

INSPECTION REPORT

ST FRANCIS RC (VA) SCHOOL

Braintree, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115194

Headteacher: Mr G J Olney

Reporting inspector: Mrs K Charlton
Rgl's OIN: 1718

Dates of inspection: 4 to 6 March 2002

Inspection number: 196508

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Gilchrist Way Braintree Essex
Postcode:	CM7 2SY
Telephone number:	01376 320440
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Clapp
Date of previous inspection:	7 - 10 July 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1718	Kay Charlton	Registered inspector	English Physical education English as an additional language Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well pupils are taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9712	Jan Barber	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1516	Michael Warman	Team inspector	Mathematics Art Music Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20142	Malcolm Childs	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology Geography History	How well does the school care for its pupils?
15427	Kathryn Butterfield	Team inspector	Science Foundation Stage	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Francis is an aided Catholic primary school catering for girls and boys aged 4 to 11. Pupils travel from a wide area to come to the school and their socio-economic circumstances are very varied. There are 196 pupils on roll, 22 of whom are in the Foundation Stage. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs and with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. Virtually all pupils are of white European origin and none speaks English as an additional language. In common with other schools in the area, the school has significant difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff. Since the time of the last inspection there has been a high turnover of teaching staff (19 in total) which has affected the Junior classes in particular. In this academic year there is a relatively stable situation with all staff on permanent or long-term contracts. The deputy headteacher has been teaching Class 4 since February 2002 to cover for the long-term absence of the class teacher through sickness.

Pupils' attainment on entry to Reception is very wide-ranging but broadly average. In the present Year 2, over a third of the class is identified as needing extra support and this is higher than in other year groups. Increased mobility of the population in the Braintree area is affecting the school and by the time cohorts leave Year 6. In 2001, nine of the 36 pupils leaving had joined the school after the age of seven. In the present Year 6, seven out of 25 pupils have joined the school during the Junior years. Assessments show that the attainment of many of the pupils who join the school other than at the normal point of entry is below that normally expected for their age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Francis School provides a sound education for its pupils and there are a number of good features. Overall, teaching is satisfactory and pupils make satisfactory progress. By the time pupils leave the school they attain standards that are in line with those expected nationally. The headteacher and senior management team provide clear educational direction. They have worked hard to maintain stability during a time of significant staff turnover. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching and learning in both the Reception and the Infant classes ensure that pupils achieve well, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- There is a strong commitment from the headteacher, staff and governors to future improvement.
- It is a caring school which promotes pupils' personal development well.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and these pupils make good progress in relation to the targets in their individual education plans.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good and that for their moral and social development is good.
- Overall, pupils show positive attitudes to school and behave well.

What could be improved

- The achievements of pupils in the older Junior classes, notably in aspects of English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils' achievements in information and communication technology, particularly for the older pupils in the school.
- The ways in which the school analyses information about pupils' achievements in order to identify trends and patterns over time for different groups and to inform future target setting.
- The communications with parents.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The school has tackled all the key issues raised at that time and now has suitable policies and schemes of work. Standards in

music have improved. There is a regular programme to monitor teaching and a suitable performance management system has been introduced. Governors are now much more involved in setting the strategic direction of the school. Improvements have taken place in information and communication technology, but more still needs to be done to ensure that standards rise in this subject. Provision in the Reception class has improved and pupils are now making better progress than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils continue to achieve well in the Infant classes, but by the time they leave the Junior classes they could achieve more. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is co-ordinated well and has improved, so that these pupils are now making good progress against the targets set out in their individual education plans.

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			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	B	C	D
Mathematics	C	C	C	D
Science	B	C	C	E

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

The inspection findings show that overall, children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and achieve well. They are on course to attain the nationally expected standards by the time they leave the Reception class. In personal, social and emotional development, in communication language and literacy, and in mathematical development, children make very good progress and many are attaining above the level expected.

Pupils in the Infant classes are making good progress and achieving well in relation to their previous attainment. Those in the current Year 2, where there is a higher than usual percentage of pupils with special educational needs, are well on course to attain the standards expected in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The results of the end of Year 2 national tests and assessments since the time of last inspection confirm that pupils make good progress in the Infant classes and that the school has generally maintained standards that are above the national average.

The inspection findings, which reflect the end of Year 6 tests in 2001, show that in Year 6 pupils are attaining standards which are in line with national averages in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. At present, pupils are making satisfactory progress overall. They are making good progress in Years 3 and 4 and satisfactory progress in Years 5 and 6. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 could achieve more, notably in writing, and in problem solving and investigative work in mathematics and science.

In all other subjects, pupils make at least satisfactory progress. They attain the levels expected for their age by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, except in ICT where they attain the expected levels in Year 2 but below the levels expected in Year 6.

The school agreed challenging targets in English and mathematics for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2001, but it has not met these in full. This is partly explained by changes in the year group cohort of pupils as they move through the school. The situation has also been affected by lack of continuity in staffing. With the current more stable staffing situation, and the present focus on improving the target setting process, the school is in a better position to meet the challenging targets set for 2002.

Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs receive a good level of support in their learning and are making good progress towards their individual learning targets.

More able pupils make good progress in the Infant classes and satisfactory progress in the Junior classes.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Virtually all pupils have positive attitudes to their work and to school. In most lessons pupils' response is good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good overall. Pupils' behaviour in formal situations such as assemblies is very good. A small number of pupils do not find self-discipline easy, but in the main, their behaviour is managed effectively.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good overall. These are very good in Reception. Pupils of all ages get on well with each other and with their teachers. Teachers encourage pupils well in their personal development.
Attendance	Satisfactory. In line with national averages.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and this leads to satisfactory learning. It is good in the Reception class and Infant classes. Teaching in the Junior classes is satisfactory overall although most of that seen in the inspection in Years 3 and 4 was good. Only a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen and this was in Year 5.

The school has appropriately implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and these are generally working well. Pupils respond positively to the structure of these lessons. Teachers and support staff work well together as a team to support pupils' learning. In the many good lessons, teachers have high expectations and set challenging targets so that the pupils are very clear about what they must achieve in the time available. This helps to ensure pupils work hard. Staff also motivate pupils well by making it clear to them what they must do to improve. However, these features are not evident in all lessons and occasionally there is an inappropriate balance of discussion and pupil activity. This has an adverse effect on pupils' learning.

Pupils with special educational needs receive good levels of support and the teaching of these pupils is targeted well so that all staff working with them know what steps need to be taken to ensure the pupils achieve the objectives set out in their individual education plans.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Broad, balanced and well matched to pupils' needs. Statutory requirements are met. The curriculum is well planned and all expected areas are covered.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school has a strong commitment to these pupils and they are supported well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual,	Good overall. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good, and that for their moral and social development is good. It is satisfactory for

moral, social and cultural development	their cultural development.
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How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils well and provides effective support, advice and guidance. Assessment procedures are satisfactory.
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Overall, the school has developed satisfactory links with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall. The headteacher and key staff provide clear direction and have maintained stability at a time of significant change. Subject co-ordination is satisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are very supportive and involved in strategic planning. They are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the school in a general way but they are not sufficiently clear about the progress pupils make.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school evaluates many aspects of its provision effectively, including the quality of teaching. Its analysis of information about pupils' achievements is not sufficiently detailed to identify patterns and trends for particular groups over time.
The strategic use of resources	Overall, good. Clear financial planning is linked to the school improvement plan. The school ensures best value in most aspects but has only got sufficient data to make direct comparisons with similar schools in broad terms.

The governing body has increased the proportion of budget allocated to staffing and as a result has now been able to employ experienced teaching staff and has also ensured that there is a high level of support staff. This is having a positive effect on pupils' learning. The accommodation is good and learning resources are generally good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • The school expects children to work hard and achieve of their best. • The teaching is good. • Parents feel that they can approach the school with a problem. • Parents feel that the school helps pupils become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside of lessons. • The amount of homework. • The links with themselves. • The information about how their child is getting on. • Pupils' behaviour. • The overall leadership and management.

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views of the school. As well as the areas listed above, parents at the Parents' Meeting expressed concerns about the high turnover of staff. The inspection findings show that the school has worked hard and managed the difficult situation in this area appropriately. Virtually all of the teaching in school is satisfactory or better, much of it is good and there is only a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. The range of activities outside of lessons is similar that found in other primary schools, as is the amount of homework. The information which parents receive about their child's progress is appropriate. Pupils' behaviour is good overall, although there are a few pupils who do not find self-discipline easy and who show some inappropriate behaviour in lessons. However, this is usually handled effectively. The overall leadership and management are satisfactory, but communications with parents are not always as effective as they might be.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. On entry to the Reception class the children have a very wide range of attainment but the majority demonstrate skills that are in line with those expected of children of this age. Assessments undertaken early in the Reception class show that there are variations in children's attainment from one year to another and that some year groups have a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs than others.
2. In Reception, girls and boys make good progress and most attain the nationally expected standards in all areas of learning identified in the early learning goals. Many children attain above this in the areas of personal, social and emotional education, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and creative development. Since the last inspection the staff have worked hard to ensure improvements have taken place in their teaching and, as a result, standards have improved.
3. Test results show that in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science the standards attained by pupils have generally been above average by the end of Year 2 and compare well with those of similar schools. A closer analysis of this information shows that pupils achieve well against their previous attainment, particularly in writing where the school's standard assessment results have been consistently well above average. The pupils in the current Year 2, which has a higher than usual percentage of pupils with special educational needs, are well on course to attain average standards and this represents good achievement compared to their prior attainment. The quality of teaching in the Infant classes is good and staff ensure that pupils work hard in order to achieve their best.
4. Inspection findings show that standards in Year 6 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are in line with those expected of eleven year olds. In relation to their previous attainment, either at the end of Year 2, or as they entered the school during Years 3 to 6, pupils are making satisfactory progress. The end of Year 6 test results for 2001 confirmed this picture. Since the last inspection, the trend in the results has been below the national trend. This is associated with changes of pupils in the year group and also with a lack of systematic development of their basic skills over time brought about by the significant changes of staffing which have occurred. At present, pupils are making good progress in Years 3 and 4. In Years 5 and 6, they are making satisfactory progress but these pupils could achieve more, particularly in writing, and in problem solving and investigative work in mathematics and science.
5. Overall pupils' skills in speaking and listening are developed satisfactorily. In the Reception class, children make very good gains in developing these skills. They learn to take part in both small group and whole class discussions, and they very effectively develop their vocabulary and use talk to sequence their ideas. Children relish opportunities to share their thoughts with their 'talk partner'. In the Infant classes pupils develop their skills well. They listen carefully in lessons and contribute ideas with confidence. They respect each other's ideas and respond to questions thoughtfully. In Years 3 to 6 pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. By the time they leave the school most are able to describe clearly their knowledge of a subject, for example when they talk about their understanding of science, and they express their opinions and ideas openly. Representatives of the school council are very articulate and give clear reasons for their opinions. However, there are occasions in lessons when class discussions go on for too long and at these times pupils do not always listen attentively.
6. By Year 6, pupils' development in reading is satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage, children develop very good understanding about the ways in which to approach a book and the sounds and shapes of the letters of the alphabet. They learn to recognise sounds within words effectively. They enjoy listening to stories. Pupils in the Infant classes make good progress. They are

encouraged by staff, who themselves show good appreciation of the importance of literature, and they develop a sense of enjoyment in reading. By Year 2, most pupils read simple text accurately and with understanding. They understand how books are organised, and they make good use of letter sounds and the pictures in the book to help them read new words. The more able pupils read fluently and with expression. In the Junior classes, pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. In Year 6, most show sound levels of comprehension and are developing clear ideas about their favourite authors. Nearly all pupils indicate that they like reading stories and they can use reference books effectively to find information. The more able appreciate the underlying ideas in the text and can understand subtleties, for example, when they explain why something is humorous to one person but not to another. The below average readers approach reading enthusiastically and use a suitable range of strategies to decode those words that they are unsure about. Although pupils are now generally trying hard with their reading there has not always been a systematic build up of their skills over time and this is affecting the overall standards in the older Junior classes.

7. Writing is developed very well in the Foundation Stage and pupils make good progress through the Infant classes. However, by the time the pupils leave the Junior classes they could have achieved more. Children in the Foundation Stage learn to write very effectively using a consistent letter formation. Virtually all have learned to write their names and many are constructing simple sentences, for example about things they have done in the recent past. In the Infant classes, pupils develop clear understanding about the need to write in different styles for different purposes. Most develop clear understanding of spelling and punctuation, and apply this in their work. Care is taken with presentation. In Year 2, there is very good teaching of writing and pupils are enthused to write well, for example when they wrote about 'The Little Mermaid'. By Year 6, pupils have developed a clear understanding about the importance of planning out their work in advance and they are prepared to review their work to achieve improvements. When writing suspense stories, they talk knowledgeably about the need to have a good 'build up' and 'development of events' as well as a successful 'resolution/ending'. Through the Junior classes there has not been a continuous build up of pupils' skills in spelling, punctuation and handwriting and these skills are not sufficiently well developed.
8. Overall, pupils make satisfactory gains in learning in mathematics. They achieve very well in the Reception class and continue to make good gains in their learning in the Infant classes. However, by the end of the Junior classes, pupils could achieve more in problem solving and investigative work. In the Foundation Stage, most children learn to count to ten and beyond and they are confident to work out the answers to questions which require them to use simple mathematical operations, such as addition and subtraction. They learn the names of basic two-dimensional shapes and can describe the difference between those that have similar properties, for example squares and rectangles. By the end of Year 2, many pupils develop a good level of understanding of numbers, and can recognise number patterns and produce some of their own. They acquire a sound base of skills in using shape, measures and data handling. By the end of Year 6, many can add, subtract, multiply and divide, both in their head and on paper and can use calculators effectively for multiplying large numbers and for checking their answers. Pupils demonstrate reasonable understanding of investigative work and problem solving but they are not always able to explain clearly the ways in which they arrived at their answer, and they do not always apply their thinking effectively in new situations.
9. In science, pupils are making satisfactory progress overall. In the Infant classes, pupils make good progress and develop well in all aspects of science; for example when studying growth in plants or when investigating the effects of different surfaces on the speed with which objects roll down a ramp. By Year 6, pupils' attainments are in line with those expected, based on satisfactory progress in the Junior classes. They show a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject but their skills in investigative science are not as well developed. Pupils effectively develop their observational skills as there are appropriate opportunities for them to work practically and record their findings. They are developing a clear understanding about the use of number, tables, bar charts and graphs to present their results. However, pupils are not sufficiently confident in selecting the appropriate equipment for an investigation or in knowing how to set up their own experiments, to make sure that these are fair. Too few show well-established skills of

prediction and in drawing conclusions.

10. By Year 2, the standards which pupils attain in information and communication technology are broadly in line with those expected. In Year 6, pupils attain the expected standards in word processing but they attain below the expected levels in other aspects of the subject. The school was one of the last to benefit from the National Grid for Learning Grant (NGFL) and until recently resources have been unsatisfactory. Pupils are now making good progress overall using the new equipment, but there has been a lack of development of their skills in the subject over time and this has adversely affected standards. This area of the curriculum continues to be a priority for development within the school improvement plan and the school is taking appropriate action to ensure further improvement in the standards pupils achieve.
11. In design and technology, history, geography, art, music and physical education, pupils generally attain what is expected for their age by the ages of seven and eleven. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall but a significant number make good progress.
12. Pupils with special educational needs are suitably identified and receive a good level of support. These pupils make good gains in their learning against the targets set out in their individual education plan.
13. In line with the majority of pupils in each class, more able pupils make good progress in the Infant classes and satisfactory progress in the Junior classes.
14. The inspection did not show significant differences in the standards achieved by boys or girls in any of the subjects in the school.
15. The last inspection highlighted the need to improve pupils' attainment and progress in music and in information and communication technology. There has been good improvement in music but there is still more to do in the area of information and communication technology.
16. The school had agreed challenging targets in English and mathematics for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2001 but the school did not meet these in full. This is partly explained by changes in the cohort of pupils as they move through the school. The situation has also been affected by lack of continuity in staffing. With the current more stable staffing situation and the present focus on improving the target setting process the school is in a better position to meet the challenging targets set for future years.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Since the last inspection, pupils' attitudes and their values have continued to be a strong feature and provision for their personal development remains good. The school is successful in achieving its aims for the personal development of the pupils and overall, the behaviour of the pupils is good, both in classrooms and throughout the school. Virtually all pupils have positive attitudes to work and to school. In most lessons, pupils' response is good and often very good, although occasionally a small number of pupils who do not find self-discipline easy, demonstrate inappropriate behaviour. Good behaviour, however, is the norm and the few incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with promptly and usually effectively. The school has not excluded any pupils in the last school year. Pupils work and play together happily, they enjoy each other's company and show high levels of mutual understanding and support. In day-to-day interaction with each other and with adults, pupils are courteous, thoughtful and polite. Relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves, are friendly and constructive. The staff present good role models for pupils. The daily assemblies encourage a very thoughtful and caring approach to others and on these occasions, pupils behave very well indeed.
18. Children in the Reception class grow in confidence and self-esteem and develop very good relationships with their teacher. They develop good skills across a wide range of areas of learning and begin to sustain concentration for longer time spans. Throughout each year group most

pupils show a progressive enthusiasm and interest in their work and respond well to the learning opportunities provided. Pupils work collaboratively when required and share their ideas well. Those from different cultural backgrounds mix happily together.

19. Through the school, most pupils develop a growing level of maturity and are keen to accept responsibilities such as tidying areas or taking registers to the school office. Two members of each form represent their class on the recently formed school council and this forum is working well. The school council includes representatives from the Reception class. These children take turns to attend the meetings.
20. Attendance is satisfactory. The level of unauthorised absence is low. Every effort is made by the staff to ensure regular attendance. Teachers follow up attendance matters to establish why pupils are absent and parents are aware of their responsibilities in telephoning the school to explain that a pupil is absent and following this with a letter when their child returns to school. Pupils are punctual and the registration time is used well allowing for administration tasks to take place while pupils prepare for assembly. There is a late book kept in the school office and occasionally coaches are unavoidably delayed resulting in several pupils arriving late. Statutory requirements are fulfilled for recording and reporting attendance.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and this leads to satisfactory learning. Teaching is good in the Reception class and in Years 1 and 2. There is very good teaching of writing particularly in Year 2. Taken overall, teaching is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Much of the teaching in Years 3 and 4 is currently good. Out of 37 lessons observed nine were very good, 12 were good, 14 were satisfactory and two lessons in Year 5 were unsatisfactory. There has been a slight improvement in the amount of very good teaching seen at the last inspection but there continues to be a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching.
22. In the Reception class, the teacher and support staff work together very well as a team. They provide a secure learning environment where children make significant gains in their levels of confidence and in the development of their social skills. Staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and this is reflected in the planning which is undertaken very conscientiously. They have high expectations of the children and ensure that they are extended in their learning particularly in the areas of personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, and in mathematical development.
23. In the Infant and Junior classes, teachers' planning is good. The school has developed effective schemes of work and a consistent planning framework since the last inspection and these form a firm basis for teachers' own planning. Staff work together well as a team so that all adults, including support staff, are clear about the purposes of the activities and their roles and responsibilities. In many lessons, teachers write the learning objectives on the board and refer to these at the beginning of lessons to ensure that pupils are clear about the overall purpose of the session.
24. The school has appropriately implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies but because of the high turnover in staffing there has been some loss in continuity in pupils' learning so that their skills have not always been built up in a systematic way over time. This situation has improved during the present academic year with the improvement in the staffing situation.
25. In the other subjects of the curriculum, the staff are generally secure in their subject knowledge although there is still some uncertainty in teaching aspects of information and communication technology. There have been clear improvements in staff's knowledge and understanding of music as a result of developments that have taken place and consequently, pupils' learning has improved. In the main, staff reinforce good behaviour effectively so that overall, pupils behave well, and concentrate in their work. In general, lessons are well organised and there is a suitable range of interesting and worthwhile activities which interest and motivate the pupils. This is particularly noticeable in English and history, where many pupils indicated that they enjoyed the work being

undertaken and where they usually showed good levels of concentration.

26. Teachers know the pupils well as individuals and relationships are good. They usually set work at level which matches the pupils' understanding in the subject. However, opportunities are missed to extend the learning of the pupils, notably in Years 5 and 6. This is mainly because teachers do not set sufficiently clear targets for pupils about what they must achieve in the time available or about how they might improve the quality of their work. Where teaching is good or very good, there is open discussion about what each pupils needs to do in order to attain a particular level within the National Curriculum. Very helpful reviews take place so that pupils can assess for themselves what they do and do not understand; for example when pupils in Year 4 described what they had learned when finding the answers to mathematical puzzles. This knowledge of their own learning has the effect of increasing the pace of learning because the pupils become very motivated to improve their work. Throughout the school, marking is undertaken regularly and often gives a good level of praise to pupils but there is inconsistency in the quality of the comments intended to help the pupils improve. Occasionally, pupils do not appreciate the purpose of the marking since it has not been made clear to them.
27. Overall, suitable use is made of the time available and of resources. Most lessons start promptly and lead to a well-timed introduction, activity session and plenary. Pupils respond well to this organisation and this helps the overall pace of learning. For example, pupils indicate that they need to finish work quickly in order to be able to present their work to the rest of the class at the plenary. Visits out of the school are used well to stimulate learning, for example when the Year 3 pupils visit a local pizza restaurant in order to better understand their topic in food technology. Displays are interesting and up-to-date and help to create a bright and stimulating learning environment.
28. Class teachers work well with the support staff, ensuring that small groups are able to work on specific tasks effectively. This is particularly so when developing pupils' basic skills of numeracy and literacy. Teaching assistants are particularly effective when working with these small groups supporting pupils with special educational needs since the learning targets about what these pupils should achieve are very clear. Many of the pupils identified as having special educational needs also receive extra support from outside agencies. This work is well organised so that all adults work with a common purpose.
29. Features of the very good teaching, examples of which were seen in Reception and each of Classes 1 to 4, are the teachers' enthusiasm for the work alongside their high expectations of pupils. They make particularly good use of questioning to extend the pupils' thinking and often use the technical vocabulary associated with the subject very well indeed. Particularly effective reference is made to the pupils' own practical experiences so that they are fully engaged in the learning.
30. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons seen teachers did not demand enough of pupils' work and behaviour and there was an inappropriate balance of discussion and pupil activity. This had the effect of pupils losing concentration and some inappropriate behaviour developed notably amongst the small number of pupils who do not find self-discipline easy.
31. Different types of homework, such as reading and learning tables, are given and these suitably reinforce the pupils' learning. The school's homework policy meets the expectation set out in the national guidelines. Those pupils asked, were clear about the policy and indicate that work is set in line with it. There is, however, variation in the level of comment made by staff in the home/school reading diary and therefore in its usefulness.
32. A minority of parents expressed concerns about the quality of teaching in Years 4 and 5. All of the teaching observed in Year 4 was at least satisfactory and the majority of it was good or very good. Much of the teaching in Year 5 was satisfactory but also a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed in that class. The school is taking appropriate action to improve this situation.

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

33. The school provides a well planned curriculum which is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of all pupils. Statutory requirements are met. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
34. The last inspection highlighted the need to improve subject policies and schemes of work and increase the time allocated for ICT. The school has worked on policies and schemes of work and these are now in place and overall are effective. All classes now have a taught lesson on ICT. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been introduced and a good amount of time is given to the teaching of these. The current staff are generally using these strategies well although the effectiveness of these strategies have been hindered in recent years because of the effects of the significant staff changes. This has particularly affected the achievements of those pupils who are in the older Junior classes in writing, and in problem solving and investigative work in mathematics.
35. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Clear procedures are in place which are managed well and which meet requirements. Pupils' needs are identified early and a good level of support is provided in all classes. Pupils have individual education plans which contain clear and appropriate targets. All pupils have equal access to the whole provision and they are included well in all activities.
36. The school provides a suitable range of activities outside lessons. These include after-school and lunchtime clubs, such as guitar, choir, football and netball. A wide range of visits takes place including to the local library, Pizza Express, Malden, Kentwell Hall and residential visits take place for pupils in Years 5 and 6.
37. The school has good links with the community. Groups of pupils sing carols each Christmas at three nursing homes. They say that they enjoy talking to the elderly residents and these events have proved so popular they have been extended to include Easter concerts as well. The events that take place around the church calendar are very well attended and provide a good link between the school and its community. Visitors to the school include the police, school nurse, the parish priest, ministers of other religions, musicians and theatre groups.
38. Pupils are well supported in their personal, social and health development. There is a planned programme that helps pupils to realise that each individual has responsibilities as well as rights, and that everyone has to learn how to make choices. There is good attention given to the need for healthy living and the dangers associated with the misuse of drugs. A particularly effective aspect of this work is when the pupils work alongside representatives from the police, ambulance and fire services addressing the sort of dilemmas the pupils meet in real life. A suitable programme of sex education is provided. Pupils effectively learn about the need to consider others in the wider community, for example when they visit a local nursing and care home. The school has satisfactory links with the wide range of early years settings that children attend before joining Reception. There are good links with the main secondary school resulting in transition being well planned.
39. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, which is similar to that seen at the last inspection. The provision for pupils' social and moral development is good and that for their spiritual development is very good. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory.
40. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. Teachers receive and value pupils' ideas and encourage them to have a positive self-image. They very effectively help pupils to develop their understanding of their feelings and emotions. This is done particularly well during assemblies and class discussions when pupils are often asked to explain what they think it would feel like or did feel like. The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to explore what they and

others believe through, for example, assemblies, religious education, stories and visits to places such as the local church. Pupils are aware of prayer and use it regularly to ask, thank, praise and celebrate. There are very good opportunities for reflection and music is used particularly well to help pupils reflect in assemblies. In one outstanding assembly pupils listened with rapt attention to a very well told story and then thought about what it might mean for them. In subjects, such as science, music and art, opportunities are given for pupils to develop a sense of wonder at the beauty of the world, for example, they were thrilled to see that the huge amaryllis flower they were studying in science had opened.

41. There is good provision for moral development. Pupils help to decide on their class rules which are prominently displayed in their room and try to keep them. They are appropriately taught the difference between right and wrong and they understand that good behaviour is reinforced and rewarded. There is helpful discussion about bullying and pupils know what to do should it occur. Those pupils who have identified behavioural needs have clear and appropriate targets set, and the staff work hard to help them to be successful in meeting these. This results in them making good progress in this respect.
42. Overall, the provision for pupils' social development through the daily life of the school is good. Adults are very supportive of the pupils and have established good relationships with them. Pupils are encouraged and helped to think of others, both in school and by taking part in activities such as raising money for charities. The school is successful in ensuring that pupils help and care for one another. For instance, at lunchtime and during guitar club older ones were seen readily helping younger ones. In class and elsewhere, pupils are effectively encouraged to work together and to support the whole school community. They are also encouraged to take responsibility and develop their independence. In many ways they do this well, for example when the pupils take part in the recently formed school council or take on specific jobs for their class. The two residential trips for pupils in Years 5 and 6 make a strong contribution to pupils' development in this area as they learn to live and work together.
43. Suitable opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their cultural awareness. For instance, visits have been made to local places of interest and lessons appropriately include work on local history, notably through the topic on the Victorians. Appropriate interest is shown in a range of cultures, for example through studying art, music, and through work undertaken in religious education and in assemblies. Pupils' multi-cultural understanding is also promoted through learning about festivals such appropriately include information about a diverse range of cultures. Overall, pupils are suitably prepared for life in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. This a caring school which provides effective support, advice and guidance for pupils. This is informed by good monitoring of their personal development, behaviour and attendance. Records of academic progress are satisfactory and those for pupils with special educational needs are very detailed and enable progress to be monitored closely.
45. The school works hard to promote a secure and caring learning environment where all children are valued as individuals and where their needs are met. The youngest children are made very welcome and they settle into school life very well. Throughout the school staff have good and supportive relationships with pupils. They know their pupils well and have a clear understanding of their emotional and social strengths and needs. Pupils' personal needs are dealt with informally and effectively by class teachers or support staff. Liaison with support agencies, particularly the educational welfare officer and the school nurse, is good and used effectively to support pupils' learning. There are good links with the main secondary school so that there is smooth transition to the next stage of education.
46. There are good measures in place to promote discipline and good behaviour and to curtail poor behaviour and these are usually effective in practice. Absence is followed up quickly and effectively. Parents are aware of the school's expectations for attendance and they generally

comply with these. Any persistent absenteeism is followed up by the educational welfare officer who visits the school regularly.

47. The headteacher undertakes the liaison required for child protection. Extensive documentation on policy and guidance exists for staff. Staff are aware of their responsibilities in this area. Any incident is managed in accordance with the Local Education Authority (LEA) child protection procedures.
48. The school is successful in promoting the health, safety and general well-being of its pupils. There are sound and effective arrangements for health and safety with good first aid and medical arrangements.
49. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory overall. There is good assessment taking place in the Reception class and in Class 2 there is particularly effective ongoing assessment in English. Throughout the school a range of assessments take place. These include national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Years 2 and 6, optional tests in English and mathematics in Years 3, 4 and 5, and assessments made at the completion of units of work which are based on recent National Curriculum guidance. Records are built up and folders of pupils' work are collected to exemplify the progress pupils are making. The assessment undertaken with pupils with special educational needs is a strength and particularly good records are kept with regular reviews of pupils' progress undertaken. However, not all staff use assessment information well enough when setting targets for pupils and there is not enough analysis of assessment information at a whole school level in order for the school to be able to make clear comparisons between the progress of particular groups of pupils over time. The school recognises this as a key priority and has recently introduced a computerised system for recording pupils' assessment data and monitoring their progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The majority of parents have a positive view of the school although a significant minority do not have total confidence. The links with parents are satisfactory overall. There are appropriate systems in place to communicate with parents but these are not effective as they might be since they do not place sufficient emphasis on the development of a positive image. Also the school does not proactively seek parents' views and therefore, is not always able to respond to parents' concerns at an early stage.
51. The inspection findings, in the main, confirm parents' positive views of the school. However, there are issues about the quality of teaching notably in Year 5. In other areas, where parents raised concerns, the school makes similar provision to other primary schools, for example in terms of activities outside of lessons. The inspection confirms that the overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory.
52. Overall, the quantity of information provided for parents is satisfactory. The school keeps parents informed in a range of different ways, but, in part because it is over-subscribed, the school is not proactive as it should be in promoting its achievements. The school prospectus covers all the expected areas, there are regular parents' evenings and the opportunity to discuss concerns by appointment with class teachers, each Tuesday afternoon. The headteacher is also available for informal meetings before and after school. All class teachers are welcoming to parents.
53. The reports to parents about their children's progress are helpful and they give a useful insight into the standards achieved by pupils in relation to national expectations. Parents are suitably encouraged to give a response to the comments made in these. Most parents feel able to approach the school with any queries or complaints and feel they are listened to. However, taken overall, the school is not sufficiently proactive in seeking parents' views and therefore is not always able to respond to parents' concerns at an early stage. This is particularly important when many parents live at a distance for the school and therefore informal contact is made difficult.

54. Parents contribute positively as classroom helpers, accompany trips and visits and also support school events. Several parents have undergone training organised by the school so that they can help with the Literacy Hour. The school is particularly well supported by an active parents' association, CHAOS (Children's Helpers At Our School). Many social and fund-raising activities are held throughout the year and a large financial contribution is made to the school's resources. Parents contribute appropriately to pupils' work at home in line with the home/school agreement.
55. The links with parents of children in the Reception class are good. There is a good two-way dialogue at the beginning and end of sessions. There are good links made with parents when children first start school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The headteacher and senior management team work together well and provide clear educational direction for the school. They have worked hard to maintain stability during a time of significant staff turnover. The headteacher effectively sets the tone for the school by his presence in classes, around the school at breaks, lunchtime, and also in assemblies.

57. There is a strong commitment by the headteacher, staff and governors to ensuring that pupils of all abilities are included in every aspect of school life and also to future improvement of the provision within a Catholic ethos. All teachers are reflective, evaluate their work and are keen to develop and improve. They are well supported in this by the senior management team who often work alongside them in class. The performance of teachers is regularly reviewed and targets are set for the future. There is a clear sense of purpose in the school, based on an understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The school improvement plan, which reflects this awareness, is well matched to the school's needs. Monitoring and evaluation of the standards pupils achieve take place in a variety of ways; for example by examining the pupils' exercise books and by staff talking to the pupils about what they have learned. Some analysis of data about pupils' attainment and progress is undertaken but this is not sufficiently detailed for the school to be able to compare the trends and patterns of achievement for specific groups of pupils over time. This means it is difficult for the school to be precise about future target setting. With so many changes in staffing, it is particularly important for the school to be able to note any variations in the rate of pupils' progress at an early stage, for example in writing, and in problem solving and investigative work in mathematics and science. The school has highlighted this as a key priority within the school improvement plan.
58. Overall, subject co-ordinators make a satisfactory contribution to the leadership and management of the school. There is a suitable staffing structure with all staff holding management responsibilities. All contribute willingly to developments but the majority of subject co-ordinators are new to the school and as yet have not made a significant contribution to school improvement. They have nevertheless clear ideas about what they want to develop and how they intend going about this. A system of monitoring by co-ordinators is in place and this is focussing appropriately on developments in the core subjects in the first instance. The deputy headteacher has responsibility for special educational needs provision and she fulfils this role effectively.
59. Governors are very supportive of the school. They are closely involved in the life of the school and effectively fulfil their statutory duties. Governors are aware of ongoing requirements in education and they attend training to keep up-to-date so that they are well placed to make decisions. In relation to financial matters they are very well informed and make clear decisions based on a range of projected outcomes. Their systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the overall provision are satisfactory and in a general way they are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the school, particularly about the quality of teaching. However, because the information about pupils' attainment and progress over time is not fully analysed, they are not able to draw clear links between the quality of teaching and the quality of pupils' learning.
60. There is good financial planning and the school makes effective use of its available resources. Spending decisions are linked closely to priorities in the school improvement plan and since the last inspection resources have improved and are now are good in many areas. There has been a good level of spending on resources for literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology, and this is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. There was a large carry forward in 2000 which was targeted appropriately on improved spending on staffing and accommodation. Specific grants are used effectively. The school suitably works to the principles of best value, for example in challenging the best use of resources and in consulting widely before major decisions are made. In contracting for services the school ensures that it follows competitive tendering procedures. However, because data about pupils' achievements is not fully analysed it is difficult for the school to make clear comparisons about how well it is doing in comparison with other similar schools. There is effective financial control and administration and the recommendations of the last auditor's report have been acted upon. Administrative systems are well established and the school runs efficiently. New technology is being used effectively and the school makes good use of its book stock although there is no library.
61. Since the time of the last inspection, the school has found it difficult to appoint and retain teaching staff. There have been 19 vacancies since 1997. The school has managed this difficult situation effectively by increasing the proportion of the budget allocated to staffing. As a result the school has attracted experienced staff all of whom are on a permanent or long-term contract. Also, in the last few years, extra support staff have been appointed, who have been well trained by

the school. These factors are also having a positive effect on pupils' learning, particularly for those pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs. The school makes every effort to ensure newly appointed staff are supported in their work and the professional development of staff is given high priority.

62. The accommodation is good and well looked after. Recent improvements to the building provide much needed extra space where pupils with special educational needs can work. The environment is clean and well-organised and this enhances the overall sense of purpose in the school.
63. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement. Governors are now more involved in decision making, and there are improved procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of spending decisions. Performance management arrangements are in place and meet requirements. However, the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures are still not sufficiently linked to the progress made by pupils. A minority of parents expressed concerns about the overall leadership and management of the school but the inspection findings show that it is satisfactory overall.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The numbers in brackets after each key issue indicate the paragraphs in which the weaknesses are discussed.

In order to raise standards further the headteacher, governors and staff should:

(1) improve pupils' achievements by the time they leave the Junior classes by:

- improving the quality of teaching, particularly in Year 5, through:
 - ensuring teachers demand more of pupils' work and behaviour;
 - ensuring that there is a suitable balance of discussion and pupil activity so that pupils do not lose concentration.
- ensuring that teachers set targets about what pupils must achieve in the time available and that they are clear about how pupils might improve the quality of their work.
- ensuring that there are improvements in pupils' skills in writing and problem solving and investigative work in mathematics and science, notably in Years 5 and 6.

(paragraphs: 4, 7, 8, 9, 21, 26, 30, 74, 77, 78, 79, 81, 84, 87, 88, 89, 91, 93, 95)

(2) improve pupils' achievements in ICT by the end of Year 6 by:

- ensuring that there is further staff training in data handling, the use of the internet and CD-ROMs, and in the control of robotic devices;
- making more use of ICT in the other subjects of the curriculum.

(paragraphs: 10, 121-126)

(3) improve the ways in which information about pupils' attainment and achievements are analysed so that:

- patterns, trends and variations in the rate of progress for different groups are noted and addressed at an early stage;

- the school can be more specific about setting whole school targets.

(paragraphs: 49, 57, 59, 60, 83, 90, 97)

(4) improve the links with parents by being more proactive in:

- identifying and responding to parents' concerns;
- promoting the school and its achievements.

(paragraphs: 50-54)

All of the above issues other than issue 4 are indicated in the present school improvement plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	37
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	9	12	14	2	0	0
Percentage	0	25	32	38	5	0	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 two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y1 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	196
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y1 - Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	38

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	94.5
National comparative data	93.9

School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	12	17	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	12
	Girls	17	17	16
	Total	26	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90(82)	93(90)	96(96)
	National	84(82)	86(85)	91(90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	12	12
	Girls	17	16	16
	Total	28	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96(85)	96(94)	96(91)
	National	85(84)	89(88)	89(88)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest 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	2001	18	19	37

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	12	13
	Girls	14	16	18
	Total	27	28	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73(80)	76(77)	84(89)
	National	75(75)	71(72)	87(85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	13	13
	Girls	14	15	18
	Total	27	28	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73(74)	76(77)	84(74)
	National	72(70)	74(72)	82(79)

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	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	191
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: Y1 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.8
Average class size	28

Education support staff: Y1 – 6

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	173

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000–2001
	£
Total income	425364
Total expenditure	391364
Expenditure per pupil	1820

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
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	246
Number of questionnaires returned	106

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	43	8	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	31	47	14	2	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	51	12	7	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	52	14	8	3
The teaching is good.	33	51	12	3	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	50	15	8	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	34	11	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	39	3	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	25	49	18	7	2
The school is well led and managed.	32	48	12	7	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	48	13	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	14	31	28	18	9

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

64. The provision for the children in the Foundation Stage, is made in the Reception class and is good. Children are admitted to full-time education at the beginning of the term in which they become five. At the time of the inspection there were twenty-two children in the Reception class.
65. Assessments are made as children begin school. These show that attainment covers a broad range but in general, it is in line with that expected of children of this age. A small number of children need considerable help to develop their skills in all six areas of learning but particularly in their personal, social and emotional development and in their communication, language and literacy and also mathematical development. Similarly there are a small number of children who are very confident in these aspects as they start school.
66. Children make good progress in all six areas of learning and are well on course to attain the expected early learning goals for children as they enter Year 1. A good number of children exceed these and are already working well into the earlier stages of the National Curriculum. Children with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and achieve well due to the high level of care, attention and sensitive support they receive from all staff.
67. The provision for the children in the Foundation Stage has improved since the last inspection where the quality of teaching was judged to be sound overall and occasionally good. In this inspection the overall quality of teaching was judged to be good with some very good teaching in key areas. This is due mainly to the improvements which have been made in curriculum planning in response to the 'Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage' published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Lesson plans for each session are now very good as they clearly show what it is that the children are expected to learn through carefully chosen and organised activities. The introduction of a well organised assessment system to monitor the children's progress through the 'stepping stones' which lead towards the expected learning goals and into the early stages of the National Curriculum has significantly contributed to this improvement.

Personal, social and emotional development

68. This is a strong aspect and most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year and a good number are set to exceed them as they are already achieving well above these. Staff provide very good role models for the children and the teaching is very good. Respect for each other and for those of other cultures or who are in need is sensitively taught and supported by the work covered in the religious education 'Here I Am' scheme. Children's inner spirituality is particularly well developed through times of stillness, quiet reflection and thoughtful prayer. Staff provide very good opportunities for the children to learn about themselves and to learn to co-operate, share and relate well with others, for example, in role-play situations in 'The Cottage' and when playing with the train set. The children respond very well to classroom routines. They enjoy working in small groups as well as a whole class group and they rapidly gain confidence and independence. The children have learned to sit still when asked and listen very carefully, and they are polite and courteous. They are confident to leave their parents and carers and both their behaviour and the relationships within the classroom are very good. This is because the staff have a very positive approach towards promoting good behaviour and appropriately reward the children with house points for good behaviour and effort. Children show that they are mainly confident in choosing activities for themselves during 'free activity' time although there are some limitations in them choosing equipment for themselves. One of the main strengths of the teaching is that the expectations of the children are high and they are made very clear. The children therefore have learnt how to organise themselves, work quietly and can concentrate and remain engaged in their activities for a good length of time.

Activities presented to the children are appropriate to their needs and successfully motivate them to learn. A good balance of 'teacher-directed' activities and those that the children choose for themselves are provided, for example, some children enjoyed threading beads and building models with construction materials and the whole class group very much enjoyed a music and movement activity. The children demonstrate that they are able to express their feelings freely, for example, they showed their excitement when making ducks from playdough and they enjoyed sharing their weekend news with their 'talking partners'. They are very good at changing their clothes for physical exercise and only a few need adult assistance. All children are able to use the toilets and cloakroom facilities themselves and cope very well during the lunchtime periods. They are good at tidying up after themselves and they take a pride in their classroom and in the presentation of their work.

Communication, language and literacy

69. Most children are already reaching the early learning goals and many are exceeding them and are already working within the early stages of the National Curriculum for English. This is because the quality of teaching for communication, language and literacy is very good. Lesson plans are thorough, well-organised in carefully planned stages and effective in moving the children on to the next stage. The Reception class teacher has a very good knowledge of the early learning goals and of the National Literacy Strategy and provides a very good range of thoughtfully chosen activities for the children. Lessons are introduced enthusiastically and explanations and instructions are clear. For example, skills in learning to handle and read books were effectively taught when reading 'Daisy's Adventure' and also when instructing the children in how to put sentences together to write their news. The children listen very carefully, they respond well to questions and relish opportunities to share their ideas and thoughts both with their 'talk partners' and the whole class. A well-organised system and activities for learning letter sounds and carefully chosen reading scheme books as well as the use of small 'flash cards' alongside the guided reading approach, have all contributed significantly to the children making at least good and often very good progress in reading. Children generally make a good start in learning to read and they hold books and turn pages correctly. A good number of them know the sounds and letters of the alphabet and can sound out letters to help them write and identify new words. Most of them are able to read simple sentences and a good number can read their early books with reasonable fluency, discuss the story and say what might happen next. The children know an appropriate range of rhymes and poems and more able children can identify and write simple rhyming words. They make very good progress in learning to write and can hold pencils and form letters correctly. The children can write their names, attempt to write simple sentences on their own, for example, about 'Muddy Puddles' and write for a suitable range of purposes. Nevertheless, more could be made of the writing corner to encourage the children to use their writing skills in role-play situations. Strong motivation by the teacher and support staff encourages the children to present their work very well. Staff effectively challenge and question the children to make them think and move on to the next stage of their learning, for example, when using the white board to extend the children's understanding of vocabulary. This approach has also been effective in encouraging the children to speak in front of others and extend their speaking and listening skills. The clear labelling and good resources around the classroom as well as appropriate role-play situations also play an important part in developing the children's speaking and listening skills. Children are gaining a good awareness of the listener and are able to recall events and stories, for example, about 'Daisy Duck' in the correct sequence.

Mathematical development

70. Children overall make very good progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals so that by the end of their Reception year, almost all are on course to attain the goals expected for their age. A good number of children are also working well into the earlier stages of the National Curriculum. Overall the quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are very well planned for each day using a 'Numeracy Weekly Planner' and this prepares the children very effectively for their daily numeracy lessons in Key Stage 1. Careful consideration is given to catering for the wide range of ability within the class when organising the children into groups and

in providing them with suitable activities. Very strong emphasis is placed on counting and sequencing numbers both forwards and backwards. These skills are taught particularly well at the beginning of lessons and already a good number of children can count accurately and recognise numbers to ten and a good number of them can count well beyond this number. Children also learn to count in twos sometimes through the effective use of songs such as 'Who Built The Ark?'. Through practical activities children are gaining confidence in calculating the difference between two numbers, for example, to work out numbers 'more than' and 'less than' a given number and also to solve simple addition and subtraction problems. The children are developing a very good understanding of mathematical vocabulary such as 'longer' and 'shorter', 'tall' and 'small'. They are gaining a good understanding of early capacity and understand terms such as 'full', 'empty' and 'half full'. The questioning techniques of the teacher and support staff are well established and children are successfully encouraged to use their knowledge to find missing numbers and, for example, make a picture graph to show the children's favourite drinks. Through the very good range of activities provided by the staff the children learn to form numbers correctly, they know the basic shapes and present their work neatly. They can make mathematical patterns using items such as pegs and pegboards and by threading beads and also more complicated sequencing patterns by printing with paints and shapes. Children are familiar with a good range of mathematical games and rhymes such as 'Ten Currant Buns' and 'Five Speckled Frogs' which staff use effectively to reinforce the children's understanding of number. The children's work is regularly marked and they are given appropriate information as to how well they are progressing and how they can improve; this is effective in helping them move forward. Staff carefully record the children's achievements so that the next steps in their development can be identified and the children are challenged sufficiently in their learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

71. By the end of the Foundation Stage, the children generally are on course to reach the early learning goals expected for their age. Progress in this area is satisfactory overall as is the quality of teaching. Staff provide the children with a suitable range of worthwhile experiences. This has enabled the children to find out how things happen and work, for example, to find out how ice melts and which objects will or will not roll. Appropriate activities are planned for children to find out about living things and the natural world, for example, to make leaf prints and explore the school grounds. However, opportunities to find out and identify features of living things and watch how things change are not organised as part of an ongoing programme. The children regularly work with construction equipment and a suitable range of materials and tools, for example, to make a model aeroplane, a tower block or a car out of junk materials. However, the classroom is not organised so that the children can select a wide range of tools and materials for themselves as part of an ongoing activity and this results in the children not making as much progress in this aspect as they could. Through following a topic on toys the children have gained a good sense of time by learning about toys from the past and what they played with as babies and they are knowledgeable about the extent to which they have developed since babyhood. They are gaining a good sense of place and the natural world by regularly recording and discussing the weather, using floor road maps and talking about where they live and how they travel to school. Visits from people, such as a police, have helped the children grasp an early understanding about people who work within the community. Skills in information and communication technology have improved since the last inspection, as the children are able to work in the new technology suite. The Reception class teacher uses this opportunity well and the children know how to click on and drag different icons to make a picture. They are able to use a 'mouse' with reasonable confidence to operate programs. They are also confident to operate a tape recorder and they operate headphones to listen to and stories such as 'Come On Daisy'. Nevertheless, the resources to support this aspect of learning as an ongoing activity are limited, as the children do not have regular access to a computer in their own classroom. Suitable progress is made by the children in learning about their own and other people's cultures and beliefs. For example, the children have a good knowledge about Eid and the Christmas story and make cards for Mothers' Day. Staff interact well with the children during their play activities. They provide a good balance of time for whole group activities such as identifying changes that take place in simple experiments and also for free play where children are able to investigate and explore through play and find things out for themselves.

Physical development

72. The teaching to promote the children's physical development is sound overall and children are on course to meet the expectations for their age by the end of the Reception year. Lessons are generally well planned and led enthusiastically and the children are well organised. Children are able to manipulate tools such as scissors and malleable materials, such as playdough with a good amount of control and concentration. They can join pieces of construction equipment together to make a variety of models. Fine manual skills and hand-eye co-ordination are practised regularly through the use of small equipment such as lacing cards and the children demonstrate good control of equipment to include pencils, crayons and paint brushes. Children learn a good range of circle games in the playground such as 'The Farmer's In His Den' and this has successfully developed their ability to walk in different directions and stop and start at appropriate times. The practising of catching and throwing techniques using small equipment means that most children can catch and throw a beanbag or ball. Good use is made of the hall space to help develop the children's large motor skills and their ability to move imaginatively to music. For example, when listening to 'The Greedy Zebra' story some children slither like a snake and use their bodies to travel in different ways such as crawling, hopping and running. The development of the children's climbing and balancing skills and an awareness of space are covered to some extent in the school hall. However, these aspects are not fully extended as the children do not have regular access to a dedicated outside play area or to climbing and balancing equipment or wheeled toys. The school is aware of this and has recognised it is an area for development by including it as an item on the school improvement plan. Most children enjoy their physical exercise sessions and go out to play each day with the rest of the school. They are increasing in confidence in being able to adjust their speed and move in different ways whilst considering the safety of themselves and others. Staff pay good attention to showing the children how to handle equipment correctly and teaching them to observe appropriate rules for safety. Children are successfully taught the importance of keeping the body healthy, for example, the children know to wash their hands at appropriate times. However, this is not extended so that children learn to appreciate the effect of exercise on their bodies.

Creative development

73. The majority of children are well on course to reach the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year and the teaching for this area is mainly good. This is because the lessons in this area are planned well. Children are provided with good opportunities to explore the sounds and rhythms they can make by playing percussion instruments which they manage with good control. They are able to use body actions to maintain a rhythm and they respond appropriately to the mood and tempo of music. Children's listening skills are effectively developed as they listen to different pieces of music during Infant assemblies and in the classroom. Most children know a good range of songs and hymns such as 'Five Little Ducks' and 'Ave Maria' and they make good progress in learning to perform in front of others, for example, by playing the claves to accompany the rest of the class in their singing. The Reception teacher makes good provision for the children to explore the use of a good range of materials so that they know the colours of paint, and they enjoy mixing them to produce different colours, for example, for their portraits of special people. Different techniques, such as printing, are effectively taught and a wide range of media is used which appropriately enables the children to express their ideas, for example when making their blue balloon collages and making shape patterns. The children are confident to make comments about the different textures of materials and enjoy developing their own ideas when painting 'Daisy Duck' and drawing their own pictures. Most children respond well to what they hear, touch, smell and feel, for example, when using a 'feely bag' and smelling the playdough and they are able to use an appropriate range of tools. Staff have high expectations of the children's work and behaviour when they are working independently and in whole class activities they hold the children's attention well. Both boys and girls enjoy role-play situations when using small equipment, such as the wooden village and farm set, and also the larger equipment available in 'The Cottage'. There are occasions, however, when the children have too few props to support their imaginary play even though the staff enter into a good level of dialogue with the children to support this aspect of learning.

ENGLISH

74. In the Infant classes, pupils make good progress and achieve well. In the current Year 2, which has a higher than usual percentage of pupils with special educational needs, pupils are well on course to attain average standards. In the Junior classes, pupils make satisfactory progress overall, although pupils in Years 3 and 4 are currently making good progress. By Year 6, pupils are attaining average standards but more can still be achieved particularly in writing. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress towards the targets in their individual learning plans. In the same way as the majority of pupils in each class more able pupils make good progress in the Infant classes and satisfactory progress in the Junior classes. Since the last inspection, pupils have continued to make satisfactory progress overall.
75. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening improve satisfactorily by the time they leave the school. In Years 1 and 2 pupils make good progress. They listen attentively in lessons and contribute ideas confidently. They show respect for each other's ideas and join in discussions showing good awareness of the situation. By Year 6, many pupils can describe clearly their knowledge of a subject, for example, when describing what they know about solids, liquids and gases in science. They are prepared to express their opinions and ideas openly as they did when discussing the reasons why particular phrases in their writing were effective. Occasionally, where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, staff spend too long on whole class discussion and pupils do not display good skills in listening. The best progress seen in the development of pupils' skills in speaking and listening was when pupils in Year 4 gained good understanding in appreciating others' points of view in 'circle-time', a session where pupils discuss issues of importance, such as friendship. This is organised as part of the personal, social and health education programme.
76. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in reading. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop their skills in reading well. They have good sense of enjoyment in reading and they learn to read simple text, such as 'Fussy Freda' with accuracy and understanding. They understand that different books are organised in different ways and can explain that some are story books and others give information. They learn to use a range of strategies to help them make sense of the text including using letter sounds and the pictures in the book. The more able pupils read fluently and with expression and are good at predicting what might happen next in the story. By the age of eleven, most show good levels of comprehension and are developing clear ideas about their favourite authors. They can explain clearly why they like certain books. Many like reading Roald Dahl and can explain why they have enjoyed the Harry Potter series. Many are keen to talk about the characters in the 'Lord of the Rings'. Pupils use indexes, glossaries and contents pages effectively to find information from books. The more able appreciate the underlying ideas and subtleties in the text. They can refer to what they consider to be successful use of writing techniques by the author, for example when one boy explained why he thought the phrase 'the delicate power of liquids which creep through the human veins' was effective. Below average readers enjoy reading and show a suitable range of strategies when they meet unfamiliar words. Although pupils are now generally trying hard with their reading there has not always been sufficiently systematic development of their skills over time and this is affecting the overall standards pupils attain by the end of Year 6.
77. Writing is developed satisfactorily through the school. In the Infants, pupils develop clear understanding of writing in simple sentences. Most pay good attention to letter formation and present their work effectively taking account of the different purposes of writing. In Year 2 pupils indicate that they love writing stories and those of all abilities achieve particularly well in this aspect. By Year 6, pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Currently, they are achieving well in Years 3 and 4 and pupils are developing good understanding about the need to write in different styles for different purposes. There is some particularly good work in Year 3. Progressively in the Junior classes pupils learn to draft and redraft their work in order to achieve a final copy. By Year 6, pupils have developed a clear understanding about the importance of planning out their work in advance with the intended audience in mind. As they were writing suspense stories they talked knowledgeably about the elements which make up a good story and showed some very good imaginative ideas. Pupils are also keen to review their work and learn from each other. There has

not been a clear build up of the skills of spelling, punctuation and handwriting through the Junior classes and not all pupils take sufficient care with these. Standards in these aspects are satisfactory overall but more could be achieved.

78. Teaching is satisfactory overall and this leads to satisfactory learning. There is good and very good teaching in Years 1 and 2 and pupils concentrate very well and make good gains in their learning. Teaching is satisfactory overall in the Junior classes although it is good in Years 3 and 4. Throughout the school, teachers build their lessons on the National Literacy Strategy and planning is generally good with clear learning objectives. Staff are secure in the subject and they use the technical vocabulary associated with it effectively, for example when describing parts of speech. The introduction to lessons is usually good and pupils benefit from what is often a pacy question and answer session where they can contribute their ideas.
79. In all lessons, effective use is made of resources, especially the 'Big Books' and good attention is paid to the wide range of levels of understanding in the classes so that activities are set which are generally well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. There are, however, opportunities missed to extend the learning of the pupils as they go about their activities. This is particularly in Years 5 and 6. This is mainly because teachers do not make it clear enough what the pupils must achieve in the set time or give specific targets to pupils about the ways in which their work should improve. Where teaching is good or very good there is open discussion about what each pupils needs to do in order to attain a particular level within the National Curriculum, for example when pupils in Year 3 were developing their ideas about instructional writing. In the good lessons helpful reviews take place so that pupils can assess for themselves what they do and do not understand and this level of self-evaluation increases their determination to succeed.
80. Teachers and support staff work very well together in all classes. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress towards the targets in their individual learning plans. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and consequently most pupils, including those with special educational needs, want to do well. The management of pupils' behaviour is effective overall, it is generally managed well so that pupils take a good level of responsibility for organising their own learning. The structure of the literacy lessons provides a helpful framework for the small number of pupils in the school who do not find it easy to manage their own behaviour. These pupils usually respond appropriately in these lessons.
81. Throughout the school, marking is undertaken regularly and often gives a good level of praise to pupils but there is inconsistency in the quality of the comments intended to help the pupils improve. Where marking is very effective it relates directly to the individual learning targets which have been set for pupils. Occasionally, however, pupils do not appreciate the purpose of the marking since it has not been made clear to them.
82. The very good teaching observed in English was characterised by the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject alongside their high expectations of pupils. In these lessons staff make particularly good use of questioning and feedback to extend the pupils' thinking. In a very good lesson in Year 2 staff made very effective use of a wide range of support materials, such as 'wordbanks', 'target boards' and 'story starter cards' to extend pupils' learning. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good teachers do not always make sufficient demands of all groups pupils and as a result the pace of learning slows. This happened when one group of pupils in Year 5 worked on a task where they were simply grouping words with similar endings.
83. The management and co-ordination of the subject are satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator has worked hard to achieve improvement by developing policy and introducing the National Literacy Strategy. She has led staff training sessions and observed lessons and given feedback to teachers. A regular programme of monitoring teachers' planning and scrutinising pupils' work has been organised. Assessment procedures have been improved with a much clearer recording system for reading having been introduced into the Junior classes. Generally, however, too little analysis of whole school assessment information is taking place. Also, because of the turnover of staff the work undertaken by the co-ordinator has not had sufficient impact on standards. For this reason literacy, in particular improvements in pupils' writing, continues to be a key priority within

the school improvement plan. Resources have been developed and are generally good although there is no library to support pupils' learning. Information and communication technology is used appropriately to support some of the work undertaken in English but overall this aspect is underdeveloped.

MATHEMATICS

84. In Classes 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in the Junior classes but could achieve more in Years 5 and 6, particularly in problem solving and investigative work. Currently the pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making good progress. Inspection evidence, including a scrutiny of pupils' work, shows that the standards of work seen for the seven and eleven year olds are overall average. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and making good progress against the targets set in their individual education plans. More able pupils make good progress in the Infant classes and satisfactory progress in the Junior classes. Since the last inspection, pupils have continued to make satisfactory progress overall.
85. By the age of seven, pupils are secure with number facts to 100. They know the names of the common two-dimensional shapes and can describe them using appropriate language. Most pupils are confident working with numbers to 100, counting in tens and calculating doubles. They are secure in their knowledge of money, working out ways to make £1 or more with different coins. Higher attaining pupils, in particular, are good at applying their knowledge of number to solve simple problems. For example they calculate the difference between two numbers using their knowledge of 'counting on' in ones, fives or tens. Pupils of all abilities are secure in plotting data onto block graphs and making comparisons for example during their work in science when they produced graphs to show how far cars had travelled after going down a ramp with different surfaces. They were able to measure the distances in metres.
86. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are developing well across all aspects. Their mental skills are improving as a result of the very focussed beginnings of lessons. These activities provide a good level of challenge to which pupils respond enthusiastically. The pupils are also developing their knowledge and use of strategies to help them solve problems effectively.
87. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are developing confidence in working out calculations in their heads although there is not always enough emphasis given to this at the beginnings of lessons for pupils to be fully confident in working out answers quickly. Nevertheless, by the age of eleven many pupils have a sound understanding of decimals, fractions and percentages and most can order fractions by converting them to a common denominator. Most have a secure knowledge of place value and they can multiply and divide whole numbers by 100 and calculate using decimals. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are confident in using standard units of measurement for measuring mass and can estimate and order different objects by their estimated weight. Many are also confident to convert kilograms to grams whilst those in Year 6 can convert grams into decimals and fractions of kilograms. Most pupils can plot data onto the commonly used graphs and frequency charts. They are, however, less secure with the strategies for solving problems and investigative work since there has not been a sufficiently systematic development over time in this aspect and more can be demanded of pupils.
88. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. There is good teaching in Years 1 and 2 and in Year 3. The teaching seen in a Year 4 lesson was very good and pupils are currently being challenged very effectively in their learning. In the good and very good lessons pupils were encouraged to work out answers in their own way and explain how they had arrived at the solution and this very effectively increased their understanding. In these lessons, pupils were learning consistently well because the expectations of them were high. The teachers were good at showing the pupils how they approach solving problems in a systematic way and at this time demonstrated their own enthusiasm for the subject to the pupils. This in turn increased the pupils' motivation. In all lessons, teachers' planning is conscientiously undertaken and identifies clear objectives for the sessions. However, not all sessions start with mental skills practice that has

sufficient pace and challenge to help pupils develop their confidence to use their knowledge quickly. In nearly all lessons the pupils are keen and well motivated and generally they respond well to the structure of these lessons which are based on the National Numeracy Strategy. When they are clear exactly what is expected of them in the time available in group activities or independent work they rise to the challenge. There are occasions, however, in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is satisfactory rather than good where pupils are not sufficiently clear about their targets and the ways in which they might improve their work. Also the teaching of strategies to help pupils solve mathematical problems and undertake investigations in mathematics does not always receive a high focus.

89. The National Numeracy Strategy is now being used well by most staff. Teachers consistently share the lesson objectives and the language to be used in the session is also made clear to the class. There is generally a suitable balance to the lessons and adequate time and preparation go into the last part of the session. Work is generally well presented and marking is supportive although it often does not always indicate how well pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve. Personal targets are being introduced in many classes and these are having a very positive effect on pupils' learning but they are not used sufficiently by all staff.

90. The school has highlighted the need to improve standards by the time the pupils leave the school as a key priority. It has rightly identified the need to improve the way the pupils' progress is monitored. At present the deputy head is working alongside the co-ordinator and co-ordination overall is satisfactory. Since the last inspection the school has developed policy and implemented the National Numeracy Strategy and maintained good progress for pupils in the Infant classes. There has been significant change of staffing and mobility of pupils in the Junior classes which has affected the progress made by pupils in the Junior classes. Resources have improved in mathematics and are generally good. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory overall. Suitable procedures are in place but the outcomes of assessment are not used consistently well by all staff to set targets for individual pupils so that they are clear about what they must do to improve. Also there is insufficient analysis of the assessment data to note patterns and trends in pupils' attainment over time. The use of numeracy in other subjects is satisfactory overall, with some good examples noted in science and design and technology. Although there are still gaps in the use of information and communication technology to support learning in mathematics there are some good examples where it is being used successfully. For example, in Year 2 when pupils produced graphs from data collected during a survey which they had recently undertaken.

SCIENCE

91. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in the Infant classes when comparison is made with their previous attainment. Pupils' progress by the end of Year 6 is satisfactory overall but pupils could achieve more in problem solving and investigative work. There is currently good progress in Years 3 and 4. The standards attained by pupils are in line with those expected of those expected of seven and eleven year olds by the end of Years 2 and 6 respectively. Since the last inspection, pupils have continued to make satisfactory progress overall.

92. By the end of the Infant classes, most pupils know that light comes from a variety of sources. They can draw and label a plant correctly and they have a good understanding of what makes plants grow. Pupils' observational skills are good, and this was evident as they recorded the changes that take place during the growth of an amaryllis plant. They can sort objects and materials into groups and recognise the similarities and differences between these. The problem solving and investigative skills of most pupils are good. The pupils are able to make sensible predictions, for example, to say which surface is the one that objects will roll down most quickly. They effectively record information on simple tables and make graphs and they can explain how their experiments were carried out. More able pupils can describe ways in which materials are changed, for example, by heating, twisting or bending. They are able to say what they have found out from their work and offer simple explanations for their observations and results.

93. In Year 3, pupils carry out experiments and make graphs to compare different soils and find out their permeability. They have a good understanding of forces, gravity and magnetism. Work is

completed in a systematic way and pupils are drawing appropriate conclusions from their investigations for their age. Year 4 pupils are gaining a clear understanding of conductors and insulators and they make good gains in learning about plants and the human body. In Year 6, pupils are confident in most aspects of their science work but less so in experimental and investigative work. For example, they have a good knowledge and understanding of solids, liquids and gases. They can explain how light and dark effect plants, how we breathe and also how the blood circulates round the body. However, they are not as confident in setting up a test to ensure that it is fair or in selecting the appropriate resources to carry out an experiment. They also lack confidence in applying their scientific knowledge to bring what they have learnt to an appropriate conclusion. Nevertheless, the pupils do present their work carefully using graphs, tables and charts.

94. In both the Infant and Junior classes, pupils frequently use reference books to find and select information. Their speaking and listening skills are developing well in most lessons and new scientific vocabulary is being developed consistently so that pupils' understanding of scientific terminology is good. Mathematical skills are seen in the use of measurement and graphs and these in the main are accurate. However, because the new ICT suite has only recently been installed the working links between ICT and science are not sufficiently developed to make an impact on pupils' learning and the standards they achieve. Pupils are currently able to access the internet to find out information, but have not been able to use CD-ROM's to support the development of their research and enquiry skills.
95. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The teaching in the Infant classes is good. In the Junior classes the teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching is good in Years 3 and 4 and satisfactory overall in Years 5 and 6. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed in Year 5. Since the last inspection, the written plans for lessons have improved. Lesson plans now clearly state what the pupils are expected to learn from the planned activities, they are organised in well-planned stages and cater for the individual needs and abilities of the pupils including those with special educational needs. Where teaching is good, lessons are introduced enthusiastically and led at a lively pace. This has the effect of holding the pupils' attention and motivating them to learn. The teachers have a good command of the subject and they use their knowledge effectively to question the pupils to help them both consolidate, and extend, their learning. Good explanations are provided for the pupils to help them develop their understanding of scientific ideas and concepts. Teachers show awareness of pupils' common misconceptions and take care to ensure they are dealt with accordingly. Activities are carefully organised and allow the pupils to experiment and investigate and use a good selection of practical apparatus; for example, in a Year 4 lesson where pupils found out which material would be the best to keep a baked potato hot. Pupils learn to record results in a range of ways, sometimes using helpful prompt sheets, which encourage them to work in a systematic and thoughtful way. Where unsatisfactory teaching was seen, the lesson did not have a good balance of teacher direction and pupil activity and staff did not demand enough of pupils in terms of work and behaviour.
96. Features of all the good lessons are that the teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour from the pupils and will not accept anything less. Classrooms are well organised and the tasks set successfully challenge the pupils. The pupils respond well in these situations, they have good attitudes to their lessons and generally concentrate well in completing their tasks. This results in the pupils taking pride in their work and learning to make sensible predictions, set their work out in a logical way and offer suitable explanations for their investigations. In most lessons the staff provide the pupils with a good level of oral feedback and work is suitably marked although occasionally the comments could be more specific about how improvements might be achieved. Pupils' attainment and progress are regularly assessed, sometimes using suitable test materials, and the information gained is appropriately used to group pupils and plan lessons.
97. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator has been in post for a short time only. She shows enthusiasm and commitment to the role, has a good scientific knowledge and has spent a considerable amount of time in auditing the resources in order to draw up a good inventory. Since the last inspection, schemes of work have successfully been drawn together to help ensure there is continuity and progression in the teaching of the subject across the school.

Good quality resources are now in place to deliver these schemes of work. The co-ordinator has begun the monitoring process by examining the coverage of the allocated units of work and has also identified the areas for improvement such as the need for pupils to use CD-ROMs. Appropriate assessment procedures are in place but the information gathered is not used in a systematic way to analyse data at a whole school level to track the progress of groups of pupils. This information is not used consistently by all staff for setting targets for pupils. There are a good number of visits made outside school, for example to Wicken House where the pupils went 'pond dipping'. The co-ordinator has recently attended a co-ordinators' course and she is appropriately using the information she has gained to help her carry out her role.

ART

98. Only one art lesson was observed during the inspection so judgements about pupils' attainment are made from a scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and talking to pupils. Overall attainment in art is broadly average at the ages of seven and eleven and pupils make satisfactory progress. This is similar to that found at the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make sound progress in all aspects of art.
99. In Years 1 and 2, pupils use a range of media, including paint and crayon to experiment successfully with colour and shape and to develop sound techniques. Pupils in Year 1 successfully develop their techniques in using collage to produce pictures of houses and they have made drawings of things they see on their way to school showing good skills in observation. By the age of seven, pupils work confidently and creatively, as is evident in their careful drawings of trees in winter, using white chalks. Good examples of the use of paint can be seen in the pupils' work showing foregrounds and backgrounds. Pupils have also illustrated some of their favourite stories and drawn their interpretation of the 'Last Supper' following a study of pictures by Renaissance artists.
100. Through Years 3 to 6 pupils learn to work in the style of famous artists. For example, pupils in Year 3 have produced sunflower pictures in the style of Van Gogh and created model sunflowers using clay. Pupils in all of these classes show satisfactory techniques in mixing and blending colours and in the composition of their drawings and paintings. Pupils have produced designs using hot and cold colours and ones using different textures. Collage work is used well to depict where the forest meets the sea. Careful observation skills can be seen in the portraits and other drawings. Three-dimensional work, seen in clay models and in the half-sized models of pupils' own bodies in Year 3, is effective. In the latter work, it is noticeable how well pupils used their skills in measuring.
101. Links with other subjects include drawings to support a history topic on the Victorians and work in mathematics associated with making symmetrical pictures. Overall, ICT is not used sufficiently in art.
102. The overall provision is satisfactory with some good features. In the one lesson seen in Year 3 the quality of teaching was good. In this lesson, the teacher demonstrated good subject knowledge and the lesson was well planned to provide an opportunity for all pupils to develop their skills and use their imagination. Pupils learned well, were enthusiastic and sustained concentration throughout the session.
103. Co-ordination is satisfactory and the curriculum is appropriately planned to provide pupils with the development of the appropriate skills and experience of using a variety of media. Resources are satisfactory. Overall, the provision for art is similar to that seen at the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

104. At the last inspection, pupils were judged to attain standards which were in line with those expected and this continues to be the case although there are now strengths in Years 1 to 3 in the individuality of pupils' designs and the good quality of evaluation they undertake. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection but a scrutiny of pupils' work, records of the progress made and teachers' planning was undertaken as well as discussions with pupils and the co-ordinator. Overall, inspection evidence indicates that pupils are generally making good progress in the Infant classes. Progress is satisfactory overall by the end of the Junior classes although there is good progress evident in Year 3.
105. Teachers make effective use of the subject policy and the national guidance adopted by the school as the basis for their planning. In most classes, they have high expectations of the quality of making, and pupils achieve sound standards of precision and finish in their products. Teachers

- undertake assessments at the end of each unit of work which suitably identifies the skills that have been acquired. The one lesson observed confirmed these features.
106. Pupils in Year 2 have designed toy cars and in discussion show familiarity with technical language such as “chassis”, “spinning wheel” and “fixed axle”. Starting from the same set of instructions, they produced a range of very different designs, which were further refined as the difficulties of making became apparent. There were strong links with mathematics as the pupils measured the materials that they were going to use, and with art as they decorated the bodies of their vehicles. In discussion, pupils were confident when explaining what they were doing.
 107. Similarly good work was seen in Year 3, where work on food technology has stimulated the pupils’ interest in bread-making. Their recording of their work made it evident that they had enjoyed judging seven different types of bread for appearance and taste. They designed their own recipes and have a good grasp of the essential ingredients that go into making a loaf of bread. Their visit to Pizza Express provided a stimulating opportunity to experience commercial food-making. The pupils experienced first hand all the elements of pizza making and gained good understanding of health and safety issues. The good quality reports written by the pupils after this visit confirm that their work in literacy is making a positive contribution to the quality of recording. Discussion with pupils in Years 5 and 6 demonstrated that they had secure knowledge of the design process from the initial identification of purpose through to the evaluation and the need for refinement of the final product. They demonstrated suitable understanding of the importance of safe procedures when working with tools and the importance of choosing the right resources for the product that they wished to make. When talking about the different fairground models that they had designed last year, Year 6 pupils drew attention to the links with their study of electricity, as they had designed a simple circuit to switch on and off the motor that powered their carousels or ferris wheels.
 108. The quality of work seen, and discussions with pupils show that pupils’ attitudes to this subject are good. In discussion, pupils in Years 2, 5 and 6 showed a good sense of responsibility and valued the contributions of other pupils when describing their projects. Pupils’ positive responses to this work were reflected in the enthusiasm they displayed in discussion. The quality of co-operation between pupils when working collaboratively on a project in design and technology makes a significant contribution to their moral and social development.
 109. The co-ordinator is providing a clear direction for the further development of the subject, based on recent national guidance. She has ensured that the pupils are introduced to the full process of design: from the identification of the purpose, the choice of materials and the initial design, through to the evaluation of the final product. Resources for work in design and technology are generally satisfactory, but not enough use is made of information and communication technology to help to develop pupils’ skills.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

110. The school operates a rolling programme of topics in geography and history and makes links between these subjects where possible. There is one co-ordinator covering both subjects.
111. It was only possible to observe one geography lesson and two history lessons during the inspection so judgements about pupils’ attainment are made from a scrutiny of pupils’ work, teachers’ planning and records, and talking to pupils.
112. Overall, standards in geography and history are in line with those expected of pupils by Years 2 and 6 and these are similar to those found at the last inspection. Pupils’ recorded work in geography and history is broadly average whereas in discussion pupils they often show good understanding about the areas they have studied. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, generally make good progress across the Infant classes. Since the last inspection there have been changes in the primary curriculum for geography and history, and the school has effectively introduced the requirements of the revision.

113. The overall inspection evidence shows that currently pupils' progress is generally good in Years 1 to 4 and satisfactory in Years 5 and 6. However, the one geography lesson observed in Year 5 was judged to be unsatisfactory. The history lesson seen in Year 1 was good and the history lesson in Year 3 was very good. In both subjects, the way in which teachers present the work ensures that pupils are usually challenged in their learning. The support provided by teaching assistants is also an important feature in ensuring that pupils with special educational needs are included in all activities. The level of research carried out by most pupils is satisfactory, and in some cases good or better, as seen in the work carried out by pupils in Year 3 pupils about the Romans. In the unsatisfactory geography lesson seen the whole class session went on for too long and this resulted in some loss of attention and inappropriate behaviour by a small number of pupils
114. In geography, pupils in Year 1 learn about the area around their school and are good at suggesting ways in which their locality could be made safer while pupils in Year 2 study the imaginary island of Struay in the Inner Hebrides. Their work and teachers' planning show strong links with their work in literacy: for example in Year 2 the pupils studied the book *Katie Morag and the Two Grandmothers*. There are also strong links with mathematics and pupils successfully completed maps of the key features of the island, which required them to have a secure understanding of co-ordinates. Pupils were able to explain the reason for a map having a key. Work on the river estuary at Maldon provided the pupils in Year 2 with a good opportunity to compare the area in which they live with a seaside environment and pupils are clear about the differences between the two.
115. In history, discussion with pupils and their teacher showed that pupils in Year 1 enjoyed comparing toys from the past with modern toys, and they were able to do this effectively having already completed a lot of work about 'Homes Long Ago'. There were moments of wonder, as the pupils' eyes widened when they discussed why they thought a particular toy was old. Different pupils proudly told the story of each old or new toy they had brought in, amongst them a teddy bear over 60 years old that had belonged to one pupil's mother. The pupils' understanding was enhanced by them using the internet to visit three different web sites about toy museums, and by creating their own toy museum in the classroom. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have sound understanding of chronology and they are able to make clear comparisons between life in Victorian times and their own lives today. They are beginning to understand the difference between evidence and opinion and they have effectively learned about the lives of some famous people, such as Queen Victoria, Beatrix Potter and Florence Nightingale. It was evident from discussion that they particularly enjoy handling and talking about old artefacts.
116. In geography, photographic evidence confirms that pupils in Year 3 have studied different types of housing in their locality and contrasting different styles of development. The emphasis given to providing the pupils with first hand experience ensures that they understand the geographical issues that they are studying. This emphasis on the importance of research was apparent in the history lesson observed where the pupils showed particularly good knowledge of the features of the Roman way of life, especially about the Roman invasion of the British Isles. They discussed issues ranging from the defeat of Queen Boudicca to obscure marriage laws with confidence. In this lesson, their behaviour was very good, they worked extremely hard and they valued the contribution made by others. The experience which they had had over time, of preparing short factual talks about what they had learned, made an important contribution to the development of their speaking and listening skills. While much of their knowledge had been learned from books and videos within the classroom, it had been supplemented by use of the internet and by visits and visitors, such as a "centurion". Pupils in both Years 3 and 4 had learned a great deal from their visit to Kentwell Hall.
117. Most recently, pupils in Year 5 have been carrying out a study of the River Blackwater. The pupils' work is generally well presented and shows satisfactory progression over time. Consequently, most pupils demonstrate a level of knowledge that is appropriate for their age. While no geography was being taught in Year 6 during the inspection, discussion with pupils and the quality of teacher planning confirms that attainment at the end of Year 6 is in line with that expected for pupils of this age. Discussion with pupils in Years 5 and 6 confirmed that they enjoy

history, and that they have generally sound, and on occasions, good understanding, of historical periods such as the Tudors and the Victorians. Pupils in Year 6 possess considerable knowledge about the Tudor period, ranging from detail about the character of Henry VIII and his six wives, to the events that followed after his death. They particularly enjoyed their visit to Braintree Museum and the 'Victorian Day' when, under the tutelage of "Miss Wilberforce" they had experienced the curriculum, and the punishments, of a Victorian school. It was apparent that in Years 5 and 6, the need to evaluate evidence and to make sensible judgements was being extended by this work. Also the pupils were able to look at issues of evidence in relation to the Tudor period and identify how that evidence might be different from that available when studying dinosaurs or cave men.

118. Throughout the school, the curriculum is extended by visits to places of geographical interest as well as to local historical houses and museums, so that pupils are given opportunities to evaluate evidence and to make judgements from what they see. Although information and communication technology is used to support work in history it is not a regular enough feature of pupils' assignments in these subjects.
119. Evidence from lessons, from discussions with pupils, the quality of their work and the way in which their learning progresses over time, suggests that generally pupils have positive attitudes towards both geography and history. Pupils carefully look after the satisfactory range of resources available in school and the additional books and artefacts that are borrowed.
120. Co-ordination is satisfactory overall. The recently appointed co-ordinator has made a good start to planning for future development. She is beginning to have a very positive impact on practice throughout the school. The good quality planning of lessons is based on national guidance, and shows that teaching is regularly adapted in the light of continuous assessment in lessons and upon the completion of each unit of study.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

121. Attainment is in line with expectations in Year 2, but while word processing skills are broadly in line with those expected in Year 6, attainment in other aspects of the subject is below expectations. In addition to lessons observed, past work was scrutinised, and discussions were held with pupils and staff. Pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 make good progress in their work and achieve well. There has been a lack of systematic development over time for pupils in Years 4 to 6 and consequently they are not attaining the levels expected. However, pupils are now generally making good progress and this represents an improvement on the position at the time of the last inspection when information and communication technology was a significant weakness.
122. Teachers in the Infant classes have a good understanding of the subject; they plan effectively and have high expectations of their pupils. In the one Year 2 lesson seen, the quality of teaching was good. Pupils in Year 1 have a positive attitude to technology and enjoy talking about what they know. They are able to use a simple word processor, control a mouse and use the keyboard. They can identify the different parts of a computer, enter text and access data, with teacher guidance, from the internet. They talk confidently about their visit to three different toy museums on the internet and what they have learnt about the differences between toys in Victorian times and toys today. By the end of Year 2, pupils confidently carry out original research and enter their data into a graph program. Most are able to work independently on interpreting their graphs and can successfully prepare questions for others to answer about the data they have collected. The pupils have sufficient knowledge and understanding of how computers are used in everyday appliances such as telephones, and toys that use technology to control them. The pupils have looked at the keyboard and its functions, labelling the different parts accurately. Their word processing skills are appropriate for their age. The activities chosen are generally relevant to the interests of the pupils and they make good progress from the time they enter Year 1 to the end of Year 2 to reach levels of attainment that are in line with expectations for the majority. Within the lesson observed the teaching assistant present was effective in ensuring that pupils with special educational needs were fully included in the lesson and achieved success in the work that they

were doing.

123. Lessons were observed in both Years 3 and 4, and in both there were high teacher expectations and effective planning. The quality of teaching is good overall, with the result that pupils in Year 3 are working at a level appropriate for their age while those particularly in Year 4 are working hard to make up a backlog of work missed over time. In these lessons, the teachers showed a good technical knowledge of the computers and programs that they were using. In Year 3, the pupils enjoyed refining their use of "clip art" to illustrate some word processing on the subject of food technology that they had been studying in design and technology. Working in twos and threes the pupils, including those with special educational needs, were able to locate the correct folder and files on the computer network and, access the text that they were going to work on. By the end of the lesson, they were able to insert an appropriate illustration from the "clip art" file into their text. Most pupils knew how to save and print their work. In this class there had been good progress over the year and the quality of learning is good. In Year 4, the pupils came to the lesson observed with very little understanding of branching databases, and no experience of using a computer to record such a database.
124. In Years 5 and 6, no lessons were observed. However, the quality of work seen and discussion with pupils confirmed that all aspects of the National Curriculum are in place, and that pupils are making at least satisfactory and often good progress from a very low knowledge base. Examples of work seen included the word processing of stories, letters and poetry, the presentation of text using different fonts, font sizes and colours, and work relating to mathematics, history and geography. Discussion with pupils confirmed that until last year the opportunities for the pupils to have 'hands-on' time with the computers in their classrooms was too short to enable them to practise their skills regularly, and as a result most forgot what they had learned. By the end of Year 6 most pupils have word processing skills that are broadly in line with expectations. However, their understanding of other areas, such as data handling, use of the internet and CD-ROMs for research, and the control of robotic devices, is below that expected of pupils of this age.
125. The way in which pupils with special educational needs are supported in lessons is successful in ensuring that they have full access to the curriculum being taught. Pupils behave well in most lessons and they work well together with the use of 'computer buddies', being a particularly positive feature.
126. The co-ordinator has only recently been appointed. She has undertaken an audit of resource needs in terms of additional software to support cross-curricular work and made arrangements for all staff to receive further training over a period of thirty weeks. She has been effective in using the strengths of other staff and increasing staff confidence overall through an ICT training day. Progression in ICT skills across the school is now ensured through a clear policy statement and the use of recent national guidance as the basis. Consequently, planning is now of good quality and there is satisfactory use of summative assessment. However, the sound foundations that have been laid are too recent for there to have been a significant impact on standards of attainment and there are still areas of work where staff lack security in the subject. Training and development are planned in these aspects, notably in database work, the use of the internet and in the use of control technology. Resource provision is good overall and additional computers linked to the main computer suite network are being introduced. Pupils have satisfactory access to programmable robotic floor devices, tape recorders, CD players and video recorders. There is too little use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum.

MUSIC

127. Music was identified at the last inspection as a key issue as standards were below average and pupils were making unsatisfactory progress. Since then the school has reviewed its policy and scheme of work resulting in a satisfactory provision. By the age of seven and eleven, pupils attain the standards expected for their age and they clearly enjoy music-making activities. These standards are an improvement on those found at the time of the last inspection.

128. Singing at both key stages is similar to that expected of most pupils of this age. In assemblies it is tuneful and expressive. Most pupils follow and maintain the beat, with improving control of diction and phrasing. They sing hymns and songs from memory and are developing an appropriate repertoire of ones they know. They sing such hymns as Ave Maria with enjoyment and enthusiasm and a growing understanding of tempo and pitch. Pupils who take part in the choir enjoy singing to the whole school in assembly which they do well. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are learning songs and accompany themselves using percussion instruments. Pupils are developing a sound sense of rhythm and can maintain the tempo of a tune. Pupils in Year 4 are learning about pitch and how it can be communicated. Pupils in Year 6 are listening to pieces of music and can use their imagination to suggest an interpretation for the music heard.
129. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages. Teachers' planning, based on a commercial scheme, is effective, with clear learning objectives and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge which enables them to ask questions to make pupils think. This occurred in a Year 6 lesson, where the teacher stressed the importance of listening carefully to the music and effectively encouraged the pupils to try to interpret what effect the composer was trying to create. This led to pupils contributing some good ideas showing that they had used their imagination well. Good opportunities to talk about feelings evoked by music enhance pupils' spiritual development.
130. The curriculum is now broad, balanced and meets requirements. A suitable commercial scheme of work is used to plan for continuity and progression. The curriculum is enriched by the work of a governor, with musical expertise, who contributes to music lessons and by extra-curricular lessons for guitar and recorder, and choir practices. Little use of ICT is made in music. All pupils are included in all activities. Resources are satisfactory, with a suitable variety of instruments available.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

131. In the Infant and Junior classes, pupils make satisfactory progress and standards in are in line with those expected for pupils of this age. The picture was much the same at the last inspection. There have been improvements in planning since the last inspection so that there is a more consistent approach to teaching.
132. Pupils have opportunities to undertake all the areas of activity outlined in the National Curriculum and they achieve satisfactory gains in learning although pupils could generally improve their skills of evaluation. Most pupils throughout the school have established a good level of co-ordination and control of their movements and show good awareness of space and others. In physical education lessons, pupils sustain a reasonable level of energetic activity and many are able to explain the effects of exercise on their bodies. By Year 6, pupils are developing a sound knowledge and understanding of a range of games activities and can explain, for example, the importance of marking an opponent and using different techniques to gain possession of a ball. Most pupils demonstrate the ability to plan ahead and they show that they have some good ideas. Pupils make satisfactory progress and attain in line with the levels expected in swimming.
133. The teaching seen was satisfactory and this led to satisfactory learning. Planning is undertaken conscientiously and often there is useful reference at the beginning of lessons about the overall aim of the session. There is a good focus on the development of specific skills and staff spend time explaining how these can be developed and the pupils are prepared to practise to improve their performance. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively. The pupils are very enthusiastic about taking part in physical activity but occasionally become over-excited. This was the case in a Year 6 lesson but overall the teacher managed this situation well. Resources are organised and used effectively. Staff dress appropriately for physical education and in this way set a standard for pupils who in turn dress appropriately. Overall, best use is made of the time available with a suitable focus given to warming up and cooling down. Staff are prepared to help pupils' understanding by demonstrating

techniques themselves and they often use other pupils as a model. Although teachers often praise pupils' efforts there is generally too little involvement of pupils in evaluative feedback in order to further improve standards.

134. Co-ordination is satisfactory. The co-ordinator joined the school only at the beginning of the academic year. He has undertaken an audit of provision and has suitable ideas to take the subject forward. Planning is carefully organised and resources and accommodation are good. There is suitable attention given to the importance of safe practices. There are a reasonable number of extra-curricular activities to support the work undertaken in physical education, these include clubs for football and netball.