

INSPECTION REPORT

COLUMBIA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Columbia Road

London E2 7RG

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 100897

Headteacher: Penny Bentley

Reporting inspector: R Peter J McGregor
OIN 3525

Dates of inspection: 10th - 14th June 2002

Inspection number: 197053

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3-11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Columbia Rd
London

Postcode: E2 7RG

Telephone number: 020 7739 3835

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Alan Russell

Date of previous inspection: June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3525	R Peter J McGregor	Registered inspector	Science Design and technology	The school's results and pupils' achievements
9391	Norma Ball	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school works in partnership with parents How well the school is led and managed How well pupils are taught
23315	Irene Green	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Art Religious education	
31421	Sue Rogers	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education English as an additional language Equal opportunities	How well the school cares for its pupils
21597	Caroline Robinson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
23233	Jo Cheadle	Team inspector	English Music Special educational needs	

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Alexandra House, 33 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Columbia provides education for pupils from the age of three to eleven. The school is bigger than most other primary schools with 426 pupils, including 50 full or part-time in the nursery. Most pupils transfer to two main secondary schools. The numbers of boys and girls in the school are similar overall, although Years 2 and 5 have rather more boys than girls. Just under three-quarters of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, mainly Bangladeshi, but with small numbers of black African, African-Caribbean and Pakistani heritage. About three-quarters of pupils have English as an additional language, around a fifth being at an early stage of learning English. These are very high figures compared with all schools nationally. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs, about a quarter of the pupils in the school, is above that found nationally. About a quarter of these pupils are at the higher stages of need, with an average number with Statements. Special educational needs are mainly specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, and emotional and behavioural issues. Judgements made in this report about national test results taken in Years 2 and 6 sometimes refer to similar schools: these are schools with more than half the pupils taking free school meals. In 2002, the free school meal proportion at Columbia is 51 percent, a well above average figure. About 11 percent of the pupils either joined the school or left other than at the start or end of the school year, an average mobility figure. Pupils of a full range of ability attend the school, but with fewer high attainers in the classes of older pupils. Generally, standards are well below average on entry. The area around the school is socially and economically mixed, with some high quality private houses but a high proportion of poor housing and socially deprived areas. Pupils' social and economic background is well below average overall.

The school has experienced difficulty in finding and retaining sufficient high quality teaching staff, as have other schools in the local education authority area. Nevertheless, about half the staff have been at the school for two years or longer. Eight of the current teachers have overseas qualifications.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Columbia is a very good school. Pupils like to attend and enjoy their school life. Clarity of vision and purpose, mutual respect, and constant striving for improvement are hallmarks of the excellent school ethos. All pupils do very well considering the level of many pupils on entering the school. By the age of eleven, standards are in line with, or above, national expectations. Some pupils achieve very high standards. Pupils' achievements are very good. The quality of teaching is good overall, with examples of excellence, which results in very effective learning. The teaching of some temporary staff is unsatisfactory. Staff carry out their duties with rigour and care. Leadership and management are excellent and, even considering the high cost for educating each pupil, the school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Above average results overall in 2001 national assessments in Year 6 show excellent achievement over time. Very good achievement currently, particularly in the development of language skills.
- Excellent support for pupils' social, cultural and moral development, and very good care, resulting in pupils' very good behaviour, personal development and attitudes.
- Very good teaching of early years children and in Years 3 to 6.
- Very good curriculum breadth, with many community links, visits, visitors and high quality extra-curricular activities. Excellent early years curriculum.
- Very effective links with parents from which pupils benefit greatly.

- Outstanding leadership from the headteacher, very well supported by the deputy, a strong leadership team, effective subject co-ordinators and governors.

What could be improved

- The quality of teaching in some lessons, particularly in the infant years, and insufficiently helpful marking.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997. At that time, standards were requiring some improvement but the quality of education, the climate for learning and the management and efficiency of the school were all good. Improvements have been made in all areas over the past five years and, where characteristics were very good, these strengths have been maintained or further enhanced. For example, provision is now excellent in the early years unit. Four key areas for improvement were identified in the last report. Teaching in infant classrooms was unsatisfactory then, but it is now satisfactory. The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is much better than five years ago, as a result of the great efforts of senior managers and teaching staff. Standards and progress needed to improve in English, maths and science in 1997. All have, and standards are now much higher. Better curriculum planning was needed to improve continuity in learning, and this has been written and implemented. The governors' annual report to parents did not meet statutory requirements and a daily act of collective worship did not take place each day. The governors' report does now meet requirements. A daily act of collective worship does not take place, however, but those assemblies seen were very good, spiritual and uplifting occasions. In other important areas, progress has often been very good. For example, the strong leadership of the headteacher is now considered to be outstanding, the quality of provision for spiritual, moral and social and cultural development has improved and is now excellent, and support for pupils with English as an additional language has improved from satisfactory to very good. Overall, with so many areas for development in 1997 that have shown good or very good change, improvement is judged to be very good and the capacity for further improvement under the leadership of the current headteacher is very good indeed.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	B	D	D	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	B	C	B	A	
Science	A	A	A	A*	

*Results in the top five percent of schools nationally

Pupils' standards in national tests taken at the age of seven in 2001 were above average in maths, average in writing and well below average in reading. When compared with pupils in similar schools, standards were well above average in both reading and writing, and very high in maths. The maths results were in the top five percent of schools with similar socio-economic circumstances. These very good test results show that pupils made very effective progress in English and maths from the time they entered the school and achieved very well indeed.

Tests taken by eleven-year-olds in 2001 show attainment was above average overall when compared with national figures. The data in the table above, especially when comparing Columbia results with schools in similar social contexts, indicate that pupils made excellent progress, achieving very good standards.

The trend in results of Year 2 pupils over the five years up to 2001, is one of improving standards in maths and English. Teacher assessments in science indicate plateauing science standards. The Year 6 trend of improvement in results is good. In both key stages, the school's trends are greater than the national increase in standards, showing that pupils are doing better year on year. The school's targets for English and maths in 2001 were greatly exceeded. Targets for 2002 are a little higher than 2001, and are challenging but realistic.

Current achievement by the children in Nursery and Reception classes is very good. Many will achieve the Early Learning Goals in personal, social and emotional development, mathematical, physical and creative development. Not as many will attain the nationally expected standards in communication, language and literacy, and knowledge and understanding of the world, because their entry standards in English were so low.

Pupils throughout the school are making very good progress in learning English; achievements are very good and a little better than in maths. Attainment is broadly similar to national expectations in both subjects by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The very good focus on pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening is a fundamental base upon which the success of the school is built. Pupils' attainment in science is well below average at age seven, and achievement is satisfactory, but well above average at age eleven with very good achievement. Pupils' attainment in art and music is above average and their achievement is very good. In other subjects, current standards are broadly similar to national expectations and pupils' progress is satisfactory or better. In ICT, pupils are making good, and at times very good, progress, achieving well, but from a relatively low base point of skills. Religious education standards are satisfactory but the written work does not reflect the depth of pupils' thinking. Overall, current attainment is average at the end of Reception and in Years 2 and 6. This represents exceptional progress when so many pupils learn English as an additional language and develop their language skills in all aspects of school life. Achievements are very good over pupils' time at the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils show a deep interest in work and are very positive. Pupils of all ages respond very well to the school's strong moral, cultural and social ethos. They like coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils respect the staff, appreciating the calm and encouraging management of their behaviour in almost all lessons.

Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are mature and confident, mix well and work together very effectively in pairs and groups. They accept willingly the very good opportunities to exercise responsibility.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Long absences for holidays to visit extended families abroad are a problem. Reintegration of absent pupils is good.

Pupils of all races and social backgrounds are equally positive in their attitudes to work. The school's ethos supports very effective relationships and racial harmony is excellent.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Satisfactory	Very good

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

Teaching in all six areas of learning for early years children was very good overall, ranging from excellent to good. Teaching was exciting and imaginative. In the infant classes, although some excellent teaching was seen, resulting in interested pupils who made excellent progress, a few lessons were unsatisfactory and the weaknesses restricted what pupils learnt. In the junior classes, the overall quality was very good, with few weaknesses. The only unsatisfactory teaching seen throughout the school was by a small proportion of the temporary teachers. Most temporary teachers, however, made a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.

In the three core subjects, the teaching seen was good overall. The quality of science teaching was very good in the juniors and satisfactory in the infants. Very good expert teaching in art, music and ICT resulted in very good achievements. In all other areas the teaching seen was satisfactory or better overall, but with strengths and weaknesses, depending upon individual teachers and the subjects or classes taught.

The key strength in almost all teaching seen was the focus on pupils' development of English, particularly speaking and listening skills and improving their vocabularies. Numeracy also receives a good focus with effective reinforcement of the use of number in several subjects. Because the literacy focus is so effective, pupils learn English quickly and effectively, enabling them to make progress in all their other subjects. The number of teachers and support staff is high and they usually work very closely together for the pupils' benefit. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, enabling them to ask demanding and appropriate questions that help pupils to learn. Lessons were well prepared with a clear structure and good range of activities.

The needs of all pupils were met in most lessons. Support for pupils with English as an additional language was very good as it was for those with special educational needs. Weaknesses that restricted learning in a few lessons included too much teacher talk, unsatisfactory management of pupils' behaviour, insufficient use of the class-based computers, and some unsatisfactory marking. Teaching of handwriting was inconsistent. High attainers were well catered for in many lessons but not always.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum's very good breadth is achieved through a comprehensive range of clubs, visits, visitors and community links. Pupils experience specific subjects in depth through focus events such as science days, book week and an artist in residence. The early years curriculum is excellent. Provision for equality of opportunity is very good in an inclusive curriculum. A collective act of worship does not take place on some days.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Specialist teaching is very effective. Support is very good in most classes, because of the large number of supporting adults. Individual education plans are good but not always followed carefully enough in lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Pupils at an early stage of learning English are immersed in language. Very good support is provided by large numbers of bilingual adults, teachers and support staff. Teaching English is the key task for all staff, enabling access to the full curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. The clear and well-respected behaviour code underpins the excellent social, cultural and moral provision. Provision for spiritual development is good. Pupils have an impressive range of opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and others, such as the school council and Year 6 friendship squad.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Child protection procedures and training for staff are clear. Rigorous health and safety procedures and risk assessments are carried out. Policies for dealing with bullying and attendance are very good as are procedures for recording good and bad behaviour and positive reward systems. Staff know the pupils very well. Small groups of pupils receive excellent care in the recently refurbished 'School House'. Assessment of pupils' academic progress is good though targets are not always shared with pupils to make clear what they need to do to improve.

The school works very closely and effectively with parents. Very good links begin with home visits for new pupils. Information in newsletters and other documents is presented in English and Bengali. The school recognises the importance of oral communication of information to parents who speak little English. All parents meet with staff on four occasions each year as well as whenever parents choose to book additional meetings, which is excellent provision. Many parents provide good support by assisting with the work of the school. Not all parents, however, are in the position to support their children with the work they are expected to do at home.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The leadership provided by the headteacher is outstanding. The senior management team is very effective with clearly delegated responsibilities that are monitored rigorously. Subject co-ordination is sound or better in all areas.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governing body is very effective, fulfilling its responsibilities in providing, with the headteacher, a direction for the school. The governors hold the staff to account for what is achieved.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school takes effective action in any area of school life where improvements are needed or desirable, striving constantly to improve for the benefit of the pupils. The school development plan is very good and used to monitor progress made in the education provided. Subject co-ordinators and senior managers monitor teaching and learning very effectively.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The headteacher is very effective in identifying sources of funds for the school and using them to the maximum benefit of the pupils. Very good management systems deal with problems of staff retention and recruitment. Best value principles of competition, consultation, comparison and challenge are applied well.

The school is well staffed and staff are deployed well for the benefit of the pupils. Senior managers and subject co-ordinators have non-contact time to assist with their management tasks, including monitoring. The accommodation is satisfactory overall and has recently benefited from the addition of 'School House'. The library and new ICT suite are valuable facilities for the school and well used. Some of the classrooms are only just of an adequate size for the number of pupils and this is especially so for the Nursery and Reception classes. Outdoor play space is very restricted. Resources are at least satisfactory in all subject areas, good in several, and used very well for pupils' benefit.

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 are very happy at school • Children make good progress • Behaviour is very good • Teaching is very good • The school expects pupils to work hard • The school is very well led and managed • The school helps children to become mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant issues were identified

Inspectors agree with the extremely positive views expressed by parents in their questionnaire responses, and with the positive views stated by the large number of parents who attended a meeting about the school. The parents' meeting views were in similar areas to those identified in the questionnaire.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1. Overall, pupils' achievements are very good and current standards are broadly similar to national averages.**
- Entry standards into the school, either into the Nursery or Reception classes, are well below national expectations with a majority of children at the very early stages of learning English; many pupils do not speak English at home. The very good Key Stage 1 test results in this context signify that pupils are making very effective progress in English and mathematics from the time they enter the school and are achieving very well indeed. The mathematics results were in the top five percent of schools with similar socio-economic circumstances. Standards attained by boys and girls do differ from year to year, but there is no pattern to the results and the school is of the opinion, a view supported by the inspectors, that the variations are dependent upon factors such as the proportion of each gender with special educational needs and their capabilities. An analysis of test results shows that pupils with Bangladeshi origins do less well than their white colleagues. The proportion of Bangladeshi pupils for whom English is an additional language is high, however, unlike the white pupils who virtually all speak English at home and at school. Test outcomes therefore show equally good progress for pupils from different backgrounds, but from different starting points of standards in English language. Teacher assessments in reading, writing and mathematics indicate standards that were broadly similar to the test results. In science, standards were assessed at well below average, indicating satisfactory progress in that subject over the infant years.
- In Key Stage 2 tests, taken by eleven year olds in 2001, attainment was above average overall when compared with national figures and well above the average for schools in a similar social context, with particularly high achievement in science. In mathematics, the strength in these results was the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level 4, but with just an average number attaining the higher level 5. In English, the pattern of results was similar, but more extreme, with a relatively small number gaining the higher level. In science, the strength in the results was in the very good number of pupils who attained the higher level 5. As in Key Stage 1, these results indicate that pupils are making very good progress, achieving very good results at the age of eleven. Boys' and girls' results vary from year to year but with a trend indicating underachievement by girls in mathematics and science, and for boys in English. The school is aware of these data differences, but reviews of teaching and learning have not identified any root causes. Pupils' results from various ethnic groups do vary but differences are not statistically significant. In teacher assessments, teachers underestimated the attainment levels, particularly of boys, as compared with the test results.
- In both key stages, the school's trend of improvement in results over five years is greater than the national increase in standards. This shows that the pupils are doing better year on year. The school's targets of 72 percent of Year 6 pupils attaining Level 4 or better in English in 2001 and 74 percent achieving this standard in mathematics were greatly exceeded, with 83 percent attaining level 4 or above in English and 85 percent in mathematics. Targets for 2002 are a little higher than 2001, at 74 percent and 75 percent for English and mathematics respectively. As the Year 6 cohort has a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs, these targets are challenging but realistic.

5. Although progress observed was slower through Key Stage 1, particularly in Year 1, where some temporary teachers took too little account of pupils' needs in their class management, nevertheless the standards of work at the end of Year 2 indicated continuing very good achievement over time. The pupils' very positive attitudes are a major factor contributing to this as well as the good and better teaching of many staff.
6. Children enter Nursery with a very wide range of ability, levels of maturity and previous experiences. A large number of children are either in the early stages of learning English as an additional language, or have no English at all, and several have special educational needs, in language and personal, social and emotional development. All children make very good progress, and are extremely well prepared for Year 1. By the end of Reception, many children will achieve the Early Learning Goals in personal, social and emotional development, mathematical, physical and creative development. Although about half of the children attain the nationally expected standards in communication, language and literacy, and knowledge and understanding of the world, a good number are unlikely to do so. The very good work reported in the last inspection has been maintained and further developed, indicating very good improvement.
7. In English, attainment is currently broadly average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. In the context of so many pupils having to overcome the barriers of learning English in addition to their own language, the progress all pupils make is very good as are their individual achievements. Speaking and listening skills are above average, reading and writing average, but with inconsistent and below average quality handwriting. The very good focus on pupils' literacy and oracy is the fundamental tenet upon which the success of the school is based. Mathematics standards are also broadly average in Years 2 and 6. Number work is a strength and data handling and space and shape are sound, but pupils have insufficient opportunities to use their own methods to calculate and record. Progress in mathematics is good, resulting in good achievement. Numeracy is reinforced satisfactorily in several subjects, and assists in the improvement in pupils' skills in using and applying number. Pupils' attainment in science is well below average at the end of Key Stage 1 but well above average at the end of Key Stage 2. Insufficient time is used for teaching and learning science in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, the strong focus on technical language and investigative science is very helpful, so achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, and very good across Years 3 to 6. Good improvements have been made in English and mathematics and very good improvement in science since the last inspection.
8. In the foundation subjects, current standards are broadly similar to national expectations, with above average attainment in art and music. Pupils' progress is satisfactory or better in all subjects with very good achievement in art and music. In art pupils understand the need to evaluate their own and other peoples' work and talk knowledgeably about famous artists. Expert tuition in music and the 'blocks of time' used to teach the subject are the cause of success. In ICT, pupils are making good and, at times, very good progress, achieving well, but from a relatively low base point of skills. Here too, expert tuition is paying dividends for the pupils. Design and technology work is sound overall, and results in some very good projects. Pupils' skills in the use of tools, however, do not improve progressively as they move through the school. In history and geography, though achievement is satisfactory, the quality of presentation of work is not always of a sufficiently high quality. Physical education standards have been improved through the introduction of dance and several sports clubs, but high attainers are not always challenged by tasks. Religious education standards are satisfactory but the written work does not do justice to the depth of pupils' thinking. In all subjects,

progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory or better, with good or very good developments in most.

9. The very large proportion of pupils needing support with learning English make very good progress as they move through the school. Pupils stay in class for nearly all of their lessons, and are very well supported by additional adults, including bilingual classroom assistants. Vocabulary is consolidated and reinforced in many lessons. Reinforcement in speaking, reading and writing English is often very restricted out of school. Given this, the pupils' achievements in learning English at school are very good indeed.
10. Pupils on the school's register of special educational needs are well supported and make very good progress. The totally inclusive environment for learning, strong support for literacy and for pupils' personal development, and the large number of supportive adults in many lessons, result in pupils achieving very well. Not all pupils' individual education plans are always used well enough, however, to target the task or level of adult support specifically and thus ensure consistent rates of learning. Staff know the highest attainers well and provide good support, enabling them to do well, but in some classes these pupils are not extended by the work set.
11. Overall, current attainment is average at the end of the Foundation Stage and in Years 2 and 6. These outcomes with the well below average entry, large numbers of pupils for whom English is an additional language, and above average proportion with special educational needs indicate that achievement overall is very good. The good teaching, large numbers of support staff and positive attitudes of the pupils are the principal causes of this success. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection in maintaining strengths and making great improvements where weaknesses were identified.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils have **very positive attitudes** to school and their behaviour and personal development are **very good**. Attendance is **satisfactory**.
13. Pupils of all ages behave very well and respond positively to the school's strong moral and social ethos, and to teachers' calm and encouraging management of their behaviour in most lessons. Behaviour, both around the school and in lessons, is of a similar quality to that reported in the last inspection. In over three-quarters of lessons observed, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were good or better, with about four in every ten very good or excellent. In the Foundation Stage, personal, social and emotional development were very good indeed; in Key Stage 1, attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory and very good in Key Stage 2.
14. Children in the Nursery and Reception progress very quickly in this area, and show great independence in making choices and decisions. Relationships are very good, and this is reflected in children's ability to play co-operatively, and to help each other when they can. For example, bilingual children, who are more fluent in English, often translate for those who do not understand what is being said to them. The difference in the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 compared with Key Stage 2, satisfactory rather than very good respectively, is the cause of the difference in behaviour and attitudes between the two key stages.
15. Sometimes pupils can be very lively and excited in the playground but they are good-natured and respond well to staff. Pupils know the school's Golden Rules of behaviour, and are happy to comply with them. They recognise very clearly how their behaviour can affect people and

the importance of showing respect to everyone around them. Bullying is minimal and when it does occur, pupils report that it is resolved quickly and effectively, to everyone's advantage. There have been five fixed period exclusions and two permanent exclusions in the last year. These have been appropriate and were for continued serious and aggressive misbehaviour.

16. Pupils like school and learning. They want to work well and are keen to do their best. Even in lessons which are more routine in character, pupils remain attentive and this makes a very positive contribution to learning and achievement. Pupils enjoy their tasks and show very good concentration. For example, pupils in a Year 3 lesson were deeply involved in discussing an Anthony Browne book and considering the characters of Hannah and her father, and how their behaviour reflected their inner thoughts and feelings. Working in groups, they used role-play to help them empathise with the characters in the book and discussed their views very perceptively. The vast majority of pupils share resources well, and their behaviour and co-operation with others is very good.
17. Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good, and are underpinned by the emphasis the school places on encouraging their social, cultural and moral development. Pupils mix very well in lessons and at play, and there is a real sense of inclusion of all pupils within the school. An especially good example of this is the Friendship Squad of Year 6 pupils, who have a valuable supportive role in the playground. They care for other pupils, befriend those without playmates and help mediate in minor disputes. Pupils follow the very good role models provided by adults, who show mutual respect, care and courtesy in their relationships with pupils and each other. Pupils notice others' needs and show initiative, for example in opening doors for each other. Pupils of all ages are keen to be given responsibilities, both in class and around the school. They very willingly undertake a range of tasks, and carry them out with confidence and enthusiasm. The school council provides a very good opportunity for pupils to take an active part in how their school develops. Representatives take their responsibilities seriously and put forward very sensible ideas for discussion.
18. Pupils on the school's register of special educational needs are happy to work with specialist teachers. Very good provision is made to meet their specific learning, social and behavioural needs. They try very hard to listen and concentrate, and enjoy the work they do. They are respectful of each other's needs, and learn to think about their actions and the impact they have on others. In class, the attitudes and behaviour of special needs pupils are usually no different from those of their peers. Most behave very well and are very positive about the work they do. For a very small minority of pupils, who require support for their behavioural needs, levels of concentration and application to task are sometimes low. This is especially the case when pupils' individual education plans are not used to plan for their learning.
19. Racial harmony is excellent and every child is made to feel valued for his or her contribution to school life. This results from the extremely positive school ethos which promotes very effective relationships. Pupils of all races and social backgrounds are equally positive in their attitudes to work.
20. Attendance is satisfactory and only slightly below the national average. The school works very hard to resolve the problem of pupils who are taken out of school for several weeks in term time to visit their extended families abroad. The continuing efforts of the school, to reverse this trend, are met with only limited success. A minority of parents do not take account of the importance of regular attendance at school or the difficulties that arise when their children miss significant parts of the curriculum. The staff work hard to reintegrate these pupils when

they do return to school and do well to minimise the impact of the long absence on their learning. This positive feature of the school was noted in the previous inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. The overall quality of teaching is **good**.
22. In the Foundation Stage, much of the teaching and learning was very good or excellent and very good overall. In Years 1 and 2, teaching and learning varied between unsatisfactory and excellent, and were satisfactory overall. In Years 3 to 6, teaching and learning were very good overall, with a high proportion of excellent and very good lessons; weaknesses in a few lessons restricted learning. The evidence of pupils' written work and the assessment records for pupils in Years 3 to 6 provided further evidence that support these judgements.
23. The quality of teaching observed in all subject areas was satisfactory or better. In all six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage, teaching was very good overall, ranging from excellent to good. All staff, having a thorough knowledge of the Early Learning Goals, and the 'stepping stones' towards them, made teaching exciting and imaginative. In the three core subjects, teaching was good throughout the school, although in science the quality was very good in Key Stage 2 and satisfactory in Key Stage 1. In the foundation subjects, very good expert teaching in art, music and ICT resulted in very good achievements. In other areas, there were strengths and weaknesses, depending upon individual teachers and the subjects or classes taught.
24. Right from the start, in Nursery or Reception, planning focuses on the language needs of all pupils, including those who begin school in the very early stages of acquiring English or have no English. Teaching and support for these pupils with English as an additional language was very effective throughout the school and enabled them to learn effectively and achieve well. A very good whole-school emphasis on speaking and listening and the development of pupils' vocabularies results in improvements in literacy for all pupils that facilitate learning in all subjects. Good opportunities were provided in lessons for paired work so that pupils shared their learning and supported each other. Teachers promoted pupils' skills in numeracy, with good use made of mathematics in a range of subjects, particularly science, where teachers reinforced pupils' skills in recording and interpreting numerical data.
25. A recent development in the school is the establishment of 'School House', a learning support unit where pupils with a range of needs can be supported in a very pleasant and welcoming environment. In lessons observed there, the quality of teaching and learning was very good. Teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' needs and plan work that encourages progress towards their individual targets. Activities were very varied and interesting and the pace of the lessons ensured that pupils' concentration was maintained. Each activity was used to consolidate and extend pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, alongside developing social and personal skills. Teachers and learning support assistants worked together in an effective partnership to ensure that all pupils made progress. Spoken language skills were very skilfully developed through the activities.
26. When pupils with special educational needs were taught in class lessons, good individual education plans, with clear targets for improvement, were very helpful in the teaching and learning process. As a result, in literacy and numeracy lessons, pupils were well supported and made good progress. Teachers did not always make effective enough use of individual

education plans to plan short-term steps in learning, however, and these are needed to ensure consistently good progress across the curriculum.

27. It was a feature of the school that the good teacher: pupil ratio led to good quality learning. In most cases, very effective use was made of support teachers, teaching support assistants, classroom assistants and learning mentors. The needs of pupils were recognised and additional support, instruction and guidance carefully targeted for the needs of pupils in each class. Support staff were well briefed and worked with commitment. However, in a few instances, additional staff were not well deployed and their time was not efficiently used so that the learning for some groups of pupils was less effective than it could have been. Given that pupils have a well below average level of attainment on entry but leave the school with levels of attainment that compare with the national average, and very favourably with similar schools, the quality of learning in the school is good overall, and very good in the early years unit and as pupils move up the school in senior classes.
28. Several other features of teaching observed successfully promoted good learning. Effective questioning, that challenged pupils, enabled teachers to assess the areas that needed to be reinforced and to plan accordingly. Teachers' good subject knowledge was used to good effect when questioning. Lessons were almost all well prepared with a clear structure and focused range of activities. There were usually high expectations of behaviour in classes with a consistent emphasis on the school's 'Golden Rules'. Relationships between pupils and teachers and other adults in the classroom were very good and a real strength of the school. These have a positive impact on pupils' willingness to learn and persevere with their tasks. These factors create a calm and purposeful working ethos in classrooms. Teachers are alert to pupils who need additional help and plan good support for them, so that pupils' learning is effective. In the best lessons, a good pace was maintained, with effective use of resources to support learning. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson for lower attaining pupils, the range of tasks and resources used resulted in enthusiastic learning by the group as they reinforced their understanding of addition.
29. The problem of continuity between the Foundation Stage and Year 1, identified in the last inspection, has been addressed by the school with the appointment of a co-ordinator to manage this transition phase. Progress across the boundary is now satisfactory, although the change in style of teaching and learning between Reception and Year 1 is one the school is following up.
30. In those lessons which included weaknesses, and these were mostly in the classes for younger pupils and with temporary teachers, a common feature was a slow pace, resulting in lack of consistent challenge for pupils as well as missed opportunities to extend pupils' learning beyond the set task. For the most part, pupils remained on task and behaved well in these lessons. However, in a few classes, where pupils were not engaged by the tasks given to them, behaviour did deteriorate. For example, in a Year 1 science lesson, children became uninterested and restless because they had to remain on the carpet for about fifty minutes. The learning opportunities for the class diminished as the teacher's attention had to be given to dealing with behaviour problems.
31. In a few lessons, insufficient emphasis was given to the needs of higher attaining pupils so they did not learn as well as they could have. The setting of pupils in some year groups for mathematics and English, however, is very helpful in extending high attainers as well as supporting those who find the subjects more difficult. Throughout the school, insufficient use was made of the good computer facilities in classes. Balanced against this, however, was the good use made of the ICT suite, which is a comparatively new and valuable addition to the

school. The quality of marking in the foundation subjects is an area where the school has focused its attention recently, but marking remains erratic and often praises warmly where it should be constructively critical and encourage development. The standards of presentation of pupils' work was variable but, where it was unsatisfactory, it was not always commented upon by staff. So pupils were not encouraged to improve and present the work they had done to better advantage.

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

32. The curriculum offered to pupils is **very good** and overall provision for pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is **excellent**.
33. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and the school follows the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Provision meets statutory requirements with the exception of a collective act of worship on some days. The introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy has had a positive effect on standards and on the quality of the teaching. Foundation Stage staff make sure that the extremely well-planned early years curriculum is exciting and stimulating for children to give them an excellent start to school life.
34. The school makes good use of published schemes of work and National Curriculum guidance documents for each subject. Teachers are provided with clear information on the allocation of time for each subject and, with the exception of time for science at Key Stage 1, the recommendations are implemented.
35. Additional learning opportunities are provided through a comprehensive programme of extra-curricular activities. These include musical sessions such as the choir, big band and recorder groups. There are also popular sports, arts and ICT clubs. The school provides opportunities for specific groups of pupils, such as the girls' club, a board games club, and the 'one o'clock club' for Year 1 pupils. Each morning, a breakfast club enables a number of pupils to be supported. Extra-curricular activities have been extended to include parents and some have benefited from the opportunity to improve ICT skills and to sing in the choir. Their involvement is also of benefit to pupils. Within the curriculum, special focus events enhance pupils' learning, for example a Book Week, when several authors visited the school.
36. The school makes very good use of an extensive range of community links to expand and enrich the curricular opportunities of pupils. The 'Magic Me' time allows pupils to meet and talk to elderly people and gain from their friendship and experiences of life. An excellent link has been made with a merchant bank, which regularly sends staff to the school to share reading with pupils. Year 6 pupils have visited the bank. Local residents contribute to the school's work with support in history and in art through the after-school clubs. The school is close to the Geffrye Museum and the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, which are well used by the school to enrich learning, particularly in history. Pupils benefit from a wide range of cultural and social experiences as well as the academic support that such local amenities provide. Links with local schools are well developed and transfer arrangements at the end of Year 6 are well structured and supportive to pupils.
37. Effective links have been established with other institutions. The school has a long-standing link with a higher education institution concerning teacher-training programmes, and regularly

receive students on teaching practice. Placements are also regularly offered to nursery nurses in training and to young people on work experience.

38. The school is very successful in ensuring that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Very effective strategies are provided for supporting pupils with English as an additional language. The provision for pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is very good overall. Pupils' needs are carefully identified and the special needs co-ordinator works with teachers to devise good and relevant individual education plans. All special needs pupils have full and equal access to all aspects of the National Curriculum.
39. The excellent facility of 'School House' enables a supportive curriculum to be provided for small groups of pupils who might otherwise not receive support, for example those in need of nurturing but whose English as an additional language needs, or special educational needs, do not warrant additional specific help. The School House curriculum is extended into the school through initiatives such as anger management, and developing social skills and thinking skills, which has a very positive impact on the learning ethos of the school.
40. The school has worked hard to establish an atmosphere where pupils work hard, enjoy learning and are thoughtful and kind to one another. Provision for pupils' personal, health and social education is very good, with a scheme of work covering classes from the Nursery to Year 6. It is clear and comprehensive and includes issues such as health, relationships and drug awareness. All classes have a regular circle time each week where they can discuss worries or concerns and learn to respond appropriately. For example, pupils in Year 2 discussed in their circle time how it feels to have problems and how you can find help.
41. The promotion of pupils' spiritual development is supported by the strong community ethos of the school and the many shared moments in class, on visits and in whole school activities. Although the school still does not comply with statutory requirements in providing an act of collective worship each day, assemblies are nevertheless moving and enjoyable times when pupils share the joy and excitement of being part of a caring and happy community. A Foundation Stage assembly, for example, was a vibrant experience when all children shared favourite songs together. The many opportunities to explore art and express themselves through painting, drawing and sculpture also create magic moments for pupils. They are given good opportunities for reflection in lessons, and to experience pleasure and surprise at events.
42. There are clear moral and social overtones in what happens throughout the school day. Staff have clear expectations of how people will treat each other and what is expected in terms of personal responsibilities. The promotion of pupils' social and moral development is an excellent feature of the school. Staff and older pupils provide very good role models for younger pupils, which promote the perpetuation of this ethos. Pupils are expected to be helpful and to show mutual respect. Relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils of all ages, are of a very high quality.
43. Pupils' cultural development is promoted in an excellent manner, particularly through art and music. Extra-curricular activities, including school performances, encourage pupils to develop a love of the arts. The school takes every opportunity to promote confidence and self-esteem through the performing arts. There is respect for the music, traditions, and faiths of many cultures, supported by good displays around the school. Very good care is taken to involve parents in the school and their children's education - excellent measures are in place to integrate fully all members of the school community. The school prospectus is readable, both in English and the community language. Pupils' awareness of other cultures and the past culture

in Britain are promoted very well through many subjects. Theatre groups, storytellers from other cultures and music events are among the rich provision of experiences for pupils, to enable them to develop an understanding of European and other world cultures.

44. The pupils' school council meets regularly and, where possible, changes are made in school life as a result of their recommendations. Pupils are provided with opportunities to take on significant responsibilities and initiatives.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The school provides a **very good** caring environment, because the staff know the children very well and relationships throughout the school are very good. The staff also work very hard to provide good, consistently implemented, welfare policies.
46. The health and safety policy is exceptionally clear and thorough and makes sensible links with other school policies, including that for physical education. The school takes safety very seriously, carrying out risk assessments as needed. They have made changes as a result, such as carrying hot drinks about the school in thermos flasks instead of cups. There are sensible, effective procedures to report any concerns. The medical room is small and barely adequate but the staff employed to deal with medical problems are well qualified. Further staff are soon to be trained in first aid.
47. Child protection systems are very good. The headteacher has up-to-date knowledge, all staff are trained and aware of systems to be followed. The register is well maintained.
48. The school has very good behaviour and anti-bullying policies. Rare incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Expected behaviour is outlined in the clearly posted 'Golden Rules'. Supervision of the pupils is correspondingly very good. For example, staff are very active in ensuring that they keep pupils in sight at playtimes and as they move around the building. They are also consistent in ensuring that the Golden Rules are kept.
49. Identification of pupils in need of extra care and support is very good. Pupils who need such support are selected through the use of well-thought-out referral systems. A team of well-qualified staff assist in a number of ways. For example, much extra teaching or classroom assistant help for pupils with special learning needs is provided in the classroom. Those requiring extra English teaching are provided with good vocabulary support and bilingual instruction. The most innovative support is provided by the School House, where pupils receive excellent care. Here pupils with a variety of needs are placed on a group programme that addresses their physical, emotional and learning needs. Younger pupils, for example, join a morning nurture group for half a term. In this small group they concentrate on learning and playing together. Pupils enjoy a daily routine of taking turns to provide toast for the group. Very clear job descriptions ensure that everyone in School House understands their role, including staff with responsibility for liaising with parents and other agencies. They ensure that a complete record is built up of the child's needs and that all concerned are kept informed.
50. Very good records are kept of good and bad behaviour of all pupils. Bad behaviour results in clear and effective sanctions. The emphasis is generally, however, on positive reinforcement and this has good results. Certificates are awarded in assembly. Social development is also recorded in the annual reports to parents.

51. Records of academic progress are good. Computer software is used to track test results as pupils move through the school. It is used effectively to predict future targets in the annual end of Year 2 and Year 6 national tests in English and mathematics. Because of this, teachers are able to tailor planning to match pupil needs. This year, teachers have also begun to analyse test results so they can adjust their teaching to cover any weaker areas or groups of pupils identified as needing attention.
52. Assessment in most subjects is conscientious and thorough with pupils' achievements being recorded on checklists. Assessment in English is particularly good, with reading and writing sampled by senior staff to ensure that pupils are working at the correct levels. Other subjects are monitored, but less rigorously, and there are plans to develop mathematics and science assessment further. Assessment procedures for pupils in the early stages of language acquisition are good. Day-by-day assessment of the progress made by all pupils for whom English is an additional language could improve further by being more specific.
53. Individual pupil guidance on their progress is satisfactory and is improving. Group targets are regularly set for English and the marking of work clearly reflects a focus on helping the pupils to achieve their targets. Similar targets are being introduced in mathematics. Teachers are not yet fully proficient at assessing the National Curriculum level at which a child is working in relevant subjects or at explaining to pupils how they might achieve their targets. However, their ability to set and mark to specific level-related targets is improving. Further training sessions for teachers to practise levelling work are planned.
54. Overall, care of pupils continues to be a strength of the school and assessment of pupils' academic progress has improved considerably since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

55. The school works **very closely** and effectively with parents.
56. Parents are very appreciative of many aspects of the school, and their good attendance at the parents' meeting and high return rate of questionnaires are evidence of their strong support of the school. Inspectors support the very positive views of parents about the school. A few parents expressed concern about the quality of information on their children's progress and the ability of the school to work closely with parents. Inspectors did not agree with the concerns and found those to be very positive areas of the school's work. Some parents expressed concern about homework. Inspectors found that the use of homework through the school was satisfactory, but with some inconsistencies in practice.
57. The school places a very high priority on maintaining a productive partnership with parents. Four parents' meetings each year set the scene for the work to be done in the class and keep parents informed about their child's progress. This is excellent provision. Parents receive regular information about routine matters through newsletters which, like many other documents produced by the school, have items in two languages, recognising the main two cultures in the school. Also recognising the language limitations of some parents, the school places very sensible emphasis on oral communication. For example, annual reports are presented to parents at the summer term parents' consultation and the content discussed, so that all parents have a good understanding of the progress their children are making. The report identifies some targets for the coming year although the quality and specific nature of

the targets is variable. The school also provides, from time to time, more detailed information on areas of the curriculum to involve and inform parents.

58. Information for new parents is clear and helpful. Induction meetings for new parents and pupils are well planned and make a valuable contribution to the successful introduction of new pupils into the school. Home visits are also an important part of the procedure. All information for parents is well displayed in the school and staff make themselves available to share information with parents, personally, where this would be helpful. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report for parents are informative and the annual report now complies fully with legal requirements, which was not the case at the last inspection.
59. A very large number of parents help in school on a regular or occasional basis, and their contribution is greatly valued. The professional expertise of some parents has been very well utilised, for example in the art club which is run by two parents, and in the organisation of the very successful Book Week. Overall, the impact of parents on the work of the school is very good. Less positive, however, is the help provided by some parents at home to support their child's learning, which is satisfactory overall but ranges from very good to minimal. Great difficulties are faced by some parents who have themselves only the very early stages of English language to help their children. The school recognises this and provides good support for all pupils within the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. The overall provision of leadership and management is **excellent**.
61. The headteacher has created a very special ethos within the school in which all individuals are highly valued and encouraged to work hard, respect each other and do well. This applies equally to pupils and staff. All adults in the school share the belief of the headteacher that the school makes a difference in pupils' lives and must equip them for the next stage of their education. This strong and inspiring leadership, and the support the headteacher secures from staff, governors and parents has continued and improved since the last inspection. The headteacher's management of the school is excellent. She has a clear vision of what needs to be done and how it can be achieved. Supportive and effective line management structures are in place. Following rigorous monitoring, very good support is given to those staff who need it. Subject co-ordinators, as well as senior managers, monitor the quality of teaching and learning and put in hand changes wherever weaknesses are identified. The deputy headteacher and other key staff provide very good and effective support for the headteacher, sharing with her the monitoring of standards achieved by pupils, and rigorously scrutinising lesson planning. The capacity for further improvement is very good under the current leadership.
62. The school's aims and the very good focus on equality of opportunity are reflected strongly in all aspects of school life and especially in the way in which the school is led and managed. The school fulfils an important role within the community around Columbia Road, uniting the various ethnic groups. The aim to educate the whole child, to instil in each a sense of worth and a respect for others, is achieved with the highest degree of success. Since the last inspection, the school has made very good improvement, maintaining areas of strength and remedying areas of concern.
63. Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and work very well with the headteacher. They have a programme of formal visits but also make regular informal

visits. They participate in training to develop their skills and contribute much to the school's strong links with the local community. The role of the governing body is developing well within the school and they are increasingly involved in the budget and financial planning, as well as participating in discussions relating to the future development of the school management plan. Governors have a clear understanding of their role, not interfering with the day-by-day management of the school, but holding staff to account for what is achieved. They ensure that the direction for the school is what they believe to be appropriate.

64. The school development plan is very comprehensive and clear, and understood by staff and governors. The plan is a whole-school document to which all staff contribute suggestions, identifying school targets for action and success criteria. Working on a rolling cycle, the plan is monitored, checked and extended each year so that it is under constant review, reflecting the changing needs and priorities of the school. It provides a very good management tool for the school. Performance management is fully in place with an appropriate policy and procedures. The management plan supports this process.
65. The school budget is carefully managed. It is based on priorities identified by the headteacher in conjunction with the senior management team and staff, and fully supported by the governors. Finances and resources are very well managed. The headteacher shows a special ability to identify and access a range of funds to support and promote important developments in the school. The recent equipping of the ICT suite is one example, as is additional funding for the arts recently achieved. The excellent conversion of the School House has been possible through the securing of Excellence in Cities funding. Finance and administration matters are dealt with efficiently and very capably. A number of issues were identified in the recent finances audit report but, when carefully analysed by the school in conjunction with the local authority, the issues were reduced to a small number, and these have now been addressed in full. The school senior managers are fully aware of the principles of best value and apply them well in the day-by-day work of the school, as well as in long term planning. Performance is compared with that at other schools, the school staff challenge themselves to do better, there is wide consultation, and competition is used to achieve the most effective and efficient services. An example of best value is seen in the way the needs of the pupils and community are considered in curriculum planning and all involved in the school community are consulted over major issues.
66. The school is well staffed. Very good use is made of funding to provide the support needed to raise attainment levels for pupils in the school. The headteacher and governors have worked very well to manage the difficulties in recruiting good teaching staff. All new staff, whether newly qualified or temporary teachers appointed from agencies, are closely monitored by the headteacher. The induction arrangements for newly qualified teachers are very well managed and closely tied with the formal induction programme offered by the local education authority. Development is monitored on a half-term programme with regular sessions organised with mentors. Newly qualified staff are fully integrated and encouraged to participate fully in school life. There is in place a robust, comprehensive and very well-managed programme of in-service training available to all staff which ensures that they have the opportunity to develop curricular knowledge and skills. There is a very positive attitude in the school to in-service training.
67. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and has recently benefited from the addition of the School House. The library and new ICT suite are valuable facilities for the school and well used. Some of the classrooms are only just of an adequate size for the number of pupils and this is especially so for the Nursery and Reception classes. Outdoor play space is very limited.

This gives rise to fewer problems than might be expected because of the careful planning of play time, good staff supervision and the good behaviour of pupils. The school's premises and facilities are very well looked after and maintained. Resources are at least satisfactory in all subject areas and good in art, religious education and mathematics and in the Foundation Stage. Available resources, both within and outside the school, are very well used to support pupils' learning.

68. Leadership and management of provision for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language are very good. Staff are well informed, knowledgeable, and work very effectively together for the benefit of these pupils. The fully inclusive principles, on which all aspects of school life are based, are seen in practice. The recommendations of the new code of practice for pupils with special educational needs have been carefully implemented. Regular special needs 'up-dates' and in-service training are provided for colleagues to ensure that they understand all pupils' needs. The evaluation of the work of classroom learning assistants, however, for example in carrying out the requirements of individual education plans, is less effective than that of teaching staff in this role. Teaching and learning support assistants are deployed very well, however, to support the many pupils for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs.
69. The cost per pupil for education at Columbia is high. However, pupils make very good progress resulting in average attainment or better, attitudes and behaviour are very good, teaching is good, the curriculum very good, the ethos of the school excellent and the leadership and management excellent. The very high quality of the provision for all pupils and the positive outcomes they achieve indicate that the school provides very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors, headteacher and staff should ensure that the following areas are included in the school's improvement planning:

- Improve the quality of teaching in some lessons, ensuring that:
 - the pace of work is increased with less teacher talk, particularly in the infants
 - increased use is made of class-based computers in lessons in both key stages, and
 - the quality of marking is improved in both key stages

Minor weaknesses, which the governors, headteacher and staff nevertheless should consider including in their improvement planning.

- Insufficient demands are made of high-attaining pupils in a few lessons
- Inconsistent approaches, from a few additional staff in classrooms, result in less effective learning for some groups of pupils
- Inconsistencies in teaching handwriting result in unsatisfactory standards for some pupils
- Insufficient opportunities for pupils to use their own methods of recording in maths and not enough emphasis on applying mathematics in relevant and interesting contexts
- Assessment and target-setting are not consistently applied in all foundation subjects
- A daily collective act of worship does not take place.

ADDITIONAL AREAS, SELECTED BY OFSTED, INSPECTED IN THE SCHOOL

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language

70. The overall provision is **very good**.
71. Compared to other schools, a very large proportion of pupils need support with learning English. About three-quarters of pupils are on the register of those requiring support and almost a quarter of these are at the early stages of language acquisition. The school's assessment records and National Curriculum tests show that staff are very successful indeed in enabling pupils to progress.
72. Their success is due to the very effective implementation of the school policy that teaches through immersion. The pupils stay in class for nearly all of their lessons, doing the same work as the others, but are supported by extra teachers and classroom assistants. Bilingual support staff are very helpful to the pupils. Instruction is given in the mother tongue where necessary and pupils are encouraged to speak English whenever possible. Teachers and other staff are adept at speaking clearly and using repetition, so that vocabulary is quickly consolidated. In a Year 3 lesson observed, for example, teachers team-taught an excellent English lesson. One teacher sat on the carpet supporting pupils with the use of flash cards during whole-class word work. This enabled pupils to have the confidence to join in the class activity, ordering sentences so that they made sense.
73. On entry to Columbia, many pupils have no English at all and a large number of families converse only in the language of the parents at home. Reinforcement in speaking, reading and writing English is therefore often very restricted out of school. In this context, the pupils' achievements in learning English at school are very good indeed. Monitoring of whole school achievement in this area is excellent, with careful records being kept of pupils' progress. The school has set itself targets to exceed its already very good record, by moving pupils through the language stages even more quickly. Annual assessments are very good. Day-to-day assessments are carefully kept by teachers and support staff but these do not relate sufficiently to the expected levels and so it is harder to monitor daily progress.
74. Teaching of English as an additional language is very good and most effectively managed by the headteacher and deputy. They utilise grants provided for pupils who need language support so they can deploy extra staff in all classes. This makes possible the inclusive, effective methods described.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

85

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

31

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	20	29	21	4	1	0
Percentage	12	24	34	25	5	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	35	376
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	206

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	104

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	298

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	29	26	55

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	24	29
	Girls	22	25	24
	Total	46	49	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (60)	89 (56)	96 (78)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	26	24
	Girls	21	23	22
	Total	45	49	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82 (60)	89 (82)	84 (75)
	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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	24	16	40

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	19	23
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	33	34	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (76)	85 (69)	95 (88)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	12	16
	Girls	14	13	12
	Total	25	25	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	63 (35)	63 (47)	72 (63)
	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	4
Black – African heritage	7
Black – other	8
Indian	7
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	202
Chinese	0
White	94
Any other minority ethnic group	3

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	1
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		1
Chinese		
White	4	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	23.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16
Average class size	26.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	418

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50
Number of pupils per FTE adult	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	1,523,000
Total expenditure	1,526,000
Expenditure per pupil	3,740
Balance brought forward from previous year	15,000
Balance carried forward to next year	12,000

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	26
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	6
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	426
Number of questionnaires returned	228

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	22	1	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	58	34	5	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	65	30	3	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	38	13	3	1
The teaching is good.	66	28	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	40	9	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	28	6	2	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	24	4	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	52	31	10	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	65	28	3	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	27	4	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62	23	7	1	7

Other issues raised by parents

Ninety-one parents attended the meeting for parents and all expressed their satisfaction with the education the school provides. The leadership provided by the headteacher was said to be very strong and effective and the school had made great improvements since the last inspection. The Bangladeshi, white and other groups spoke very favourably about the school community and how each individual child was cared for very well.

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

The overall provision for children in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception Classes) is **excellent**

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management of the early years unit
- Very good teaching
- Very good progress for all groups of pupils
- Excellent learning environment which helps children to learn and achieve very well

Areas for improvement

No significant areas

75. The early years unit is very well managed and organised, and the teamwork of all staff in the unit is highly effective in ensuring that all children's needs are met. Teaching in all six areas of learning is very good overall, ranging from excellent to good. All staff have a thorough knowledge of the Early Learning Goals, and the stepping-stones towards them, and this is reflected in the planned provision for children, which is exciting, stimulating and imaginative. All teaching and support staff know the children very well, and use observations and assessments most effectively so that children progress at an appropriate rate. Parents and carers are supportive and are encouraged to be involved with their child's learning, for example through initial home visits by early years staff, who give practical ideas for play, and by curriculum meetings held in school. This excellent provision represents very good improvement on what was already a strength in the last report.
76. The early years unit currently has 110 children, of whom 60 are in the Reception classes, and the rest attend Nursery either full or part-time. These children enter Nursery with a very wide range of ability, levels of maturity and previous experiences but are generally of well below average attainment. A large number of children come from homes where English is not the first language, and are either in the early stages of learning English as an additional language, or have no English at all. In addition, several children have identified special educational needs, particularly in relation to language development and personal, social and emotional development. As they move through the Foundation Stage, all children make very good progress, and are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education. By the end of Reception, most children will achieve the Early Learning Goals in personal, social and emotional development, mathematical, physical and creative development. Although about half of the children attain the nationally expected standards in communication, language and literacy, and knowledge and understanding of the world, a good number are unlikely to do so.

Personal, social and emotional development

77. Many children have very limited skills in this area when they come to the Nursery. A few children separate easily from their parents and carers, but some take a considerable amount of time to settle into school life. Staff in both Nursery and Reception place very strong emphasis on developing children's confidence and self-esteem, through encouragement and praise, and by providing as much adult support as possible. Children make very good progress in this area,

and show great independence in making choices and decisions, and know how to use resources responsibly. Relationships between adults and children, and children themselves, are very good. This is reflected in children's ability to play co-operatively, and to help each other when they can. For example, bilingual children, who are more fluent in English, often translate for those who do not understand what is being said to them. All children clearly understand the routines and organisation of the unit, and carry out responsibilities, such as tidying up, very sensibly. They are encouraged to show their feelings, for example excitement and delight at making a model of London Bridge, and understand that discussion, teamwork and problem solving are important elements of the task.

Communication, language and literacy

78. Most children's language skills are very limited when they join the Nursery. Very effective use is made of multilingual assistants who ensure that all children have equal access to activities, by translating instructions and ideas into, for example, Bengali. This was particularly important when the staff performed 'On The Way Home' at an assembly. All children were able to share the fun and humour of the story. Staff take every opportunity in planned and spontaneous activities to encourage children to speak and communicate with adults and each other. Literacy activities are well matched to children's ages and stages of development, particularly when Reception children have a designated group time at the beginning of the day. For example, chosen texts are relevant, appropriate and interesting, and link with the learning intentions in all areas. 'Bears in the Night' reinforced mathematical language of position, as well as allowing children to show delight in making the sound of the owl at the top of Spook Hill. About three-quarters of the children know the sounds that letters make, and can apply this knowledge when looking at new words and texts. Higher attainers read simple words, for example, 'on' 'like' 'at' 'can' 'you'. Children clearly enjoy writing. They understand the purpose of it because adults explain what they themselves are writing and why. The early years unit is very well set out, and there is a well-equipped writing area in each section. Adults are deployed very effectively to encourage children to write/make books, often based on stories which they have heard. Records of children's writing show that very good progress is made over time, and most children have the confidence to write independently with some recognisable words by the time they enter Year 1.

Mathematical development

79. Children's mathematical skills are developed very well with good emphasis on practical activities, games and puzzles. Staff have created an environment where mathematical concepts are reflected in attractive and meaningful displays. For example, teddy bears are placed 'over' 'under' 'next to' other objects, and clearly labelled with appropriate vocabulary. Language of position was effectively reinforced in a Reception session where 'squirrel' hid 'teddy's' bath-time ducks. Children were enthralled by the puppets, and demonstrated their acquisition of new vocabulary by placing their own little animals in the right places according to instructions. Lower attaining children who were unsure of what to do, watched others to help them get the right position. Adults encourage children to count whenever there is an opportunity. Planning for mathematical development ensures that children have a very firm foundation for future work. For example, they understand the importance of estimating before measuring. The height of 'the giant' was measured using pens and cubes, and children noted the differences when using non-standard units.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

80. Many children have very limited knowledge of the world when they start in the Nursery. Through very good teaching, and well-thought-out themes and activities, children develop their observational skills and become progressively more curious about how things work. For

example, children in the Nursery were surprised that a magnet underneath could control an object on top of a tray. There are collections of interesting objects for children to explore, such as shells and rocks, and staff use children's interest well to promote language development. Children use computers confidently and frequently. They have free access to construction equipment, both commercial sets and reclaimed materials. They develop a good understanding of how to build, and to join material together, whether in a three-dimensional model or in making a book. The outdoor area is used very well to extend children's learning about the environment. They paint white parking lines on the tarmac, for example, and consult maps when 'driving' their wheeled toys.

Physical development

81. Children's physical development is promoted very well through a wide range of planned outdoor and indoor activities. Children make very good progress. They have regular access to climbing and balancing equipment, both in their own secure area outside and in the school hall. Reception children have a good understanding of the need to warm up before vigorous physical activity, and to cool down afterwards. Both boys and girls show equal enthusiasm for wheeled toys and construction activities. Children use scissors carefully, and enjoy the new challenges of a range of tools and equipment. For example, children who have not been in the Nursery very long were tapping shapes onto boards using thick pins and a hammer. They learned, the hard way, that trying to do it too fast, meant that sometimes the hammer hits the hand instead of the pin!

Creative development

82. Children have many opportunities to express themselves through art, music and imaginative play and make very good progress. Very attractive displays reflect a variety of techniques, such as observational drawings of snails, or collages where children have explored line and tone in the environment. Imaginative play is a strong feature in the unit. Role-play areas are well equipped, and staff join in when appropriate to retell or extend stories. Children enjoy small world activities, such as playing with toy lizards or wild animals. They have specialist music sessions in the hall, as well as more spontaneous opportunities to play instruments and sing in class.

ENGLISH

The overall provision is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good development of speaking and listening skills throughout the school
- Very good teaching of reading skills; the school fosters a love of reading in pupils
- Very rich language environment created promotes pupils' learning of English most effectively
- Very good leadership and management with a relevant curriculum suited to the needs of all pupils

Areas for improvement

- Below average and inconsistent standards of pupils' handwriting throughout the school

83. Many pupils begin at the school with very low skills in English; a high proportion only learn to speak English when they join the school. As a result of the very good provision for teaching English and the school's focus on the development of language through all subjects, pupils achieve very well on their starting levels. In comparison with pupils from schools in a similar

context, national test results for both seven and eleven-year-olds at Columbia were well above average. When compared with all schools nationally, seven year-olds' results were well below average in reading but average in writing. Eleven-year-olds attained below average results in English.

84. In the current Year 2 and Year 6 classes, pupils attain average standards overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards of work were found to be below average. The school's determined approach to creating a language rich environment is very effective. The curriculum is extremely relevant to the needs of the pupils because it provides them with the language skills that are the tools for learning in all subjects. Pupils make very good progress. The strengths in standards are in speaking and listening which are above average. Standards in reading and writing are broadly average. Standards in handwriting are inconsistent and generally below average.
85. The overriding strength in most lessons observed was the development of pupils' spoken language skills and the emphasis on learning new vocabulary. Teachers plan lessons to start from the vocabulary needed, so that pupils can talk easily about their learning. Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to talk to each other and with adults to reinforce new words and language. These enabled teachers to assess learning. In an excellent lesson in Year 3, pupils discussed the learning intention for the lesson, talking about the meaning of the word "structured" in relation to how diaries are compiled. The teacher asked many pupils to offer their suggestions to 'unpick' the learning intention. Good attention was paid to pupils of all abilities, so that everyone was armed with appropriate language to help them work and succeed. The support teacher and learning assistant worked in excellent partnership with the teacher. The level of discussion between adults and pupils was very high, and encouraged pupils' excellent progress. In science lessons observed, there was also a very good focus on oracy and learning new vocabulary. Support teachers and other staff were involved in explaining terminology and technical language that helped pupils' understanding, giving them full access to the science curriculum. The presence of extra staff in lessons means that pupils receive much more individual attention than is usual, and this is a key factor in the very good development of their speaking skills.
86. Listening skills are equally well developed. Pupils are taught to listen well so that they can use new language in their own spoken contributions. Pupils show great respect for each other, and listening is one of the essential elements taught to pupils in developing respectful attitudes. Those pupils who are in the early stages of learning English are confident that their contributions will be listened to. In return, the listeners offer correction and explanation in the context of improving and assisting the speaker. In almost all lessons, pupils' very good listening was a key feature of their very positive attitudes to learning. In the few lessons in Key Stage 1 where attitudes and behaviour were only satisfactory, pupils did not listen well, but because of teaching weaknesses.
87. In response to past test results and teacher assessments, the school has placed very appropriate emphasis on the development of writing and, as a result, standards have risen. Grammar and punctuation are taught well and effective use is made of the National Literacy Strategy objectives to promote good learning. Additional literacy support is provided for those pupils who need extra help to attain expected levels. Pupils have opportunities to write for varying audiences and for a variety of purposes. Writing skills are developed through all subjects of the curriculum, and skills taught in English lessons are applied well in other subjects. For example, instructional writing in English is taught in conjunction with design and food technology activities. In general, the best improvement in writing has been made in pupils'

creative writing skills because there has been very good emphasis on the development of story planning, writing and redrafting. During the inspection, very good evidence was seen of the progression from year to year of pupils' skills in writing stories. Year 3 pupils worked together well to edit a piece of work and improve the grammar and language. By Year 6, pupils write from the viewpoints of others, use debating language to present an argument or point of view, and create poetry in many styles. Given the well below average skills in English on entry, the proportion of pupils who are now attaining levels in writing that are in line with national expectations clearly signifies the very good achievements being made. The school has an agreed handwriting scheme and the expectation of pupils is that they will present their work well in all subjects. However, handwriting is often untidy, and poor presentation detracts from pupils' good work. Cursive script is used intermittently and many pupils have incorrect grips, or position their books and papers awkwardly. The negative impact this has on the standards achieved is greatest for the school's highest attaining pupils. They produce highly imaginative work that is grammatically correct and well punctuated but often very untidily presented, without cursive handwriting.

88. Reading is given a very high profile in the school and is a continuing strength since the last inspection. The school fosters a real love of reading in pupils. They were engrossed in books during reading sessions. They shared books with each other, talking about the things they were finding out, such as background to the plot and characters. Higher-attaining readers were helpfully directed by teachers in their choice of reading material to ensure that they gained a broad experience of genres. One boy talked avidly about the 'classics' he was reading. The school works in partnership with a bank, whose employees listen to pupils reading on a weekly basis. This is an excellent experience for the adults and pupils alike. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the progress they have made over time and how much they enjoy reading to visitors. A recent, very well-organised book week at the school, featuring famous authors, was also highly appreciated by pupils and parents.
89. The overall quality of teaching observed was good, with some excellent lessons. The main strength is a common recognition of how important it is for pupils to understand new vocabulary and language devices and have regular opportunities to use their new knowledge. In lessons where teaching was graded as excellent, the difference was made by the enthusiasm of the teacher and the real enjoyment for learning encouraged in pupils. In an infant lesson, working with a top ability set, the teacher demonstrated excellently how to read with expression. Pupils imitated this in their own renditions of the story, working with puppets and performing for the whole-class plenary. Pupils were spellbound and made excellent progress. In the lessons where teaching and learning were graded as satisfactory, the majority being in Key Stage 1, the key weaknesses were the length of time that teachers spent talking to pupils, causing lapses in their concentration, missed opportunities to correct and improve pupils' spelling, despite this being a focus for teacher assessment, and the unsatisfactory assistance provided by support staff in group work.
90. The subject is led and managed very well. Lessons are monitored very effectively, enabling standards to be carefully assessed. The emphasis is on further improvement using models of excellent practice in teaching and learning. Very good support is provided for all staff, which is particularly valuable for all those new to the school. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection and the capacity for further improvements in the subject is very good.

MATHEMATICS

The overall provision is **good**

Strengths

- Above average test results in 2001 at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, indicating very good achievement
- Very positive pupil attitudes
- Good teaching with some very good aspects
- Very good leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient opportunities are provided in junior classes for pupils to calculate and record using their own methods and to use mathematics in real life situations
- Marking of work in most classes is not helpful

91. Pupils did very well in the 2001 national tests in mathematics. Results at the end of Year 2 were above average. They were very high when compared with schools judged to have a similar intake of pupils. The end of Year 6 results were also above average and well above those in similar schools. There has been a general trend of improvement in tests at both ages over the last few years. Differences between boys and girls are not significant and pupils from different racial backgrounds score equally well. The proportion of children achieving the above average level 5 at age eleven has, however, decreased over the last three years.
92. Inspection evidence indicates that current standards at age seven and eleven are in line with average standards in most of the mathematical curriculum. This is not as good as last year's test results but the pupils in these classes this year have a higher proportion of pupils with special needs and pupils at the early stages of English language acquisition. The downward trend in the proportion of pupils working at level 5 continues. Work in books shows that number is good throughout the school and pupils are confident at manipulating numbers and calculating mentally. Data handling and space and shape are sound. Year 6 pupils, for example, were seen using their skills to draw and interpret pie charts. Pupils in junior classes, however, are not given enough opportunities to use their own methods to calculate and record. As a result they rely too heavily on trying to recall methods that they have been taught and do not always understand what they are doing.
93. Pupils' achievements overall, considering their well below average prior learning and the effects of absence due to long holidays, are good in both the infant and junior stages. The staff have worked very hard to implement numeracy initiatives and the daily mathematics lessons are very effective. A bilingual language instructor is used very successfully to support those pupils who are not fluent in English and they make good progress.
94. Pupils enjoy mathematics and their attitudes to the subject are very good. They work well independently. This is because the teachers are enthusiastic and because of the good school ethos of support and commitment. Teaching in infant classes is consistently good. Overall in the junior classes it is also good. Lessons observed in these classes ranged from excellent to unsatisfactory.
95. Planning based on national guidance is used to underpin lessons to good effect. The three-part lesson structure is used well, so lessons flow and pace is usually good. The role of the support teacher or assistant is not always clearly explained and consequently these staff are not always used as well as they might be. In the best lessons they supported groups quietly during the whole class session. They ensured that they understood the task and offered

encouragement. There is a lot of solid teaching using worksheets or textbooks and necessary repetition to ensure understanding although this can sometimes make lessons a little dull. Not enough use is made of the school environment to set real life problems or open-ended investigations that will engage interest. Teachers are very well prepared and go to some trouble to create mathematics resources, such as laminated wipe clean number charts. Most work seen was well matched to the needs of different pupils, but pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and in less successful lessons tasks were not well chosen to support learning. For example, higher attaining pupils could not progress because they had not been taught all the skills that they needed.

96. In the best lessons seen, pupils were encouraged to talk to each other; they gained thinking time and practised their speaking skills. Small whiteboards were used well so that pupils could practise quick calculations and teachers could assess the whole class at a glance. Mathematics targets are being introduced for pupils and, in the best teaching, marking related clearly to these targets so that pupils knew exactly what to do next. In weaker teaching, marking was only a series of ticks, without helpful comments to guide pupils on how to improve their performance.
97. Assessment overall in mathematics has improved and is good overall. Pupils' achievements are tracked well and records of predictions are used to set targets for the next year. Teachers keep detailed checklists that show all the objectives achieved by each pupil over the course of lessons. It is a good system and teachers are becoming more proficient at assessing pupils at the right level.
98. The mathematics curriculum is sound, based on a good, clear policy. Mathematical vocabulary is reinforced well but, because of the limited opportunities for pupils' own recording, and the overuse of worksheets, links with literacy are limited. Good use was made of computers by Year 6 classes, generating colourful pie charts, but there is not enough similar information technology work built into mathematics lessons. Some opportunities are made to teach mathematics in other subjects. Year 3 pupils, for example, had done some very detailed mathematical graphs in their geography study of settlements. Specific opportunities for teaching numeracy are not yet sufficiently planned, however, in other subjects.
99. Mathematics is very well led and managed. Several staff are very good role models to show good practice in teaching and learning. Resources have been overhauled and updated and new textbooks have been purchased. Monitoring is good as work is sampled and lessons have been observed. Findings are carefully and systematically recorded and fed back to the teachers. The system is not yet developed to the point where checks are made to ensure that teaching targets based on these findings have been met. Provision for mathematics has improved considerably since the last report, because of the hard work of the staff, and clear direction for the subject.

SCIENCE

The overall provision is **very good**

Strengths

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of experimental and investigative science in junior classes, with well above average national test results for the past three years
- Very good teaching and learning in junior classes

- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning science
- Very good leadership and management of science

Areas for improvement

- Weaknesses in teaching and learning, mainly in infant classes
 - The amount and quality of written work in Years 1 and 2, and the amount of time allocated to the subject
 - Marking of pupils' work is often not helpful
 - The needs of pupils of all abilities are not catered for in a few lessons
100. Pupils enter the school with very limited scientific knowledge and understanding. Results were well below average in the 2001 teacher assessments at age seven, but average when compared with similar schools. At the age of eleven, however, standards in the end of key stage national tests have been well above average for the past three years. When the 2001 pupils' results are compared with those of similar schools, they are in the top five percent nationally, an excellent achievement. Pupils did equally well at the expected level 4 and the higher level 5, and there were no significant differences between boys' and girls' results. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds did equally well.
101. Current standards in Key Stage 1 are well below average, but with some good work from individuals. Pupils' achievements, considering their language skills and prior learning, are satisfactory overall across the three content areas of National Curriculum science. Too few records are kept of work, however, and investigative approaches are not the strength they are in Key Stage 2. There is evidence to suggest that the amount of curriculum time spent on science in Years 1 and 2 is not high enough, restricting pupils' attainment. At the end of Key Stage 2, current standards are above average, with a higher proportion of pupils who find learning difficult than last year, and pupils' achievements are very good. The quality of teaching, curriculum planning with a strong focus on experimental and investigative work, and a school ethos where effort and commitment are highly valued, all contribute to this success. Pupils use technical language carefully, showing good understanding of terms such as habitat, conductors and insulators, and 'variables' when discussing fair tests.
102. Pupils have very positive approaches to learning, showing a willingness to listen and to discuss points co-operatively with their peers. They work well by themselves and their behaviour is usually very good.
103. The quality of teaching observed was good overall; it was satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and very good in Key Stage 2. Teachers' planning was generally very effective and lessons were carefully structured with 'beginnings, middles and ends'. Activities were usually appropriate and interesting, and helped pupils to make progress in their learning. Clear learning intentions, using technical scientific language, were shared with the pupils in most lessons. For example, in a Year 6 class, the learning intention was for pupils 'to carry out a scientific investigation in an environmental context' focusing, in that particular lesson, on explaining results, and this was made very clear to pupils. Objectives were often revisited in the final minutes of lessons to find out what progress had been made. Several staff have great 'presence' in the classroom, gaining pupils' respect as a result of their good communication skills and efforts to help them learn. These staff find the management of pupils' behaviour relatively easy and maintain a very good pace to learning. Pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, make similarly good progress to other colleagues in the class, usually because of the presence of supporting adults. In several lessons, support teachers and learning

support assistants worked very closely with the class teacher to ensure that individuals and groups received the help they needed to progress. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, where the pupils were revising their knowledge of electricity before moving on to new work, the class teacher taught the middle and low attainers, ably supported by a bilingual learning support assistant, whilst the support teacher developed the high attainers' understanding. The lower attainers were given sufficient time and support to gain a very good understanding of the electrical contacts on batteries and bulbs through practical work, whilst those who found this work easy also learnt how to represent their circuits with circuit diagrams. Learning and progress were very good indeed.

104. Where lessons were less effective, and occasionally unsatisfactory, teachers spoke for too long, resulting in fidgety pupils who lost interest. Expectations were too low and the pace of work was slow. In group work, targets for what should be completed were unclear and time-scales were not set. Occasionally, support staff were not as effective as they could be in helping the full range of pupils present to make progress. The written work of the older classes was usually thoroughly marked. In general, however, the marking of pupils' work is an area of weakness. Quite a lot of work is merely ticked, with no constructive comments on how to improve. Few comments were made about the quality of presentation even when this was poor. Low attainers' work is also unfinished in some books and folders.
105. National guidance on how to teach science provides a good basis for the curriculum, with a very effective emphasis on learning how to investigate scientifically. This experimental work helps pupils understand difficult ideas, such as learning how surface area affects the rate of evaporation. Too little use is made of ICT in science. Good end of topic assessments are used and a more consistent approach is planned using recent published materials. At the end of a year, each pupil's attainment is gauged and progress tracked from year to year. This is very good practice, enabling the co-ordinator to identify issues early in a key stage. Resources are good, well organised and used to good effect to help learning. Leadership and management of the subject are very good indeed. Lessons and work are scrutinised and advice provided on any changes that are necessary. Areas for improvement have been identified and are being worked on, including marking, the quality of written work in Key Stage 1, and working to ensure that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds do well.
106. Since the last inspection, standards and teaching have improved in both key stages. Oral work, independent learning and learning intentions for lessons are now all strengths, although weaknesses five years ago. Very good progress has been made, with the potential for further improvement as known weaknesses are tackled.

ART AND DESIGN

The overall provision is **very good**.

Strengths

- Above average quality of pupils' work
- A rich variety of experiences
- Very good management of the subject

Areas for improvement

No significant areas

107. Standards in art are above average for pupils at the ages of seven and eleven. This reflects very good improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged to be below average. Displays around the school and pupils' own portfolios show a rich variety of experiences incorporating all elements of the curriculum very effectively. By the age of seven, pupils know about different printing techniques, have a good understanding of colour-mixing, and make use of sketchbooks for their work. They make appropriate choices about colour and texture in, for example, collage work. They also understand the need to evaluate their ideas and make changes and improvements to achieve the best result they can. Older pupils' work in three dimensions shows skilful use of clay and other materials. Sculptures by pupils in Year 6 on the theme of 'People in Action' successfully depict people using different movements. Clay pots of a very high quality from Years 3, 4 and 5 show use of the 'pinching' technique. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language, achieve very well throughout the school. By Year 6, pupils talk knowledgeably about the work of famous artists, and evaluate their own work. They also understand the importance of art in their lives.
108. In the small amount of teaching seen during the inspection, it was evident that lessons are planned well to meet the needs of pupils. For example, pupils in Year 1 were shown printing techniques at the start of the lesson, and were reminded of this in a gentle way throughout their independent work. This ensured that they would be more likely to use the technique correctly when applying it to a different activity. Teachers anticipate pupils' possible errors or misunderstandings well, and give clear instructions and guidance to avoid these. They give pupils every opportunity to succeed. As a result, pupils gain confidence. Teachers' high expectations and appropriate challenges inspire pupils to do well.
109. The subject is very well managed. Visiting artists, some of whom are parents, bring additional expertise to the school, and create opportunities for art activities during lessons and after school. The curriculum is enriched by visits to galleries, and participation in local projects, for example 'Hidden Art'. The school received first prize for its collection of paintings, and the entries were exhibited in a local studio. The good focus on different styles of art makes a valuable contribution to pupils' cultural development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The overall provision is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Good projects, enabling pupils to appreciate disassembly and investigating before designing, making and evaluating

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient emphasis on teaching the skills associated with using tools
- Inconsistent amounts of design and technology taking place in classes

110. Attainment is broadly average compared with national standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. One or two design and technology projects are usually completed each year, although the school policy is for three. These cover a range of materials, including textiles, food and wood. An example of high quality work was seen in a Year 4 class, where pupils had designed, co-operatively, two wooden chairs, one for storytelling and one for dreaming. These had been designed and constructed to a high

standard, with support from a parent in cutting out the hardwood sections. Both are in use in the classroom. Pupils in Year 2 constructed above average standard vehicles, using a variety of materials and different axle arrangements. Pupils have experience of disassembly, designing, making and evaluating in their projects. The quality of outcomes is variable, however, from below to above average, depending upon the pupils' skill levels. Insufficient emphasis is given to the progressive development of pupils' skills in using a range of tools.

111. In Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching and learning observed was good. No teaching of design and technology was seen in Key Stage 1. In a Year 6 lesson, where pupils were making mechanisms for model fairground rides, resources were readily available and well used. Designs were adapted as pupils learnt what did and did not work. Lively co-operative discussion and confident support from the staff helped to maintain good progress, although pupils' knowledge of possible mechanisms was just average. Flow charts, used to map progress through projects, were helpful and ensured that pupils had to think in detail about their work. The pace of work slowed in lessons where targets were unclear and when not all pupils were fully involved in their working groups of three or four. Seating arrangements were unhelpful when pupil sat with their backs to the teacher as work was explained.
112. The subject is satisfactorily managed and led. National Curriculum guidance is followed. Good assessment records are kept and the quality of teaching and learning is monitored, although the amount of design and technology activity carried out does not always reflect what is expected. Resources are well managed and sufficient. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection, with better assessment, monitoring and higher standards, although some skills remain underdeveloped.

GEOGRAPHY

The overall provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Geographical work is interesting and relevant to pupils' lives
- Research skills are developing through the use of ICT

Areas for improvement:

- The quality of marking is too variable
 - The quality of the presentation of some pupils' work is unsatisfactory
113. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly in line with those seen nationally, with some examples of work of above average quality. The presentation of pupils' work is too variable, however, with some that is unsatisfactory. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall, but with some good work.
114. In Key Stage 1, pupils learn about the immediate locality and further afield. They carry out simple surveys about the local parking problems and learn about different locations, making good links with work in literacy. The story of Katie Morag and the two grandmothers provided a very good opportunity for pupils to develop their own ideas about living in different locations. They carried out a transport survey in Bethnal Green and compared the findings with the Isle of Struay. Extended literacy opportunities arose when pupils had to write an imaginary message in a bottle. Pupils kept their own independent travel diaries. Using books and other

resources, pupils extended their knowledge about travel, exploring the main features of a passport.

115. In Key Stage 2, pupils were encouraged to develop their research skills and extend their knowledge about climate and weather patterns by using a range of resources such as travel books, atlases, CD ROMs and the internet. Pupils' books provided examples of good work on rivers where they had written up their own research, labelled maps and drawn diagrams. Pupils' interest and understanding have been enhanced by a visit to the Thames Barrier.
116. In the few lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory. Marking was clear and helpful on some work, but too often advice was not offered on how work could be improved. A good feature of a lesson in Year 2 was the final section where the teacher reviewed specific features about countries the pupils had 'travelled to'. Good questioning enabled pupils of all abilities and backgrounds to present their findings on the chosen countries and groups questioned each other on what had been found. Pupils demonstrated good progress in the knowledge they had gained about the location, climate and food in the country researched. They used appropriate vocabulary in both asking questions and explaining their findings. Bar charts and spreadsheets were used to good effect in a lesson to show the different land uses on Columbia Road. Introductions to lessons were not always as clear as they could be, however, with pupils told what they had to do rather than what they were expected to learn.
117. Since the last inspection the school has improved opportunities for pupils to undertake geographical enquiry and standards are higher. National Curriculum guidance is followed. The curriculum has been improved to take account of the background of the pupils, and now includes a study unit of a village in Bangladesh. Good monitoring of pupils' work results in thorough assessment records. Leadership and management of the subject are good.

HISTORY

The overall provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Very good range of visits and visitors that enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of history
- Some very effective teaching
- Very positive attitudes to learning history

Areas for improvement

- The presentation of pupils' work is not always of an acceptable quality
 - Work is not always thoroughly marked, to aid pupils' learning
118. Attainment is broadly average compared with national standards at the end of Years 2 and 6, and pupils make sound progress resulting in satisfactory achievement over time. Pupils carry out activities to develop a sense of chronology and make comparisons between the past and now. Interesting examples of writing in the style of Samuel Pepys were seen, as a follow-up to learning about the Great Fire of London. Pupils make good progress in learning the story of history and satisfactory progress in the more analytical aspects of the subject. The quality of the presentation of work is too variable, however, with some good work and other that shows little pride in what has been achieved. Pupils' work also showed inconsistencies in the

constructiveness of teachers' marking. Some was helpful but too often no indication was given of how pupils could improve their standard of work.

119. During the inspection, few history lessons were seen. In an example of a very good lesson, pupils were learning about the key features of the blitz. Good quality resources were available for them to handle and describe. Pupils listened well and knew what they were expected to learn. The lesson was well structured. Group work was effective and very good questioning by the class teacher meant that pupils made very good progress in understanding the main features and aspects of Britain in the Second World War. Pupils have very positive attitudes to history and enjoy the subject.
120. National guidance on how to teach history provides a good basis for the curriculum. The recently introduced assessment framework helps teachers to plan lessons appropriately and pupils' progress is tracked through the school. Pupils cover the recommended number of units of work in history. These are significantly enhanced by a range of visitors to the school and visits to museums, which help pupils to understand the story of history. From Years 1 to 6, pupils have regular and planned opportunities to visit the Bethnal Green museum of childhood, the Geffrye Museum, and the British and London museums. Topics are further enriched by visits from groups acting as Victorians or Greeks and local residents who lived through the Blitz. The school makes good use of the local education authority loan system to enrich topics. Class teachers are encouraged to evaluate the resources and supplement them with new ideas in order that provision can be improved. Helpful induction guidance has been produced to help new members of staff to plan their teaching of history and geography. Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment has improved. Leadership and management of the subject are good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The overall provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Very good partnership teaching between the co-ordinator and class teachers
- Good attitudes to learning in ICT
- Pupil's knowledge and understanding of their own progress
- Good leadership and management of ICT

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of computers in subject lessons

121. Current standards at the end of Year 2 are similar to those seen nationally. There is evidence of some good work in control technology and word processing, and standards are improving rapidly as the computer network is used to good effect by all classes. Pupils' achievements since the new ICT suite came into use have been good in developing specific computer skills. In Year 6, where standards are also average, pupils are beginning to use spreadsheets with confidence and in Year 5 they have learnt how to create a multimedia presentation and manipulate a sound composition. Pupils use the Internet and CD ROMs for independent research. They use related vocabulary well, showing understanding of such terms as formula, calculate, and equalise. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make similarly good progress to their peers. They are well supported in lessons and given time to finish the task.

122. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning ICT; they work well together and listen to each other's responses and ideas.
123. The quality of teaching and learning observed was always satisfactory or better. The co-ordinator, supported by the class teacher, led the majority of the lessons seen. This approach to teaching is having a dual benefit for the pupils as it provides additional teaching in lessons, increasing the rate of pupils' learning and progress, as well as training for teachers. Pupils keep good records of their own progress. They are encouraged to assess their own skills and to understand what they need to learn to achieve the next National Curriculum level.
124. An excellent lesson in control technology was seen in Year 2. Pupils were working in a hall, programming a floor turtle to follow instructions containing numerical data. Pupils worked very successfully in small groups and programmed instructions for the turtle to follow a path and collect a range of imaginary items from a supermarket. A good lesson was seen in Year 4, where pupils were controlling a screen turtle using the white board and personal computers. Pupils worked effectively in pairs to create a shape and rotate using their instructions. Teachers were careful to use the correct vocabulary throughout the lessons. Partner discussion about the task in hand was a regular successful feature of lessons.
125. National guidance on how to teach ICT is providing a good basis for the curriculum. Time allocated for the teaching of ICT is appropriate but evidence from the work samples indicates that insufficient use is made of the school's facilities to enhance learning in a range of subjects – particularly the class-based computers. Demonstration lessons, good guidance for staff on effective teaching strategies and assessment, are helping to improve standards. The newly refurbished ICT suite is proving very useful and is well managed. With the exception of the development of cross-curricular links, the provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection. Overall, progress has been good. Leadership and management are good.

MUSIC

The overall provision is **very good**.

Strengths

- Good balance between performing and composing in pupils' musical development
- Excellent contribution of extra-curricular activities to pupils' musical experiences
- Good use made of specialist teachers and performers to enhance pupils' musical awareness
- Very good leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Assessment and recording are underdeveloped

126. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully implemented a programme of 'blocked' musical experiences for pupils that have resulted in above average standards by the end of Year 6 and very good achievement for the pupils. The planned curriculum covers the full National Curriculum requirements and is relevant to the needs of the pupils. Although pupils do not have regular weekly music lessons, they work on specific musical projects at selected times during the course of the year. These projects not only cover all aspects of the music curriculum, but also are strongly influenced by the need to improve pupils' literacy skills. This is a very good and relevant method of delivering the music curriculum. Pupils have attained

good skills in all aspects of music. In discussion, they talked confidently about musical scores, note values and composition, and sang in tune with very good rhythm and without accompaniment. They explained how their most recent project had been based on a novel and how the words of the song they had composed extended the novel's theme. They performed with great confidence and panache. In the delivery of such projects, the school has made very good use of outside specialists who have worked with pupils at school. Projects have been very cross-curricular and thoroughly enjoyed. Pupils' very positive attitudes to music are the culmination of this good provision.

127. Extra-curricular music tuition and choirs greatly enhance pupils' overall attainment. The school choir, held after school and led by a visiting tutor, is attended not only by Columbia pupils but also pupils from other local schools, teachers and a few parents. The choir is professionally managed and pupils perform well. The co-ordinator for music teaches pupils to play the recorder to a very good standard. Homework is well used to encourage good practice and progress. Many pupils have opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument during their time at the school.
128. The subject is very well managed and led. The vision for the future of the subject is clear and is being implemented in practice. Assemblies are used to further pupils' musical appreciation and singing skills. During the week of the inspection, Reggae music was played during assemblies, and pupils learned about Haile Selassie and his beliefs. Key Stage 2 pupils sang "By the Rivers of Babylon" very tunefully, understanding the significance of the words. In this way, music makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff provide inspiration for other teachers to follow, placing music in a very cross-curricular and multi-faith position. As yet there is no skills checklist for music, with just general assessment expectations for each year group. No formal method is used to identify any gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge, which could lead to further improvements in standards. Resources for the subject are good and the school makes very efficient and effective use of specific grants for the development of the creative arts and music. Standards are higher than reported at the time of the last inspection and improving.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The overall provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Good achievement resulting in standards similar to national expectations at age eleven
- Good leadership and management
- A good range of sports clubs and activities

Areas for improvement

- Behaviour is not managed well in a minority of classes
- The curriculum is not demanding enough for high attainers

129. It was only possible to observe a few infant lessons at the time of the inspection so judgments relate only to pupil attainment at the end of Year 6. By the age of eleven, most pupils have reached the expected national level. They can swim 25 metres, construct a gymnastics sequence, participate in small-scale games and constructively evaluate and improve their own performance. Year 6 pupils were seen, for example, working sensibly and creatively, in pairs, to improve bridging sequences. Dance is now being introduced into the curriculum and, whilst

the benefits have not yet reached Year 6, Year 5 and 3 pupils were observed moving sensitively to music. Pupils understand the need for attention to health and safety and to warm up and cool down. These were features of every lesson seen.

130. Pupils enter the school with below average skills in physical development, so they achieve well to reach satisfactory standards by the time they leave. There has been a big improvement, since the last inspection, in the number of clubs that are run. Pupils are given the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of sports clubs and the school takes part in a number of festivals and competitions. Girls were seen, for example, enjoying lunchtime football coaching. These activities have all contributed to the raising of standards in the subject.
131. Generally pupils' attitudes to physical education are very good. In two lessons seen, however, the pupils were not well managed by the teachers and expectations of behaviour were too low. The majority of teachers observed, however, had good teaching skills. They demonstrated well and made useful teaching points. This was seen clearly in a Year 4 games lesson, where teachers team-taught effectively and clearly modelled the rolling and stopping of a ball while fielding.
132. The physical education policy is clear and good detailed schemes of work, adapted from other sources, have been prepared. These are a good support for teachers but are aimed very much at average expectations and do not cater sufficiently for the more able. The subject is well led and managed with good improvements since the last inspection. Concerns, such as extending swimming for those who have not achieved the necessary distance, have been effectively addressed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The provision overall for religious education is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding about major religions
- Teachers' good use of resources
- Pupils' understanding of the similarities and differences between religions

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' written work does not always reflect the quality and depth of their thinking
133. Standards in religious education for pupils aged seven and eleven are in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus, and are similar to those reported at the last inspection. Pupils in Year 2 know about the life of Jesus, and can relate the story of The Good Samaritan to their own lives, by being kind and helpful to each other. They are beginning to understand the similarities and differences between religions. Older pupils have good knowledge of major religions, and can compare and contrast them. For example, they know that pilgrimages are very significant to Christians and Muslims and that, whilst followers of some religions worship one god, Hindus worship several gods. Pupils understand that religious education helps to promote respect for their own and others' religions, and that this is important for them in all aspects of their school life. However, pupils' written work does not always reflect the quality and depth of their thinking. Pupils in Year 6 give considerable thought to religious issues in their lives. For example, a discussion about Easter cards revealed strong feelings about commercialism and why pupils felt that some cards were more

appropriate than others. Overall, satisfactory progress is being made and the pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

134. In the few lessons seen during the inspection, teachers showed that they planned lessons well, using relevant and meaningful resources. They made good use of opportunities for pupils to discuss aspects of the lesson. For example, in an excellent Year 4 lesson, pupils talked to each other about special people in their lives and presented the information succinctly to the rest of the class. By the end of the lesson, most pupils were using appropriate vocabulary such as 'inspiring', 'role model' and 'admire', in an accurate way to describe their feelings. In less effective lessons, the pace of the lesson was slow at times. This resulted in too much listening or written work of variable quality, because some pupils had become distracted by talking unnecessarily or by simply working at a leisurely pace.
135. The subject is satisfactorily managed. Support is provided for those teachers who request assistance in their planning, and also through observation of demonstration lessons. Assessment and recording are teacher dependent and too inconsistent, but a new policy for assessment is currently being piloted.