

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BUTTSBURY JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Billericay, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115278

Head teacher: Mr Vaughan Collier

Reporting inspector: Mrs Barbara Doughty  
22261

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2001

Inspection number: 194740

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	7 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Norsey View Drive Billericay Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Dee Horton
Date of previous inspection:	28 <sup>th</sup> April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs Barbara Doughty Registered inspector 22261		What sort of school it is and what it should do to improve further  How well pupils are taught
Mrs Carolyn Webb Lay inspector 9614		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development  How well the school cares for its pupils  How well the school works in partnership with parents
Mr Peter Dexter Team inspector 14976	Mathematics Design and technology Special educational needs	How good the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils are
Mr John Sangster Team inspector 20010	Information and communication technology Art and design Religious education	How well the school is led and managed
Mr Mike Roussel Team inspector 22157	Science Geography Music Physical education English as an additional language	
Mrs Eva Wilson Team inspector 20653	English History Equal opportunities	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This foundation junior school is much bigger than most other schools. There are 470 pupils aged seven to eleven on roll, 242 boys and 228 girls. Fourteen per cent of them have special educational needs; one has a statement of special need. This is below the percentage found in most schools. Their needs include emotional and behavioural difficulties, visual impairment and attention deficit disorder. Very few pupils, less than two per cent, are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. Most pupils have attended the local infant school and attainment on entry is above average in English, mathematics and science. Nearly four per cent of the pupils come from homes where English is an additional language spoken; this is higher than in most other schools. Two of these pupils are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The school has recently had a problem filling vacant teaching posts; there is currently one vacancy filled by a teacher on a temporary contract. Two classes are being taught by unqualified teachers; one is an overseas teacher and the other is in the final year of training.

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

The school is providing a sound education overall and is improving rapidly in key areas. Standards are above average in English and science, reflecting pupils' attainment on entry. Standards in speaking and listening and in mathematics are well above those found in most other schools and pupils do particularly well in these subjects. However, standards in writing are not as high as they should be given the pupils' attainment on entry, and the brighter pupils do not do well enough in science. Nevertheless, teaching is good overall and standards are now rising because of it. This is because senior managers help teachers to find out what they can do to improve their teaching. The school provides sound value for money.

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

- Standards are high in mathematics, and pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good.
- Teaching is good, and often very good, in Years 5 and 6, and because of this standards have risen from average to above.
- The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is good and is bringing about a rapid rise in standards.
- Effective subject leadership in English, mathematics, science, ICT, design and technology and music is causing standards to rise in these subjects.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and enjoy very good relationships with teachers and schoolmates.
- The school is well led and managed.

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

- Standards in writing are not as good as they could be given what the pupils can already do when they start this school.
- The brighter pupils do not do as well as they could in science and their standards are not high enough.
- Subject leaders in religious education, art and design, geography, history, and physical education are not given the opportunity to find out enough about what is happening in their subjects to bring about improvements to teaching and learning.

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

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

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected in 1997. All of the key issues have been dealt with. Most pupils now do as well as can reasonably be expected, except in writing, and standards overall have risen from average to above average. Pupils' learning is improving over time because of better teaching and significant improvements to subject guidance. The procedures for gauging and recording pupils' achievements are now satisfactory overall.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	A	B	C	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	A	A	A	B	
Science	A	A	B	C	

The school's results show that standards are above average overall and have risen over the last four years in line with the national trend. Pupils do particularly well in the reading and mathematics tests; over half of them attained the higher level in 2001, when results were even better than in previous years and show clearly that standards are rising. The school's targets for the number of pupils attaining the expected level and above in mathematics and English overall are sufficiently challenging and usually met. In general, pupils at this school do as well in the tests as those in similar schools and standards are high enough overall, given pupils' attainment on entry. The fall in standards in English, illustrated in the table, was due to a fall between 1998 and 2000 in the number of pupils attaining the expected level and above in writing. Whilst the 2001 figures were more in line with the 1998 figures, they are still not good enough. Although pupils make good progress in mathematics and reading, their attainment falls short of expectations in writing. This is because pupils do not join phrases together effectively to add meaning to their work. They do not usually begin their sentences in an interesting enough way to capture the attention of the reader, and sentence structure and demarcation are weak. Although standards in science are above average overall, the brighter pupils do not do well enough in science because teachers' expectations about what these pupils can do are too low. Pupils read a range of texts confidently and extract relevant detail quickly and easily. They have good vocabulary and choose words carefully to express themselves accurately and precisely. Their numeracy skills are well developed, reflected in over half of the pupils in Year 6 in 2001 attaining the higher level in the national tests. Standards in music are above those expected for eleven year olds; their singing is very good. In design and technology, pupils' graphic work is particularly imaginative and their evaluations and descriptions of the design and making process are above expected levels. Standards in all other subjects, including ICT and religious education, are broadly as expected by the time the pupils leave the school.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils like coming to school. They take care to present their work neatly and accurately. They want to learn and are attentive in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This is very good. Pupils are very well behaved and polite and courteous to each other both in class and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils applaud and celebrate the success of their classmates and help others with their work. They share equipment, like computers, sensibly and work together well. They have some opportunity to take responsibility, through their work with the school council for example, but have little opportunity to show initiative in some lessons such as science.
Attendance	Attendance is good, partly because of the very good procedures in place for encouraging pupils to come to school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils in:</b>	<b>Years 3 – 6</b>
Quality of teaching	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.*

Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good in Years 5 and 6. Pupils' learning over time has been acceptable, but is good in lessons now because of improvements in teaching. English and mathematics are taught well, mainly because the teaching of pupils in attainment sets for literacy and numeracy means that work is relevant and suitably challenging to extend learning. However, there is a lot of working through textbooks in mathematics and not enough time for pupils to apply their computational skills to solve everyday problems. Reading is taught well, but in writing not enough is done to extend pupils' skills. Science is taught reasonably well, but not enough demand is made on the brighter pupils; too few opportunities are given for these pupils to use their initiative in investigative work. The teaching of ICT is good. Teachers are supported well by the subject leader and are confident about the requirements of the subject and secure about how to teach them. The subject is taught mainly in the new computer suite and not enough regard is given to ICT in the classrooms to promote learning in other subjects.

The needs of all pupils are met well. Pupils with special needs and English as an additional language are supported well. Teachers throughout the school ask relevant questions that probe and extend pupils' understanding, and use praise successfully to encourage pupils to do better. They have a clear idea about what pupils have learnt, but not all of them use this information to set precise enough personal targets for pupils to improve their achievements. In addition, marking does not always tell pupils what they can do to improve their work next time. Lessons always have an aim and this gives them good structure and direction; resources are chosen and used well and lessons generally move at a good pace. However, teachers are not always clear enough about what pupils will learn by the end of the lesson and this means that sometimes tasks are not always as relevant and purposeful as they might be. The four unsatisfactory lessons seen were due mainly to unfamiliarity with the National Curriculum and teaching inexperience.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is wide and varied and enriched by a good range of residential visits, extra-curricular activities, educational visits, and visitors to school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is good and pupils do well. Their learning is ensured through the good support they get from the special needs teacher and classroom assistants.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Although there is no specialist support for these pupils, teachers are well aware of the difficulty these pupils have in understanding the English language and support them well in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is promoted well. Pupils have a good understanding of their own cultural heritage mainly through their studies in literacy, art and music. However, pupils' awareness of other cultures living in Britain is under-developed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a caring school. Staff know the pupils well and take good care of them. They monitor pupils' learning effectively, but not all of them use the information effectively to set pupils precise enough personal learning targets. The school works well with parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	This is good. The head teacher and senior managers have a clear idea of what needs improving and give clear direction for the future. However, some subject leaders do not have the opportunity to observe lessons or look at pupils' work in order to evaluate the quality of teaching and how well pupils are learning. Therefore, they do not have a clear enough picture of what is happening in their subjects to influence and bring about improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have a working knowledge of the school mainly through their meetings with subject co-ordinators and information they get from the chair of governors and head teacher. They know what works well and not so well, and influence improvements through their involvement in school development planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good, and because of this, targets for improvement are relevant to the needs and circumstances of the school.
The strategic use of resources	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate. Finances are used well to support improvements and the school applies the principles of best value well, mainly through effective tendering procedures and by comparing its costs and performance with those of other schools.

## 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>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• The way their children behave in school.</li> <li>• The progress their children make and the way staff expect them to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• The quality of teaching and how staff encourage pupils to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The approachability of the school staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information about how well their children are doing.</li> <li>• The arrangements for homework.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with all of the things that please the parents most. The information the school sends out about how well pupils are doing is satisfactory, but more could be said in pupils' written progress reports about what they could do to improve. The arrangements for homework are good. Pupils are given work to do at home that helps them with their work in school. There is a good range of activities outside lessons including after school and lunchtime clubs, residential visits, and visits to places of educational interest and value.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards are above average overall in English, mathematics and science and the school usually meets its targets, which are sufficiently challenging given pupils' attainment on entry. Many pupils start Buttsbury Junior School with good attainment, and the expectation, therefore, is that they will leave with it. Many do, and standards are high enough given the pupils' previous attainment. Some do much better than expected, particularly in speaking and listening, and mathematics. The 2001 test results and the work seen in pupils' past and current workbooks show that pupils achieve well above average standards in mathematics by the time they leave the school. Standards in English are above average, which is as expected given the pupils' attainment on entry. However, whilst pupils achieve very well in speaking and listening and well in reading, not enough reach either the expected or the higher levels in writing. In science, standards are above average overall and most pupils make sound progress. However, too many of those who have attained the higher level at the age of seven, do not attain it by the age of eleven.
2. Nevertheless, overall, standards are rising and, in English and science, at a slightly better rate than nationally. They are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection, when they were broadly average. This is mainly because teaching and learning has improved significantly and the school's curriculum is better focused and more effectively planned. Teachers use the school's new teaching guidance effectively to plan lessons and this means that they are clear about what to teach pupils of different ages. The arrangements for teaching pupils in attainment sets in English and mathematics is very effective because it means that pupils are given work that matches their level of attainment and challenges them well.
3. Standards in mathematics are particularly high and the rate at which pupils achieve is good; nearly half of the pupils in Year 6 last year attained the higher level by the time they left the school. Results are set to rise again this year, with 95 per cent of the current Year 6 pupils predicted to attain the expected level and above by the end of the year. Pupils have well-developed numeracy skills in particular. They calculate quickly and accurately, using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. However, whilst there are many opportunities to practise and develop these skills in mathematics lesson, there are few opportunities to use them in other subjects.
4. By the time they leave the school, nearly all of the pupils are very confident speakers and attentive listeners. They use a good range of vocabulary and talk confidently about, for example, their work on the school council. They listen carefully to their teachers and schoolmates and confidently respond to suggestions and comments made. Their reading skills are good. Most pupils in Year 6 read a wide range of material for pleasure and to find things out, including newspapers and fashion magazines. Many have preferences for different authors and justify their choice convincingly. However, standards in writing are not as good as they could be and pupils' achievement falls short of expectations, given their attainment on entry. Whereas pupils' spelling, handwriting and presentation skills are good, pupils do not use joining words effectively to add colour, interest and meaning to their writing. Sentence beginnings are often dull and do not capture the attention of the reader, and sentence structure and demarcation is not always correct.
5. Standards in science are much better than they were at the time of the last inspection, with more pupils attaining the expected level and above by the time they leave the school. However, the brighter pupils do not do as well as they could, given their attainment on entry. This is because the same demands are made on them as on the rest of the class.

Investigation work for these pupils is too directed and controlled. They have insufficient opportunities to learn how to formulate a hypothesis, plan an experiment to test it and then carry it out, select their own resources and methods of investigation, record their findings, and draw their own conclusions.

6. Standards in ICT are broadly as expected for the age of the pupils, and are rising rapidly because of new technology equipment, including computers and control equipment, such as programmable traffic lights. The subject leader offers good guidance and support to colleagues and because of this, teachers are confident in teaching ICT. They have secure subject knowledge and this means that they give accurate instructions and good pupil support. Their learning about the impact of multimedia presentations and eye-catching designs to advertise a product is particularly good. At the present time, however, ICT skills are not used enough to support work in other subjects.
7. As at the time of the last inspection, standards in religious education are satisfactory and meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have a secure understanding of the Christian faith in particular, but limited knowledge and understanding of other world faiths. Standards in design and technology are much better than they were; some of the graphics and the models the pupils produce are of high quality. Standards in all other subjects are as expected for pupils of this age, except in music, where they are better than expected. Pupils sing well and their composing and performing skills are particularly well developed. This is because some of the lessons are taught by a music specialist, who has very good expertise and knowledge of the subject requirements.
8. Pupils with special needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress towards their learning targets because they are supported well in lessons. Consequently, very few pupils last year attained below the expected level in speaking and listening and reading. Their support in English is particularly good and this impacts significantly on their learning and progress in other subjects too. The literacy group that these pupils are in is small, and is taught by the special needs teacher, who has a very secure understanding of their needs and how best to meet them. She recognises that those pupils with English as an additional language are not necessarily lower attaining pupils and moves them on at a pace and level appropriate for them. In other lessons, classroom assistants help these pupils to do their work successfully. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls and both genders do equally well in the tests and lessons.

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

9. The school continues to encourage and foster good attitudes to learning and the positive values reported at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are enthusiastic about their lessons and want to please their teachers. They work together well and are proud of their own and others' achievements. They respect each other's feelings, and show support for those less fortunate than themselves by raising considerable sums of money for charity. Relationships throughout the school are very good and mutual trust is enjoyed. There have been no exclusions for the past three years. Pupils with special needs and the very few speaking English as an additional language are very well integrated with, and supported by, their classmates. This makes them confident to work hard and have a go at new things. Pupils like coming to school, almost all arriving on or before time in the mornings. Attendance is good.
10. A stimulating, purposeful and happy atmosphere pervades the school. Many pupils remarked how pleased they were to be able to use the new ICT room and those creating a new history book cover in Year 5, excited by their experiments with colour shading and extending letters, worked harder because of this and were delighted with their results. Despite their very recent arrival at school, Year 3 pupils settled quickly to their mathematics

lesson and enjoyed choosing items for their party bags, whilst making sure that the total value of these should not exceed £1.50 – balloons and lollies were very popular choices! On successfully completing an electrical circuit in a science lesson, a cry of joy, “I have light”, was heard from one Year 4 boy and this spurred the others on frantically to try to achieve the same result. Pupils in a Year 6 history lesson became so involved in their discussions of what life must have been like with no television and limited communication in 1938 that they nearly missed assembly! Through enthusiastic role-play, Year 6 pupils recognised emotions aroused by another’s action or comment and thoroughly enjoyed comparing the text used in the cartoon, film and book versions of ‘101 Dalmatians’. Subsequent interviews with Cruella de Ville were penetrating.

11. Behaviour in lessons and around the school building is very good overall. This makes concentrating easier and lessons run smoothly. The only silliness observed was when the work was not challenging enough in some of the lessons and pupils became bored, or when new teachers were still learning about the pupils in their class. All know the rules, how they are expected to behave and what will happen if they do not. Outside in the playground, where exuberant and sometimes boisterous play is enjoyed, minor incidents occur but are quickly dealt with by vigilant supervisors, and no aggressive or bullying behaviour was observed during the inspection week. If any of their number are hurt, classmates are concerned and try to help.
12. Pupils’ personal development is good although formal responsibilities are only allocated when pupils reach Years 5 and 6. All pupils like taking on responsibilities, and carry out tasks conscientiously when asked to do so, but very few take the initiative in this. Pupils who aspire to membership of the school council prepare and deliver a speech to their classmates at election time. The council takes its responsibilities seriously: the agenda is governed by suggestions taken from the agenda box and pupils take on the roles of secretary and treasurer. Members report back to their classes and take surveys of pupils to find out opinions and preferences. The whole school is now pleased with the choice and quality of school dinners, these having been discussed with the catering manager. The council successfully lobbied the parents’ association for a donation to further their ideas, and during charity week, their organisation of Red Nose day was a great success, when one class wore pyjamas, another odd shoes, and yet another had ‘wacky’ hair and clothes. Assemblies and personal, social, health, and citizenship education sessions result in some fruitful discussions. Year 4 pupils showed a good understanding of how to protect themselves when talking about ‘being safe’ after an assembly on freedom. When the teacher produced a bag of broken bottles there was a concerned “Oh” from the class and gasps when a workman’s axe appeared from under her table. Sensible suggestions were made on how to deal with these hazards.
13. All benefit from the residential trips in Years 4 and 6. During the latter, pupils quickly learn to rely on their friends and develop the confidence to cope with unknown situations. ‘Crucial Crew’, a multi-agency course arranged by the police for all Year 6 pupils in the vicinity, and regular talks from the local police officer for all pupils at school about the dangers and problems pupils could face in the world outside Buttsbury Junior School, make a positive contribution to their developing maturity. Pupils look forward with confidence to their transfer to secondary school.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

14. Teaching is good overall and is significantly better than at the time of the last inspection, when just under a quarter of the lessons seen were unsatisfactory or worse. A regular programme to check on the quality of teaching has resulted in teachers evaluating their own teaching. As a result, they have sought effective ways to improve it. During this inspection, 74 lessons were seen. Ninety-five per cent of them were satisfactory or better, 41 per cent

were good, 14 per cent very good and four per cent were excellent. Five per cent were unsatisfactory.

15. New subject teaching guidance supports teaching well. Teachers are clear now about what to teach and when to teach it and so the building of pupils' learning from year to year is secure. Better arrangements for finding out about what pupils know and need to learn next have led to teachers setting work that is well matched to pupils' learning needs. The effective setting of pupils in literacy and numeracy attainment groups means that pupils work at the correct level and that what they are asked to do challenges them. However, this does not happen in science and the brighter pupils are not challenged sufficiently as a result. Too often these pupils are given the same work to do as their classmates, which is too easy, and they do not achieve as well as they could.
16. Teaching and learning are particularly good in Years 5 and Year 6, where 26 of the 37 lessons seen were good or better. Here, teaching is often inspirational and lively, and interests and enthuses pupils very well. For example, in Year 5 when reading 'The Hobbit' and making deductions about what the writer was saying, the teacher encouraged the pupils to ask questions as well as answer them and this involved them well in the lesson, made learning enjoyable and meaningful, and held their attention. In a Year 6 numeracy lesson, the pupils were very excited learning about multiplication terminology and decimal places because the teaching was imaginative, linking words like 'triangle' and 'tricycle'. The pace was so quick that the pupils wondered what was coming next, and the teaching was lively and good humoured. As a result, pupils concentrated well, thought about what they were being taught, and clearly enjoyed their learning.
17. The teaching of literacy and numeracy are good and result in high standards overall. In particular, the English and mathematical work that pupils are asked to do at home is well focused on improving their learning in school. Clear planning, especially in literacy and numeracy, gives lessons good structure and the teaching good direction. There is usually good balance between teacher explanation and pupil activity. In most lessons throughout the school, teachers share with the pupils what they want them to learn by the end of the lesson. Where these learning intentions are clearly focused, such as, "By the end of lesson you will be able to multiply decimal numbers by 10 and 1000", the pupils know what they are doing and why, and teaching concentrates on enabling pupils to achieve the identified goal; questions are well-focused. These make pupils think about what they are doing and build their learning effectively. However, because the learning objectives are not always clear and are sometimes confused with what the pupils will do and not what they will learn, such as "To look at the local area and focus on the High Street", learning is not always as good as it could be. This is because the work does not then concentrate on promoting any particular skill and the tasks are not as well chosen as they might be. For example, in the lesson above, pupils compiled their own list of the buildings they knew to be in the local High Street. They had done this together in a previous lesson and their learning would have been better extended had they then used the information they had already compiled to categorise buildings according to their different features, location, or use.
18. Teachers enjoy very good relationships with their pupils and because of this, pupils work hard to please them. There is trust and affection between pupils and teachers, and this helps to create a good learning atmosphere. Humour makes learning fun, and praise and encouragement is used effectively to get pupils to try hard with their work. Lessons generally move at a brisk pace and time reminders add urgency to the tasks, such as "You have five minutes left". Teachers use good Standard English and this in turn encourages pupils to choose the words they use carefully in order to say exactly what they mean. Resources are prepared well and used effectively to secure learning, such as videos in history and pictures of advertisements in ICT.

19. Teaching meets the needs of all of the pupils well. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are taught well. Good regard is given to their personal learning targets, which are very precise, and their language difficulties in lessons. The teacher for special needs uses praise very effectively to build pupils' confidence and self-esteem, and encourages all pupils to have a go at answering her questions. The gentle, kind and sensitive approach towards teaching these pupils means that pupils relate well to one another. They will each other to succeed, urging classmates to find the right answer. Boys and girls are given equal attention in lessons and each gender performs as well as the other.
20. There are some weaknesses, however. Pupils are given insufficient opportunities to use the skills they have learnt in mathematics and ICT, in particular, in other subjects. Some teachers do not make enough use of what they know about pupils' previous learning to talk with pupils about what they need to focus on next in order to improve their work over time. Consequently, pupils' personal learning targets are too broad and pupils are unclear about how to attain them. In addition, some of the teachers' comments in workbooks are mainly corrective or complimentary and do not tell pupils what they could do to improve their work.
21. Five per cent of the lessons seen were unsatisfactory or poor. Weaknesses were due mainly to unfamiliarity with the requirements of the National Curriculum and, to a much lesser extent, teaching inexperience. Lesson plans, written with the support of teachers from parallel classes in the same year groups, were not strictly adhered to and this meant that teaching lacked focus; pupils became noisy and restless and little learning took place. The school is working well to support and deal with these weaknesses.

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

22. At the time of the last report this area had serious weaknesses. This is no longer the case. The school has worked hard to improve the management of the school day and its balance. It has been successful; the curriculum is now wide and varied and meets statutory requirements. All the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are given a suitable well-planned balance of time; the breadth of the curriculum is further enhanced by visits, including residential ones, and visitors, and a satisfactory range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, including an orchestra, choirs and a full range of sports such as netball, rugby, cricket, athletics and football. The gym club before school is a particularly valuable activity when pupils with special needs and their families meet to practise different skills. Good links with the community, such as the church, supermarkets, and police and fire services, enrich pupils' learning opportunities further. Literacy and numeracy lessons are seen as central to pupils' learning. These are well organised and successful. The organisation of pupils into groups of similar ability continues to raise standards in English and mathematics.
23. All pupils benefit from this full curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs are identified quickly by the special needs co-ordinator and supported very effectively by her, class teachers, and learning assistants. The brighter pupils benefit from learning in ability groups; they have further opportunities in sport in the competitive matches against other schools, or through the specialist teaching in music. Some are selected to attend an activity week during the summer holidays at the nearby secondary school. This fosters good links with this school and prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. The school keeps an up-to-date register for both pupils with special educational needs and the highest attainers, which is shared with all teachers. The curriculum for pupils with English as an additional language is relevant and these pupils learn well because of it. The way the school tracks the progress of pupils regularly ensures all pupils are provided for equally.
24. The good programme for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is taught well through several subjects. In addition, there are regular planned lessons when pupils sit together and talk about how to keep safe, or why rules are important to a community. Part of

the programme is linked to science when pupils learn about healthy living, follow a series of videos on sex education, and learn about the dangers of drugs misuse when they meet with the community policeman or school nurse. Pupils organise their own school council, which meets regularly to suggest ideas for improving the school and its grounds. The pupils are helped to deal with their own personal growth most effectively because of this thoughtful provision.

25. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. It has improved since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory. Pupils are developing an understanding of themselves and their place in the world through the wide and enriched curriculum. For example, stories in English lessons, musical activities, and lessons in religious education and art, give pupils opportunities to reflect on more enduring values or to enjoy their own artistic achievements. It is when this is distilled into their own writing that the best results are seen. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 wrote about their understanding of happiness or what they would put in a magic box. They wrote: "Happiness is my family ..... my imagination ..... kissing my dog on the nose". Year 5 pupils wrote: "I will put in my magic box friendship ..... the sound of baby Eleanor ..... the feel of a guinea pig's fur ..... my box will be made of dreams and memories". These writings are illustrative of the school's skilled approach to spiritual development, underpinned by the well-planned acts of collective worship.
26. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. It is better than at the time of the last inspection, when it was satisfactory. Moral and social development is successfully promoted by such means as class rules, well-planned acts of collective worship, both whole school or class, and through constructive discussions of incidents of wrong behaviour. Good behaviour is praised and merit awards are given in assemblies for being honest, helping others, or telling the truth. Teachers set pupils good examples because they treat everyone with respect. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they are increasingly mature and developing a good understanding of moral citizenship. They are ready to take responsibility for more of their own learning and increased opportunities should be planned for this to happen.
27. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. It is clear from the displays around the school that pupils learn with enthusiasm about the traditions and customs of their local area, which is planned for well and involves the wider community. Pupils participate in music festivals, enjoy visits from theatre companies, and go on visits to theatres and places of local interest. They were very successful in their work for the 'Billericay in Bloom' competition, and in their imaginative designs for a sculpture in the local park. However, this good planning is not as apparent for learning about the wider ethnic diversity within our culture. Although there is a multicultural week and some opportunities to listen to other cultures' music, this provision is not as well thought out as the programme for developing pupils' understanding of their own culture. This remains outstanding from the last report and is still a weakness in the curriculum.

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

28. The school continues to provide a supportive, caring and stimulating environment for all pupils. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory but some girls wear unsuitable shoes for school, increasing the likelihood of them tripping or stumbling, particularly when running and playing in the playground. Risk assessments take place once a term and security is reviewed regularly. The school has effective arrangements for child protection, and trained first aiders, on site throughout the school day, deal with any incident effectively. Teachers know pupils well and deal effectively with their concerns. Pupils with special educational or other needs and the very few who speak English as an additional language are very well supported by, and integrated well with, their peers. Pastoral care is one of the school's strengths and the school's practice of including pupils of all abilities, gender and race, is good.

29. The school has very good procedures for promoting attendance. Incentives include the termly and annual certificates awarded for 100 per cent attendance throughout the year. The weekly announcement of class attendance percentages in assembly is awaited eagerly. The well-established systems for monitoring attendance are very good. Registers are scrutinised daily and 'first day' absence telephone calls are made by 10 o'clock each morning if no reason has been received for a pupil's absence. The education welfare officer who visits the school regularly is appropriately involved when necessary.
30. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour, a clearly stated discipline policy, and very effective systems to promote good behaviour. Racist and sexist remarks are never tolerated and rarely arise. Individual classes formulate their own rules in response to the policy and all pupils are clear about what they should and should not do. The rewards, which include stickers, 'blobs' and merit awards, are given for attitude and behaviour as well as achievement and are valued by pupils. Monitoring of behaviour is ongoing and very effective. Sanctions, which include standing in the corridor and being sent to the head teacher, are well known and perceived as fair. There have been no detentions, nor exclusions, during the past three years.
31. Assessment procedures and the use of the information gained are satisfactory overall; they have improved since the previous inspection when they were ineffective. The wealth of information collected includes data from the infant school, initial pupil assessment carried out soon after pupils arrive in Year 3, optional and national test results, and teacher assessments. The new computer program used to track pupils' attainment year by year enables teachers to see at a glance the progress classes and individual pupils make during their time in school. However, this is currently only used for English, mathematics and science. All information is collated and analysed in great detail but is not yet used effectively enough to adapt the curriculum. Pupil profiles are updated once a term and annual reports record achievement, but not all contain precise targets to help pupils improve. Marking of pupils' work does not always indicate where or how pupils can improve their work. Individual education plans for those pupils with special needs and English as an additional language, set clear targets and are reviewed regularly, which underpins the good support these pupils receive in class. The school has effective procedures to assist pupils who speak English as an additional language and plans well for their progress.
32. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development, although largely informal, are good overall. Pupils respond well when asked to help teachers or to take charge of the registers but rarely take the initiative. Monitors are only appointed in Year 6 when pupils are pleased to 'man' the office, under supervision, over the lunch break and watch the corridors to make sure that no one re-enters the building unless they really have to during break times. The two representatives elected from each class to the school council are proud to be chosen by their classmates and work hard for the benefit of the school. Council members ensure the new footballs and giant Jenga are fairly allocated between classes. Pupils enjoy and learn from educational visits. In Year 5, the sports adventure is eagerly anticipated. Year 6 pupils develop self-reliance and their confidence increases during their residential trip. Attendance at 'Crucial Crew' – talks from the local police officer and discussions during the well-planned personal, social, health and citizenship sessions – alert pupils to the dangers and difficulties to be found outside school, in addition to reminding them of their responsibilities as citizens in the multicultural society in which they live. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

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

33. The school has established very good links with parents and enjoys a good relationship with them. Parents support the school's aims and ambitions for their children and are pleased with the attitudes and values promoted. A significant number help in school each week,

hearing children read or generally assisting pupils as directed by teachers. Others enjoy accompanying their children on educational trips, which include the residential week in Year 6. Parents were generous in their support for the school's successful attempt to win the 'Billericay-in-Bloom' competition for the second time, providing many plants and 'muscle' to enable this to happen. Parents' attendance at report evenings is excellent at almost 100 per cent, and all are keen to see their children perform at the popular school productions.

34. Although a minority of parents do not believe they are sufficiently well informed about their child's progress, inspectors found that information provided by the school is good overall. Regular newsletters, Year Leader letters at the beginning of term, and others, ensure parents know in good time of what topics their children are studying and forthcoming school events. Teachers are always available to speak to parents if they have concerns, and questionnaires sent out by the school elicit parents' opinions. Parents of children with special educational or other needs and those who speak English as an additional language are well informed, involved in deciding their children's individual education programmes, and are well supported by the school. Parents appreciate the annual progress reports, which detail their children's achievement, although many of them lack clearly defined personal targets to help pupils understand what they must do to improve. The home contact book is not yet used consistently as a dialogue between teacher and parent in Years 3 and 4 but after the success of the homework diary in Year 6 one is now being introduced in Year 5. Although some parents do not believe that the school provides an interesting enough range of activities outside of lessons, inspectors found that there is a good range, including visits and visitors.
35. As a result of the many successful fund-raising activities run by the very enthusiastic and active parents' association, large amounts of money are raised each year for the school to use; amongst other resources purchased, pupils now enjoy new benches in the playground, medals for sports day and new mathematics books and equipment. These events, well supported by teachers, families and friends in the community, include the very successful sponsored walk, the 'sell-out' race night and 'bouncy' afternoon enjoyed by all. Pupils were eagerly awaiting their discos on the Saturday following the inspection!
36. The school's commitment to developing the already very good links and good relationships established with parents, coupled with their strong support for and involvement in school life, makes a considerable contribution to pupils' academic achievements and to their personal development.

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

37. The head teacher provides the school with strong and effective leadership, which has given a clear direction to the good improvement that has been made since its last inspection. He is supported well by the senior management team, consisting of the deputy head teacher and four year group leaders. Together they have implemented the policies that have led to improvements in teaching and a rise in standards. As a result, the school is making very good progress towards meeting its stated aim of achieving the highest possible standards of attainment in a happy, caring environment.
38. At the time of the last inspection, the part played by individual subject co-ordinators, particularly in the monitoring of teaching and learning, was weak. This has improved in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT, which have been focuses for development both in the school and through National Strategies, as well as in design and technology, which was identified as a weakness at the last inspection. Good progress has been made in these subjects in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, leading to an improvement in its quality. However, the co-ordinators for other subjects have not yet had the time and opportunity to monitor teaching and learning in their own subjects through observation of lessons and a systematic scrutiny of pupils' work. As a result, standards in

these subjects are only average, except in music, where good teaching by a specialist teacher has raised standards to above those expected. The co-ordination for pupils with special educational needs is good and ensures that these pupils are fully integrated into the life and work of the school and make good progress.

39. The governing body meets all its legal obligations well and plays an active part in the planning and development of the school. Governors have a good knowledge of the school, enhanced by their individual links with particular classes as well as with the co-ordinators for the core subjects and special educational needs. Through these channels and good communication with the school, they understand its strengths and weaknesses well.
40. The school plans well for its future development, by a process that involves all staff and governors as well as the senior management. The development plan sets out priorities clearly, linking them well to previous achievements and the financial implications of new initiatives. Priorities are appropriate, and there is a separate five-year plan for ICT. Progress in meeting the targets set is checked regularly at meetings of the governing body and its committees.
41. The school has implemented effectively the new arrangements for performance management in schools. At the time of the inspection, all teaching staff had been set targets, except for the deputy head teacher. There are good procedures for the induction of staff new to the school, including those who are unqualified and newly qualified. They are well supported by their year leader and other members of the team in planning teaching through the year group organisation. The school has an adequate number of teaching staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. It has had difficulty in filling a vacant post this year, which has resulted in the appointment of a teacher who does not have United Kingdom qualifications and is unfamiliar with its education system. The teaching staff are supported well by competent and qualified teaching assistants, including those for special educational needs.
42. The school's accommodation is adequate for teaching, although its exterior is in need of redecoration and there are leaks in its flat roof, sometimes causing damage to workbooks and displays. The computer suite is a valuable addition, which is helping to raise standards in ICT, although there are problems with its ventilation system which need addressing. There are good outside hard and grassed areas for physical education, as well as for breaks in the school day.
43. Resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The provision of musical instruments, criticised at the last inspection, is now good, thanks to financial help from the parents' association, and this is promoting good standards in music. The number and high quality of computers and other ICT equipment is helping to raise standards in that area. The school has a good range of good quality books, both fiction and non-fiction, which successfully promotes pupils' good reading and comprehension skills.
44. The financial planning and management of the school are good. Day-to-day financial administration is carried out very efficiently by the school administrator, and spending is monitored well by the head teacher and the governing body's finance committee. The school has taken note of the most recent auditor's report, acted upon those recommendations it considered appropriate and given good reasons where it has not accepted other recommendations. The school's budget is managed well to ensure that the available funds are used fully to meet the priorities decided by the school, particularly in raising pupils' standards of attainment. Funds designated for pupils with special educational needs are used well for that purpose, with additional money allocated from the school budget, which has led to good provision and progress for these pupils.

45. The school makes good use of new technology, both in its administration, for instance to track pupils' progress and to write individual education plans for pupils with special needs and English as an additional language, as well as in the teaching of ICT skills, including the use of the Internet and e-mail. However, more use could be made of computers to support work in other subjects.
46. The school applies the principles of 'best value' well, for instance when making decisions about the appointment of teaching assistants or the provision of time for co-ordinators to monitor their subjects. Such decisions are always linked to the priorities of the school in raising standards. The school has shown a good commitment to improvement in the progress it has made since the last inspection, when it had some serious weaknesses and was providing unsatisfactory value for money. In the light of the improvements already made in standards, teaching and the management of the curriculum, it is now providing sound value for money, and it is well placed to improve further.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

47. The school should now:

- (1) Raise standards in writing by:
  - a) making pupils aware that the start of sentences is important to capture the attention of the reader;
  - b) encouraging pupils to make their writing more interesting by using joining words in an interesting way;
  - c) making sure pupils know how to use sentence structure and demarcation correctly.(Paragraphs 4, 48, 51)
- (2) Improve the learning of the brighter pupils in science by developing their investigation skills and giving them opportunities to plan and carry out their own investigations, and allowing them to select the most appropriate resources to do so. (Paragraphs 5, 15, 63, 64, 66)
- (3) Improve the quality of teaching and learning in religious education, art and design, geography, history, and physical education, by giving subject leaders the opportunity to find out what is happening in their subjects by monitoring lessons, scrutinising pupils' work, and identifying the action needed to bring about improvement, (Paragraphs 38, 73, 82, 86, 108)

In addition to the key issues above, there are some minor weaknesses identified in the report which governors should have regard to in their action plan:

1. Teachers do not set pupils precise enough personal targets for improvement or write comments in their books to help them to know what to do to improve their work next time (paragraphs 20, 31, 34, 58, 61).
2. Pupils do not have a secure enough understanding of the multicultural society in which they live (paragraphs 7, 27, 71, 106).
3. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility (paragraphs 12, 26, 32, 59).
4. Insufficient opportunities are taken to use numeracy and ICT skills to support learning in other subjects (paragraphs 3, 6, 20, 50, 67, 92).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	74
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	10	30	27	3	1	0
Percentage	4	14	41	36	4	1	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	470
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	67

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	17

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	4.3	School data	0.0
National comparative data	5.2	National comparative data	0.5

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

### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	67	54	121

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	52	60	64
	Girls	49	47	53
	Total	101	107	117
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (83)	88 (88)	97 (93)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	53	56	56
	Girls	49	45	49
	Total	102	101	105
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84 (87)	85 (90)	87 (93)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	1
White	458
Any other minority ethnic group	5

*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: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.4
Average class size	29.4

#### **Education support staff: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	8.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	108

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	902936
Total expenditure	896494
Expenditure per pupil	1916
Balance brought forward from previous year	2493
Balance carried forward to next year	8035

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	428
Number of questionnaires returned	188

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	46	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	38	51	7	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	72	4	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	54	22	6	1
The teaching is good.	34	55	7	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	51	18	6	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	51	5	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	43	51	5	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	23	56	15	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	26	56	9	5	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	58	5	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	54	19	4	2

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

### **ENGLISH**

48. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average in English, and this is the case when they leave, representing satisfactory achievement over time. Pupils attain high standards in speaking and listening, and above average standards in reading. However, they do not do as well in writing. Standards were broadly average in 2000 when a similar number of pupils as nationally attained the expected and higher levels in the national test. Nevertheless, standards rose significantly in 2001 as a result of the school's concentrated effort to improve pupils' skills, mainly through a systematic and well-thought out plan of action and new initiatives, led and guided skilfully and successfully by the subject co-ordinator. Consequently, between 2000 and 2001, real change took place in writing standards and a higher percentage than nationally attained the expected level and above. Even so, the initiatives were too new to enable enough pupils to reach the level expected from their attainment at entry and too many made unsatisfactory progress in writing over time. Nearly a third of them did not move the expected two levels between Years 3 and 6, and half of those who had attained the higher level 3 at the end of Year 2 did not attain the higher level 5 at the end of Year 6.
49. However, since then, teaching, progress and standards have continued to improve and the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons seen were good and pupils made effective progress in most of them. Overall, the quality of teaching of writing is now satisfactory, but whilst there are strengths, some weaknesses remain. Some aspects of writing are taught well, such as spelling and handwriting, enabling pupils to make good progress. Pupils' workbooks show legible, well formed and presented handwriting; by the end of Year 6, pupils have developed joined, individual styles. The majority of younger pupils hold and manipulate pencils properly, which was not the case in the previous inspection. Throughout the school, pupils spell with a good level of accuracy. These two improved skills have brought greater order and clarity to pupils' writing. As well as that, pupils use a wide and often rich vocabulary when writing. Such development has been secured within the action plan, which has brought about better planning, resources and perhaps most importantly, consistency of practice, enabling learning to be built upon from year to year. Also contributory to advancement in attainment and progress is the very productive strategy of setting pupils in Years 5 and 6, thus enabling teachers to plan the curriculum to nurture more finely pupils' stages of development. Such strategies, including the effective implementation of the literacy teaching guidance, have benefited all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, enabling these pupils in particular to make good progress.
50. Additionally, opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes and audiences have increased greatly since the previous inspection. As a result, pupils write aptly, in a good variety of forms, in subjects across the curriculum. As well as setting aside time for pupils to practise and improve their independent writing techniques, teachers provide good stimuli to aid creativity and structure. Particularly good examples include the beautiful pictures used by Year 3 teachers to nurture descriptive writing successfully and the artistic collage artwork in Year 5, which led to good collaborative writing about 'A Babylonian Myth of the Seasons'. Here, pupils used computing skills well to present their finished work, but these opportunities are too few and ICT is not used enough to support work in English lessons. Other good examples are the effective posters created by pupils in Year 4 after a visit to Hatfield House and the front-page news articles crafted by Year 6 pupils in response to reading Dodie Smith's '101 Dalmatians'. In this case, pupils create attention-grabbing headlines such as 'London Loses Its Spots!' All of these examples are presented to a high standard, demonstrating the pride pupils take in their work; they have good attitudes to their work.

51. However, weaknesses still prevail in writing: pupils make unsatisfactory progress in constructing and punctuating sentences properly and in using a variety of joining words and sentence starters to add interest, colour and meaning to their writing. This is because these skills have not been cultivated in the same focused and consistent fashion as spelling and handwriting; learning objectives to drive these particular skills have not been thorough and systematic enough in planning and teaching, and pupils' progress in developing them has been unsatisfactory as a result.
52. Reading is taught well and pupils make good progress. Across the school, pupils read with good levels of fluency and understanding. This is due to the high focus reading has in literacy lessons, when pupils are taught methodically to appreciate different writing forms and styles through exploration and discussion. Pupils use technical vocabulary well when talking about both fiction and non-fiction books. In discussions, teachers use good questioning skills to draw out responses and are particularly successful in encouraging pupils to ask questions as well as answer them. As a result, pupils in Years 5 and 6 show a good level of maturity when asking sensible questions in their search for meaning and in using, discerningly, the information gained to make correct deductions. Also, they have confident dictionary and thesaurus skills, which assist them in both reading and writing. Reading with expression is not as highly developed as other skills, due to missed opportunities in choral and expressive reading during lessons. Most pupils read at home, and the help and encouragement given by parents has a significant and valuable influence on their children's development.
53. The teaching of speaking and listening skills is very good and is mirrored in the very good progress that pupils make in attaining high levels of proficiency. The key to the school's success is the secure and trusting learning environment created by staff, both teaching and non-teaching. Very good, cordial relationships are built up between teachers and pupils and among pupils. As a result, pupils feel valued and in turn self-assured about asking and answering questions and contributing to discussions. When engaging in role-play interviews, Year 6 pupils display a very good range of skills: they conduct the interview in a well-structured fashion, ask probing questions, build upon responses, use expression well and add to it with gesture and eye contact. They show great enjoyment in exercising and adding to their skills. Such curricular opportunities have improved effectively since the previous inspection.
54. Recommendations in the previous report regarding leadership and management of the subject have been taken on board successfully. The co-ordinator has formulated and implemented effective strategies to improve practice and raise standards. Resources have been enhanced: there is a good supply of reading materials, comprehension texts, dictionaries and thesauruses. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented effectively through in-service training, clear guidance and better year group planning. As a result, the teaching of basic reading and writing skills is good and is raising standards. Across the school, teachers have shared in the process of assigning levels to pupils' narrative writing. This exercise has been very useful in raising teachers' awareness of the development within each level of the English curriculum. It also has made teachers confident in the judgements they make about their pupils' writing.
55. Whilst improvements are new and are not yet showing their full impact on pupils' progress over time, leadership and management are very good, not least because of the enthusiasm and high level of knowledge and understanding that the co-ordinator brings to the subject. Additionally, the school is served well by the subject governor who plays an active role in supporting initiatives.

## **MATHEMATICS**

56. The overall standards achieved by pupils in Year 6 are well above the national average. The higher attaining pupils now compose half of the age group. This is high compared to schools nationally. Progress since these pupils began in Year 3 with above average attainment is good because more are now reaching the higher level. Since the last report the school has raised attainment each year and has made good progress in the subject.
57. There are four main reasons for this success:
- the continued careful organisation of pupils into like ability groups in each year;
  - the good match of work to groups of pupils of differing ability using the National Numeracy Strategy effectively;
  - the good teaching throughout the school; and
  - the hard work and enthusiasm of the pupils.
58. Pupils are organised into groups of similar ability from the time they start the school. This means that work is accurately matched to their ability and because of this, they make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language, are taught well and make good progress as a result. These pupils are monitored regularly by the class teachers and the special needs co-ordinator. At the end of Year 5, all lower attaining pupils are assessed in more detail so that they are given every opportunity to reach at least the expected level by the end of Year 6. What could be improved in this successful approach is the fine-tuning of individual targets in each pupil's workbook so that all pupils are clear what it is they have to do to improve on a weekly or half-termly basis.
59. The National Numeracy Strategy is followed by each ability group, but at different levels. Work is planned each week in detail and each lesson follows the recommended structure carefully. Teachers meet to make sure the work is suitably different across each class in each year. The school uses several commercial schemes to ensure a consistency of approach, content and challenge. As a result, pupils reach high standards in their understanding of number, and shape, space and measures as they move through the school. They are able to apply these high level skills in everyday situations, and enjoy doing so, but the occasions to do this are limited because the commercial schemes are used for most of the time. A good example of this was when a higher ability group moved away from the scheme and calculated the cost of holidays or worked out figures based on Harry Potter books. There was an extra real buzz of excitement as they used their number skills in their 'real world'. Opportunities for pupils to use these high number skills to solve everyday problems, or use them more widely in other subjects, are not planned for enough.
60. Pupils' mental calculation skills are good. This is because of the opening mental arithmetic sessions at the start of numeracy lessons. Consequently, by Year 6, the brighter pupils work easily and accurately with large numbers up to two decimal places, using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They convert pounds to francs, compare Fahrenheit and Centigrade scales and solve problems involving kilograms or kilometres, using a calculator where appropriate. They calculate angles of a triangle and construct a range of shapes, measuring angles accurately. Middle ability pupils follow a similar programme of work but at a lower level; however, all are stretched by this work. Those pupils with special educational needs work at a level that is close to the nationally expected level. They do calculations such as  $53 \times 18$  or  $6.7 + 3.8$ ; they draw angles accurately but in simpler and more regular shapes. A number of these pupils are reaching an average level in national tests. The school has set an ambitious target of well above 90 per cent of pupils to achieve at least national average standard in the coming year, as a result of rising standards amongst these pupils. Inspection evidence shows that it is likely to reach it. Now that the computer suite is working successfully, all pupils have regular planned access to use ICT in their data handling.
61. The quality of teaching is good, with examples of very lively teaching towards the end of the school, which enthuses the pupils. Pupils are responsive and hard working in all ability

groups because teachers manage lessons well. Teachers plan work together well so pupils succeed. They organise resources such as whiteboards, number squares, books or other apparatus carefully to make sure pupils understand new concepts more easily. When they are explaining new work, they do it clearly and step by step, so pupils are not confused. Questions are used well to challenge pupils' thinking as well as a means to check their understanding as the lesson progresses. Pupils like the merit awards and praise for good work and as a result they make sure their work is well set out and neat. Teachers are confidently in charge throughout the lesson so pupils behave well and respond positively. Teachers set high standards. However, many pupils are polite, helpful and enthusiastic, which means they bring their own mature approach to learning. More could be done to give these increasingly mature pupils opportunities to take responsibility for some aspects of their own learning, in particular the older, brighter pupils. However, because pupils' personal targets for development are too broad, they are not useful enough when teachers mark books to check on an individual's progress, or to tell pupils what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.

62. Subject leadership and management are good. The head teacher and deputy head teacher monitor teaching regularly. All have benefited from this because any necessary in-service training related to the National Numeracy Strategy has been quickly identified and provided. Teaching and ancillary staff have been keen to respond.

## **SCIENCE**

63. Standards have improved since the last inspection when they were broadly in line with the national average. They are now above average by the time the pupils leave the school, reflecting pupils' above average attainment on entry and representing sound progress over time. Even so, not enough pupils attain the higher level given their attainment on entry. This is because pupils of all abilities too often undertake the same work and the brighter pupils are not always challenged enough; consequently too many of them do not achieve well enough over time. For example, whilst most pupils made sound or better progress from entering school in 1997 to leaving it in 2001, 22 of the 53 pupils who had attained the higher level 3 at the end of Year 2 failed to attain the higher level 5 by the end of Year 6. In contrast, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language usually make good progress because of the additional support they receive from teachers and support staff and the practical nature of the activities organised for them.
64. Pupils in Year 3 have a secure knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things through their studies of, for example, what is needed to stay alive and by testing what conditions different creatures, such as snails, prefer to live in. Pupils in Year 4 know about electricity and the range of sources and devices that use it. They can make a circuit to light a bulb, using a battery, bulb holder, bulb, and connecting wires. They accurately identify the correct and incorrect circuit illustrations on worksheets and draw in the correct circuit connections. The focus of the lessons seen in Years 5 and 6 was on materials and their properties, with Year 5 investigating changing materials and Year 6 revising dissolving as part of their studies in separating mixtures and materials. However, there is a weakness in providing challenging tasks and opportunities for the brighter pupils to take more responsibility in planning and carrying out their own investigations. For example, in most of the lessons observed across the school, pupils undertook the same task regardless of their ability. This too often resulted in a lack of challenge to inspire and extend the learning of the brighter pupils.
65. Nevertheless, most pupils are interested and enjoy science. They were keen to talk about their previous learning and what they had done recently in the subject. They are particularly keen on practical experiments and can talk about what constitutes a fair test and the recording of their results. Behaviour in lessons is generally good. However, there were some instances in practical investigations where some pupils became over-excited and this had a

disturbing effect on the overall atmosphere for learning. Pupils are willing to listen to others and are very articulate in their answers and in discussions, using correct scientific vocabulary as and when necessary. The positive attitudes shown by many pupils result in them acquiring scientific skills satisfactorily throughout the school. Overall, their interest and enthusiasm enable them to develop appropriate strategies for tackling experiments, and they enjoy this type of work. As a result, progress over time, for most pupils, is satisfactory and in some lessons it was good.

66. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features, particularly where the lessons are well planned, and have clear learning objectives and ongoing assessment to inform future planning. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and lessons often move at a brisk pace. When this is combined with effective questioning to stimulate and encourage pupils' responses, effective learning takes place. Good relationships exist between teachers and pupils. This means that pupils feel confident enough to ask questions and pose problems. Teachers' plans are carefully produced with clear regard to the subject teaching guidance. Pupils of average ability and those with special educational needs are taught well. However, the brighter pupils are generally offered similar work to their classmates, and this restricts their rate of progress. Teacher expectations for these pupils are not high enough. The emphasis is mainly on direct teaching and this approach does not enable these pupils to plan and develop their own investigations. In talking to some of the brighter pupils it was clear that many were capable of undertaking extended research and investigations. Not only do they lack the opportunities to develop their own learning, but some were quite happy to leave it to the teacher and consequently were not motivated or inspired to become independent learners or aim for higher achievement in the subject.
67. Science is well led by a subject co-ordinator, who has given high priority to raising the profile of science, the quality of teaching in the subject and, most importantly, the need to extend the brighter pupils. She has undertaken regular lesson observations and talked with teachers about what is and is not working in their teaching. She takes demonstration lessons, and gives colleagues guidance on short-term assessment and future planning. All of this has contributed to improvements to the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Parents become involved directly in their children's learning when the science homework is set. They get a letter that explains the ways in which they can help their child by talking with them about each unit of work and 'rehearsing' the subject vocabulary. The use of ICT to support work in science is as yet underdeveloped. The subject co-ordinator has recognised this, but at present no time is available to teach science skills in the new ICT suite. The quality and use of learning resources are very good and these are easily accessible to staff. The school grounds are used effectively and outside visits, such as those undertaken to the Abberton reservoir, make a valuable contribution to pupils' science education.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

68. Because of the way the school organises its curriculum, there were limited opportunities to see art and design being taught during the inspection, and it was not possible to see the oldest pupils in the school in lessons. Since the inspection took place near the beginning of the school year, there was no current work from these pupils. However, from looking at pupils' past work, talking to them and examining photographic evidence, it is clear that pupils in Year 6 are achieving the standards expected for their age.
69. Pupils work with a good range of media, and the current Year 6 pupils, when they were in Year 5, worked together on effective collages to represent the Biblical stories of Moses and Joseph, and the Babylonian myth of Ishtar and Tammuz. They also produced good quality montages, selecting images from magazine pictures, and three-dimensional work using papier-mâché and clay. Pupils in last year's Year 6 produced effective designs, which they then transferred into work with clay in the style of Clarice Cliff. They made good quality

pottery masks in an African style, and also used the tie-dye technique as part of their project on Ghana. Art is used well to support a range of curriculum subjects.

70. Sketchbooks are used well to develop pupils' drawing skills. Pupils in Year 3 have used them to sketch items on their visit to the local church, and Celtic houses and Roman artefacts for their study of history. Their drawing skills are developed further in Year 4, when pupils experiment with pencil leads of varying hardness. Pupils in Year 5 have produced some good observational drawings of plants.
71. Pupils also have good opportunities to appreciate the work of other artists, which was not the case at the time of the last inspection. Younger pupils in Years 3 and 4 have produced work in the style of artists such as Cezanne, Van Gogh and Monet, and some striking paper mosaics of the Palazzo Dario by Monet were on display during the inspection. In Year 4 they have also produced tiles with Islamic designs as part of their Arts Week. However, their opportunities to appreciate art from non-western cultures are limited.
72. Pupils' attitudes to art are very positive, both in the lessons observed and in discussions with pupils. In a Year 5 lesson, when pupils were working with a teacher who is also an artist, they were fully engrossed in their task, as a result of the high level of expertise and encouragement by the teacher. This enabled them to understand fully the purpose of illustrations and to develop and refine their own illustrations to the text they had selected, using their sketchbooks. Sketchbooks from last year's Year 6 showed that these had also been used by pupils to evaluate their own work. From the evidence of the work seen, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but the specialist teaching is of a high quality. Where teaching has a weakness, it is when the resources chosen are not appropriate to enable pupils' to achieve their objective, for instance in producing a repeating pattern.
73. The co-ordinator has only recently taken over responsibility for the subject, and she has not yet had an opportunity to monitor work in other classes directly. The school has just introduced individual portfolios of work, which will be useful in tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection, when there was no co-ordinator in place. There is appropriate teaching guidance, based on national guidelines, which helps teachers plan appropriate work for each year group. However, there are still insufficient opportunities for pupils to study the work of artists of other cultures.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

74. Design and technology had several major shortcomings at the time of the last report. The school has now addressed most of these very successfully under the skilful guidance of an experienced co-ordinator. Consequently, improvement in the subject since the last report has been good.
75. Standards in design and technology are still rising. They are average overall but with examples of above average attainment in both the design and the making of products. Almost all the graphic work is above average. It is imaginative and pupils use shading, lettering and perspective very well. Good examples of this were in the work from Year 5 designing 'Fruity Sport' advertisements. ICT was used very effectively in this activity for some designs. Some of the evaluations and descriptions of the design and making process by pupils in Year 6 are above average, for example when they explain the making of rotational toys and the reasons for their successes or difficulties. However, standards in design remain average overall because improvements are recent and pupils are still developing an understanding of the qualities of a range of materials and their best use. Thus, some of their designs do not work.

76. Pupils in Year 3 make models using scrap material, built on a carefully constructed cardboard and wood base. They reinforce the frames well. Several of these models are above average, as are the colourful puppets made by the same year. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they build rotational toys or pneumatic models of earth moving equipment, which work successfully. Again, several are of an above average standard. They are constructed very accurately and cut and glued carefully to complete a product of quality. However, the making of products overall is average. The main reason for this is that insufficient use is made of the design and technology room. It is a good specialist area, with a suitable range of materials and resources, many of which cannot be used in the classrooms, for example vices, drills, hammers, pliers and saws. Further opportunities are to be sought to use this room more often in order to improve pupils' understanding of the properties of wood and plastic, to develop their skills in the use of different tools, and to give them an experience of a 'working and doing' technological environment.
77. The quality of teaching is good overall, and very good when the co-ordinator takes a class. The teachers plan a series of lessons well using the good medium- and long-term frameworks organised by this specialist. As a result, learning was purposeful in all of the lessons seen, and pupils were able to use their skills to improve. Teachers use the correct terms, and disassemble commercial products well to explain what they are doing, and consequently pupils are learning the correct skills and knowledge for the subject. A good example of this was the developing design of a package, either re-usable or disposable, by pupils in Year 6. Pupils like design and technology; they refer to it as "fun"; they look forward to translating their designs into products with enthusiasm. Pupils and teachers get on well together; there is a busy, positive learning atmosphere. Teachers display pupils' work attractively around the school and it is clear pupils are proud of their models. Because most work takes place in the classrooms, it limits the opportunities for teachers to develop their own, and their pupils, knowledge of a wider range of more permanent materials and the tools that are used to shape them. However, it is in design and technology where pupils are given most opportunity to use their mathematical skills to measure and plan accurately.
78. The co-ordinator is clear where the subject needs further improvement. Much of this is centred on the better use of the specialist technology room.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

79. Standards in geography are in line with those expected nationally by the time the pupils leave the school. This is a similar judgement to that of the last inspection. No geography is being taught in Year 6 this half-term and evidence was obtained by looking at pupils' work, displays around the school and lesson observations from Years 3, 4 and 5. There is a satisfactory range of interesting opportunities that develop pupils' interest, skills and knowledge to a satisfactory level. Pupils have clearly learnt a great deal from their geography lessons and talk keenly and enthusiastically about them.
80. Pupils' mapping skills are securely developed. Pupils use their understanding of symbols, keys, and scale to read and produce maps of the local area. Resources are used well, such as computer programs and aerial photographs, which pupils use to successfully match the landmarks and features to those on their maps. In each year, pupils are introduced to their prescribed area of study and wall displays stimulate pupils' thinking and interest. For example, Year 3 described their holidays and tracked the route they used to reach their destinations. They were encouraged to use the world map and globe to identify the different places they have visited, and a map of the United Kingdom to find holiday locations and the shortest route that could be taken to travel to these places. During the inspection, pupils were beginning to collect data through interviewing a friend about their favourite holiday location, recording the information on a chart. Year 4 continue with studying maps and progress to using an atlas to identify the physical features of the British Isles, the main countries and capital cities of Europe, and mountain regions. In Year 5, pupils study their

local environment, focusing in particular on Billericay High Street. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 gain valuable experience on residential visits such as the day orienteering in the Hatfield Forest and visits to Scarborough and the North Yorkshire moors when they contrast North Yorkshire with their own locality. Their study of a village in Ghana is supported well by a visitor from Ghana, who spends time in the school working with the pupils on a cross-curricular study, including music, art and multicultural links. The evidence in pupils' books suggests that they have developed satisfactory geographical skills by the time they are eleven years old.

81. The quality of teaching is sound overall. Only a small sample of lessons was observed and the judgement on the quality of teaching is based on observations, scrutiny of work, displays in classrooms and discussions with pupils. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. There are sound relationships being developed that are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and interest in the subject.
82. The school has developed clear teaching guidelines that are based on national guidance. There is a good range of resources, to which the school is adding, and geography is well supported by ICT and, in particular, the use of the Internet. The subject co-ordinator took on the responsibility only two days before the inspection. However, she is well qualified in the subject and is well aware of the strengths and weakness in the subject. At the present time, the identified need is to conduct an audit of the subject and create an action plan for improvement. However, high on the agenda is to put in place a system for monitoring teaching and learning in the classrooms. Procedures to assess pupils' progress in geography are developing well and there are end of year teacher assessments that support the receiving teacher in their planning for the teaching and learning of their new class.

## **HISTORY**

83. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress and attain the levels expected nationally by the end of Year 6. These findings indicate that the quality of teaching, together with pupils' attainment and progress, has improved since the last inspection. There are two main reasons for this:
  - subject guidance describing exactly which parts of the National Curriculum should be taught to the different year groups has greatly improved; and
  - as a result of these detailed and structured guidelines, curricular breadth, balance and relevance have also improved, enabling pupils to build skills more comprehensively.
84. Teachers make good use of suitable resources including ICT. Wall displays and pupils' topic books bear witness to the good variety of sources upon which pupils have based their historical enquiry. Such sources have given pupils good opportunities, for example, to build soundly their understanding of chronology. Across the school, pupils assemble time-lines well and use dates and vocabulary accurately to place events and people into correct periods. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils, resulting in pupils being confident about offering their points of view. During discussions, therefore, pupils are involved well and there is a good exchange of views demonstrating pupils' sound grasp of main events, people and changes. Good examples of this were seen in all Year 6 classes as they explored, 'How we used to live, 1936 – 1939'.
85. Pupils have good attitudes to their work. In lessons, they showed a good level of interest. Significant examples of this included Year 6 pupils empathising with the feelings of British families of 1938, as fears of war gathered force throughout the land. Year 5 pupils prepared for their visit to the British Museum with great anticipation by extracting from a CD-ROM, facts about Ancient Egypt to inform and focus their visit. They used ICT skills with increasing competence and were most helpful to each other as they worked in pairs. Other telling examples of pupils' good attitudes to historical studies, are the carefully researched and

beautifully presented topic books on The Romans and Tudors, produced by pupils of Years 3 and 4 last year.

86. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has had greater influence on the subject since the previous inspection, and has brought about positive advancements in curricular structure, which have led to an increase in the attainment and progress made by pupils. However, she has still had too little opportunity to raise standards further by identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning through monitoring lessons.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

87. The school has very good provision for ICT. It has a computer suite with a projector linked to one computer, which enables teachers to demonstrate skills to a whole class effectively. There are 16 computers in the suite, so that pupils can work no more than two to a computer, which gives them good opportunities to develop their skills individually. There are also two computers in most classrooms, so that follow up work can be done there, both in ICT skills and in using ICT to support other subjects. All computers are networked and have access to the Internet. As a result of this good provision and the effective leadership provided by the subject co-ordinator, standards are rising, and the oldest pupils in the school are achieving standards expected for their age.
88. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were not consistent and much of the pupils' learning took place out of school. Teachers are aware of those pupils who do not have computers at home, and provide them with additional support in lessons, as well as using this information to place them with a suitable partner in class. Pupils undertake the full range of ICT activities. Pupils in last year's Year 6 used a word-processing program to produce 'newspapers', using different fonts and sizes of print and incorporating graphics well. They understood how to use spreadsheets, for instance to interpret information about expenditure in a school tuck shop, and used ICT to produce graphs to represent their findings, for instance of a survey of Billericay High Street. They also used the Internet successfully to find out about different charities and for research into the design work of Clarice Cliff. Current Year 6 pupils are beginning work on a multimedia presentation of a design and technology project, and they were very excited by the effects produced by last year's pupils on a similar task.
89. The last inspection identified a weakness in pupils' ability to control, monitor and model events using ICT. These skills are now taught satisfactorily. For instance, in Year 3 pupils have used a sensor successfully to detect changes in the temperature of a baked potato. In Year 5, they are learning how to write instructions for traffic lights. Pupils also now know how to use e-mail. They have e-mailed each other, as well as sending thank you messages after a visit to Colchester Castle. The school is attempting to set up e-mail links with schools abroad.
90. Pupils have very positive attitudes to ICT, and show genuine excitement at some of its uses and effects. They listen well to instructions they are given and work well together in pairs on the computer, often independently of teacher support. They behave very well and show respect for the equipment.
91. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Through the training that has been provided, teachers have a good understanding of the subject. They prepare lessons very thoroughly, and manage well the inevitable technical problems that arise. Teachers have established good relationships with pupils, which help to develop their positive attitudes to learning. They make pupils aware of the uses of ICT, for instance to catch the attention of a reader of a newspaper or advertisement. As a result of the good teaching, pupils are acquiring new skills well and have a good understanding of what they are doing. Occasionally, however, teachers do not use the time allocated to them in the suite fully, which results in pupils not completing the planned learning tasks.
92. Although pupils use ICT successfully in a number of curriculum areas, such as history and design and technology, the school has already recognised the need to use it more widely as a tool for learning, both in the classroom as well as in the suite. It also recognises the need to improve the ventilation in the computer suite, where the noisy extractor fan is often a hindrance to teaching, preventing teachers and pupils hearing each other.

## MUSIC

93. Standards in music have improved since the last inspection. Pupils achieve levels above those expected by eleven year olds nationally. Progress throughout the school is generally good and supported by the skills and enthusiasm of the subject co-ordinator. The sharing of these good teaching skills adds quality to the singing and performance of music and further supports the development of teaching and learning of music throughout the school. Pupils' enjoyment and interest in music is linked to performing within the community where the school takes part in the Billericay Junior Schools Music Festival.
94. Music is taught well, using published guidance and a range of resources to support the teaching and learning in the classrooms. These include singing accompaniments and resources for the study of sound, all on CD. Each year group maintains a consistency of practice by following the guidance and this ensures progression across the school. For example, Year 3 pupils explore beat and percussion instruments prior to rehearsing for the school Christmas performances. This performance is a Nativity-based musical play. All other years have some musical event for which they rehearse and perform. Year 4 extend their learning to grouping beats and move onto researching how some instruments are made with wood and others from metal, as a preparation for making their own instruments. For example, in a Year 4 class lesson pupils had been using body percussion actions as a way to feel the beat and were learning to sort and categorise the various environmental sounds played on a CD. These sounds included a baby crying and an ambulance siren. Year 5 pupils continued with an exploration of voices and building rhythmic and melodic shapes to develop music compositions. Pupils worked in small groups, using a range of instruments to create a rhythmical composition and then moved on to developing their own graphic compositions. Year 6 classes are taught by the music co-ordinator and lessons move at a good pace, with a range of musical activities to keep pupils' enthusiasm and interest in music. For example, in the lessons observed, pupils were listening to music of other cultures and specifically concentrated on African and Caribbean drum sounds. This is in preparation for the visit of an African musician, who is going to work with pupils, in the school, as part of a multicultural week.
95. The quality of singing is very good. Pupils sing with warmth of tone and clear diction, paying attention to the pitch and dynamics of the music. In assemblies, teaching stresses the importance of listening to each other, concentrating on joyful, yet tuneful singing as a whole school. This quality permeates into the classroom in other music lessons.
96. The quality of teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. For teachers who are not so confident at teaching music, there is ongoing support from the subject co-ordinator. The monitoring of the subject through classroom observations supports the quality of teaching and learning and impacts well upon rising standards.
97. Pupils' interests in music are enhanced through a range of extra-curricular clubs during the school lunchtime and after school. For example, there is a range of recorder groups: a beginner group in Year 3, a group in Year 4 and Years 5 and 6 recorder groups join the school orchestra. A treble recorder group is developed in Year 5 and all pupils learn to read conventional musical notation. The school has lower and upper school choirs which meet at lunchtime and after school. Performances, at which the orchestra play and the choir sing, include a special Harvest assembly and a carol service in the local church. In April each year the school has a musical evening. Another opportunity offered to pupils who are keen to develop their music skills and talents further is the chance to learn a musical instrument from visiting peripatetic instrumental teachers. There are six teachers offering lessons in cello, violin, brass, keyboard, flute and clarinet playing.
98. The music co-ordinator has good expertise and enthusiasm and leads the subject well. There is an action plan and the progress through this plan is very good. However, it has

been recognised that in-service training for the development of music is not high on the agenda and needs to be. Furthermore, there is a need for more cross-curricular links with regard to subjects such as science, where pupils study sound, and the designing and making of musical instruments. The school is well resourced for the teaching of music and has a very good range of musical instruments that add quality to pupils' learning.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

99. Pupils achieve standards appropriate for their age. Appropriate physical activities are planned and balanced across dance, gymnastics, games and swimming. The last inspection report identified a lack of emphasis on outdoor and adventurous activities. However, although these areas are not specifically identified in the physical education programme, Year 5 undertakes outdoor rock climbing and sailing, and activity weekends are provided through the geography curriculum. Progress is good overall. This is a similar judgement to the previous inspection.
100. As only one lesson was observed, it is not possible to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching. From this lesson, however, it was clear that Year 3 pupils understand the need to get changed into appropriate clothing for lessons and recognise the importance of warm-up activities in preparation for exercise. When entering the hall, pupils moved quietly and found a space to sit down ready for the lesson. They used space appropriately and generally followed instructions carefully, changing speed and stopping on command. Some pupils were keen to demonstrate what they had learned in a previous lesson while the remainder of the class quietly observed. Pupils showed a good awareness of safety and followed instructions immediately.
101. The subject co-ordinator is a specialist physical education teacher, well qualified to teach all sports. Physical education contributes well to the social and personal development of the pupils. For example, the school has a reputation in the local area for doing well, especially in competitive sports. This is notably in football, rugby, swimming, and athletics, for which a range of awards and medals has been won. Older pupils have a number of useful opportunities to develop, refine and modify their games skills when competing in after-school clubs or playing for a school team. The subject co-ordinator has a file with photographic and documented evidence to support the schools' successes. A particular strength identified by the co-ordinator is the excellent attitude of pupils to the subject, and their sportsmanship shown when taking part in competitive sport.
102. The teaching guidance follows national guidelines and model lesson plans support staff knowledge and understanding for the teaching of the subject. For example, recently a local education advisor led a course on the teaching and learning of gymnastics in the school. The school is well resourced for physical activities and the quality of the learning resources are very good and used well. For example, in addition to the high quality equipment, there are a large hall, playground space and an extensive field in which to undertake physical education and games activities.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

103. The standards achieved by pupils in Year 6 meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in both its aims of learning about religion and learning from religion. The school has recently adopted the local authority's own guidance for teaching according to the syllabus. This is an improvement on the last inspection report, when the school was not implementing the syllabus fully.
104. From this year, the school is planning for pupils to learn about Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. Last year's Year 6 also had a satisfactory knowledge of aspects of Islam and Sikhism. For instance, they were able to compare their own daily life with that of a Muslim

and showed a sound understanding of the significance to a Muslim of his faith. They also knew about Guru Nanak and his significance in the Sikh tradition. Writing about the idea of death in the Sikh religion led pupils to consider more generally things people say about death.

105. As they move through the school, pupils' understanding of both implicit and explicit religion deepens. Younger pupils in Year 3 show an understanding of the use of symbols, helped by sensitive teaching, which leads them from symbols used in everyday life, such as a Blue Peter badge, to those in a Christian church, which the pupils have recently visited. Pupils in Year 4 are able to discuss their ideas of the concept of God without reference to any religious tradition, and apply these ideas to their own experience, for instance raising the issue of evil in the world or why people die. Pupils in Year 5 last year showed an understanding of aspects of the Jewish faith, particularly in its significance to a young boy. Current Year 6 pupils were observed discussing their response to the Judaeo-Christian creation story. Although they were able to discuss the literal meaning of the story, the teacher's questioning did not extend their thinking to the symbolic significance of the story as a statement about the world.
106. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers plan lessons well, usually adapting the suggested outline appropriately to the needs of their own pupils. Teachers use pupils' artistic skills well to develop their knowledge of some of the Old Testament figures, such as Moses or Joseph. They use resources, including good artefacts, well to make pupils' learning more vivid. However, pupils do not have opportunities to visit places of worship other than the Christian church to extend their understanding of other faiths and of their place within society. The amount of written work pupils are required to do varies considerably between classes, and in some classes the full allocation of time is not given to the subject, which restricts learning opportunities for pupils. Occasionally teacher's knowledge of the subject is not secure, with the consequence that pupils' understanding is not challenged sufficiently.
107. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. For instance, pupils in Year 5 were keen to continue writing a postcard from Abraham when the lesson came to an end, and were only pacified by the promise that they could finish it later in the week. Pupils generally behave well, although a few younger pupils lose concentration when they have to sit too long on the carpet during the introduction to a lesson.
108. As yet there is no system by which teachers can record pupils' progress, and plan work to meet more closely the individual needs of pupils, but the subject co-ordinator is aware of this and training on assessment in the subject is planned. The co-ordinator has not yet had the opportunity to observe other teachers at work in order to ensure consistency in teaching and learning. Overall, however, with the full implementation of the agreed syllabus, progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.