were very interested, worked hard and groaned when it was time to finish because they wanted to carry on.

128. In Year 2, children sing tunefully, with expression and enjoyment. They draw well on their previous learning in music, for example to express their ideas of mountains, rivers, plains and forests using a wide variety of instruments. The children were observed working together very well to decide on the instruments to use in their groups and how to play them to illustrate the characteristics of the earth that they were trying to represent. Following advice from the teacher, children refined their performance, making it louder or softer. Eventually their performance was recorded so that they could evaluate their work.

129. The secure subject knowledge of the teacher and enthusiasm for the subject is shared effectively with the children. The children enjoy the sense of fun and humour in the songs. A published scheme gives good support so that work can be continued when the music teacher is not available. Since the last inspection children enjoy a much broader range of musical experiences, singing, listening to and appraising as well as composing and performing music. At the present time, no child learns to play a tuned instrument in school. In the spring term, there is a choir and the school takes part in the local musical festival. These factors, together with the children's very good attitudes and desire to learn, have had a significant impact on improving standards in music.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

130. The physical education programme covers gymnastics, dance, swimming and games. At the time of the inspection, four lessons were observed, three in games and one in dance. Overall, standards are similar to those found in schools nationally. This is lower than at the time of the last inspection when they were judged to be good. Good monitoring by the headteacher and coordinator has identified this situation. A new policy, scheme of work and assessment programme has been completed and is the focus for improving teachers' confidence, knowledge and skills. The planned training programme is a good one and involves teachers observing good quality lessons led by a specialist in the subject.

131. Three of the lessons observed were satisfactory and one was very good. All had an appropriate structure that helped the children to warm up their muscles, understand the impact of exercise on their bodies and relax before returning to the classroom. Children use space sensibly and show the ability to sustain effort. They co-ordinate and control their movements satisfactorily. In games, children know how to throw and catch a ball or beanbag correctly. They can bounce and catch a ball successfully as well as aim a ball or beanbag at a target accurately.

132. The lessons provide good opportunities for children to develop their social skills, working cooperatively in pairs and small groups. Children with special educational needs are fully integrated into lessons and with the help of the learning support assistants make satisfactory progress. The children's high standards of behaviour and willingness to work hard help to make lessons purposeful and enjoyable. They do their best to carry out the teachers' instructions, use resources sensibly and avoid running and bumping into each other.

133. In dance, children use space well and link movements effectively to represent feelings and moods expressed in a poem called *What can I do?* The children's very good attitudes enable them to quickly devise movements to show peeping, hiding, creeping, shrinking and stepping. These movements reflect children's imagination and control. Very good relationships between the children plus encouragement of the teacher motivated them to do their best. Children with special educational needs played a full part in the lesson supported effectively by learning support assistants.

134. Teachers give attention to essential safety issues. However, they should ensure that all children tie their hair back and that staff wear appropriate clothing and footwear.

135. The school shares a pool with the junior school that enables children to gain confidence in the water and reach good standards in swimming.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

136. The school's programme for religious education is based on a nationally recommended syllabus that provides an opportunity for children to begin to appreciate what religions are and why so many people belong to them. The programme also leads the children to think about practical spiritual and moral issues in their own lives. The standard reached by the end of the infant stage is in line with the expectations of the syllabus, as it was at the time of the last inspection.

137. Children know a little about some of the main festivals and celebrations of different faiths, for example Christmas and Divali. They understand that such celebrations are important to believers just as celebrations in their own lives are important to them. They remember some of the great figures of the Old Testament such as Noah, Joseph and Jonah. Some children can explain underlying messages in these stories, such as the evil of jealousy. They write well in religious education, with a pleasant personal tone, neatly and accurately. Children with special educational needs, and those for whom English is not a first language, also develop effectively in this subject because additional help is on hand if needed and tasks are matched to their abilities.

138. While the three religious education lessons seen during the inspection were all satisfactory, there were still some weaknesses in them. Two of the lessons focused on keeping safe. While looking after oneself and others has a place in the religious education programme, these lessons did not develop the religious aspect of the subject fully enough. Indeed some teachers make no distinction in their timetables between religious education and personal and social education. Where this happens, the subject's integrity and structure is put at risk. The third lesson was more soundly based on the programme of work for religious education. It explored the Christian season of Advent through discussion with the children. An Advent ring had been brought in for them to see. The children talked about the

high points of their own Christmases and learned some of the different ways Christmas is celebrated in different households. However, not enough attention was given to Advent itself. Its importance as a time of inner reflection, preparation and anticipation was not explored sufficiently to help the children towards an appreciation of what Christians do in Advent, and why it is so important to them.

139. Children are very interested in religious education. They are lively conversationalists, never slow to put forward a point of view, or to illustrate teaching by an example from their own experience. They take the subject seriously and work hard to understand the ideas presented. They are careful and neat in their stories and pictures. They are always sensitive in discussing matters of other people's beliefs and religious practice.