

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **THAXTED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Thaxted

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115288

Headteacher: Mrs J Chittick

Reporting inspector: Mr John Messer  
OFSTED number: 15477

Dates of inspection: 11 – 12 March 2002

Inspection number: 197724

Short 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: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bardfield Road  
Thaxted

Postcode: Essex  
CM6 2LW

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J Jossaume

Date of previous inspection: September 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This foundation school has 269 pupils on roll and is about the same size as most other primary schools. There is an almost equal mix of boys and girls. Almost all pupils are of United Kingdom heritage and all speak English as their first language. Around five per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is below the national average. There are 30 pupils entered on the register of special educational needs which is below the national average but six pupils have statements of special educational need, which represents a high proportion. Several pupils have physical disabilities and several have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. The attainment of children on admission to the reception class varies considerably from year to year but is broadly average overall. There have been significant changes to the teaching staff in recent years, including the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy head.

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

This is a highly effective school. Standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average. The school provides a rich curriculum that is particularly strong in developing pupils' creative talents in writing, art and design and music. The very good leadership and management provided by the headteacher and key staff are underpinned by the very effective support provided by the governing body. Teachers are hard-working, caring and committed to doing their best for all pupils. The very good teaching has resulted in pupils' very good achievement from Year 1 to Year 6 and the consistent attainment of high standards by the end of Year 6. Children's achievement in the foundation stage is good but a lack of resources inhibits their achievement from matching the rates of progress achieved by pupils in the rest of the school. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- Throughout the school standards are maintained at consistently high levels in English, mathematics and science.
- Teaching and learning are good in the foundation stage and very good in the classes for pupils in Years 1 to 6.
- The school is led and managed very well by the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the senior teacher, governors and those staff with curricular responsibilities.
- A rich curriculum is provided and there are strong links between different subject areas.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of their learning is very good because assessment procedures are used well to create individual targets for further improvement.

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

- The range and quality of reading books in Years 1 and 2, the quality of reading records in these year groups and the promotion and encouragement of a deeper knowledge of children's literature in order to improve the quality of pupils' reading.
- Resources and the learning environment for children in the reception class, including the development of an outdoor play area in order to improve children's learning opportunities and their achievement.
- The over-reliance by several teachers on the use of undemanding worksheets that restrict learning.

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

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

Since the school was last inspected in October 1997, there has been very good improvement in many key areas. The standards that pupils attain by the end of Year 2 have improved in reading, mathematics and science and the above average standards in writing have been maintained. By the end of Year 6, standards have improved substantially in English, mathematics and science and last year the school exceeded its statutory targets in English and mathematics. The rate of improvement has been very good and has exceeded that which might reasonably have been expected. Across the school, standards in information and communication technology have improved and computers are used increasingly to support learning in many areas of the curriculum. The quality of teaching has improved; there is now a

much higher proportion of very good teaching which has made a strong contribution to very good improvements in pupils' learning. The key issues for improvement raised at the time of the last inspection have been tackled successfully; standards in gymnastics have improved, the quality of information in annual reports to parents has improved and the school's curricular plans and policies are good. The management of the school is now even more effective and good progress has been made in including all associated with the school in contributing to further improvements.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A*	A*	A*	A
mathematics	A*	A*	A*	A
science	A*	A*	A	A

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

The inspection focused on the standards pupils attain in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Pupils, regardless of background, achieve well in the reception class and are well on course to attain the early learning goals, specified in national guidance, by the end of the school year. The standards they attain in early reading, writing and mathematical skills are above average. Pupils' achievement, regardless of background, is very good in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3 to 6. By the end of Year 2 and by the end of Year 6 pupils are likely to attain standards in reading, mathematics, science and information and communication technology that are well above average. Pupils in Year 2 attain standards that are above average in writing and by the end of Year 6 they are well above. At present the standards attained by pupils in Year 2 in writing are not as high as they should be and their knowledge of literature is not as extensive as it could be. The high standards that pupils attain are reflected in National Curriculum test results which show that the school's performance is maintained at a high level each year. The star symbol indicates that the school's performance was among the highest five per cent of schools nationally. In the tests for pupils in Year 2 in 2001, the school's performance, when compared with all schools and when compared with schools in similar contexts, was well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school set realistic targets for the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who were expected to attain the national target of Level 4 in mathematics and English in 2001 and it exceeded its targets. Similar targets have been set for this year but they are more challenging because there is a high proportion of pupils in Year 6 with learning difficulties but the school is likely to reach its targets. The improving trend in the school's performance over the past five years has been in line with the improving trend nationally. Work of high quality was seen in art and design across the school.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils enjoy school and are eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils are polite and caring one of another. They behave exceptionally well in the classroom, the playground and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils form excellent relationships with their classmates and with adults. They show good levels of maturity and take increasing responsibility as

	they move through the school.
Attendance	Very good. Rates are well above the national average.

The school is a friendly and orderly community. Pupils from all backgrounds work and play happily together.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	good	very good	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.*

The teaching of basic skills is given a high priority and the teaching of English and mathematics is exceptionally good. Teachers maintain high expectations of pupils' performance and encourage them to apply their good skills in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. In information and communication technology a good planning framework promotes the systematic development of pupils' skills and these skills are used increasingly to support teaching and learning across the curriculum. Lessons are interesting, planned meticulously, organised well and cater for the range of attainments in the class, including the particular learning requirements of pupils with special educational needs. As a result of good teaching in the reception class, children learn effectively. Pupils' learning is very good in Years 3 to 6 because teaching is consistently of high quality.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. A rich curriculum is taught in all age groups and is supplemented well by extra activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils' needs are identified accurately and the highly skilled learning support assistants make a strong contribution to the very good provision.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils' moral and social development are promoted exceptionally well. Provision for spiritual and cultural provision is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety are very good.

The school teaches the nationally recommended curriculum for children in the foundation stage and all subjects of the National Curriculum to pupils in Years 1 to 6. It gives a high priority to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. It has established good programmes of personal, social and health education and citizenship. There is especially good support for pupils with special educational needs that has been organised well by the co-ordinator in liaison with teaching and support staff. The individual education plans for pupils with special needs are detailed and are used well in lessons.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
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Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The new headteacher and her new deputy have established a clear vision for the school's development. There is a strong focus on including all associated with the school in seeking to improve provision further.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body works very well. Governors are well informed and active. They support the school very well in many ways, especially with the management of the new building works.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school collects information on how it is doing and uses this exceptionally well to identify areas for further improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The budget is controlled and managed very well and funds are directed to areas of priority.

Although standards are well above average, there is no complacency in the school; it is constantly striving to improve the quality of provision. The school is rigorous in applying the principles of best value in its spending decisions by questioning what it does, comparing its performance with other schools and setting realistic targets for the future. The accountability of the subject leaders for raising standards by monitoring and evaluating the school's performance in all areas of the curriculum has been under-emphasised in the past but is now being developed well. Accommodation is inadequate as five classes are taught in aged, temporary, hatted buildings but the new buildings, which include five new classrooms, are nearing completion. The school has managed to accrue a large financial surplus that it is using to complete the building works and to equip the new classrooms. The school's strong leadership and management places it in a good position to improve further.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children enjoy school.</li> <li>• Teachers' expectations are high.</li> <li>• Children make good progress.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• Children are helped to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The amount of homework that is given.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• Staff are approachable.</li> <li>• The school is led and managed well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How closely the school works with parents.</li> <li>• Information about children's progress.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

Thirty eight per cent of parents returned the inspection questionnaire and 27 attended the pre-inspection meeting for parents. Parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school's provision. Inspection findings confirm parents' positive views. The inspection team found that the school is working closely with parents and has plans to strengthen links further. The information provided about pupils' progress is good and there is a good range of activities outside lessons.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

**Throughout the school, standards are maintained at consistently high levels in English, mathematics and science.**

1. Children enter the school with skills and levels of development that are broadly in line with expectations of four-year-olds. They achieve well in the reception classes and nearly all are well on course to attain the early learning goals detailed in national guidance by the end of the school year and many will surpass these standards. Firm foundations are laid, especially in reading and writing, so that pupils are prepared well to continue their studies in Years 1 and 2. They develop a particularly good understanding of the links between letters and the sounds they make and they learn to read a good range of words that are used most commonly. They apply this learning to their reading of simple texts and many are quickly becoming confident readers. Many write shopping lists and several write simple sentences with accurate spelling. Skills, knowledge and understanding are developed systematically and children have great confidence in their abilities. Although they achieve well, the lack of resources and the inferior quality of the learning environment in the reception class prevent children's progress matching the exceptionally good achievement in the rest of the school. The classroom environment lacks warmth and quality and this impedes learning which, with better resources, could be even more effective. Children use computers to consolidate reading and writing skills by labelling parts of the body, for example. They also use programs that help them to practise counting. They play in the class toy shop and have a good understanding of how to exchange the correct amount of money for the articles they purchase. They visit the local windmill as part of their study of wind power and investigate how toy boats can be blown across a water tray by puffing air through a straw or by being propelled by the air escaping from a balloon. They measure the distances that the wheeled bugs they have made travel. They speak confidently and sensibly about their work. By the end of the reception year pupils have well developed early skills in literacy, numeracy and scientific understanding.
2. Pupils continue to achieve well in years 1 and 2. By the end of year 2, pupils attain standards in reading and writing that are above average. Pupils in Year 1 explained confidently how words can be broken into segments to make them easier to read and spell. In one class pupils sign well, using the Makaton system, and this adds another dimension to their communication skills. Pupils read well, often with appropriate expression and good understanding. Their knowledge and awareness of the range of children's literature is limited, however, and few could remember their favourite authors. Few read widely for pleasure and they are not yet discerning readers, able to discuss and compare works of fiction. They have a good understanding of how to use the index of a non-fiction book to find specific information and several explained how they used the Internet at home for research. They write well and have a good understanding of how to describe the characteristics of different people. A witch, for example, was described vividly, 'She should have long, scratchy nails, green skin and be dressed all in black.' The higher attaining pupils in Year 2 write complex sentences with good use of adjectives and adverbs while lower attaining pupils write a series of simple sentences usually punctuated correctly and spelt logically as in, 'He was quit a rood giant'. Pupils write according to different forms and higher attaining pupils come close to creating regular cinquains such as,

'Shell  
Glistening brightly  
On the shore  
Collected by many people  
Masterpiece.'

Although pupils are capable of writing expressively, their achievement is constrained by being required to complete worksheets that often require them to fill in words or strings of letters. These present insufficient challenge.

3. Pupils attain standards in mathematics and science that are well above average by the end of Year 2. They have quick recall of number facts and most are good at teasing out patterns in sequences of numbers. They are good at measuring and weighing. They weighed ingredients in grams to make cakes and estimated, before weighing, which objects weighed more and which less than a kilogram. They are good at using a bag containing 50 grams to deduce by making comparisons whether a crayon is heavier or lighter than a plastic cube. For homework they collect labels that indicate the weight of contents and note, for example, that a packet of crisps weighs 26 grams and this is the same as a small chocolate bar. In scientific investigations about forces and movement they make sensible predictions about the effects of friction on toy cars rolling down ramps with different surfaces. One pupil, for example, predicted that the shiny fabric was slippery and would help the car to travel further. They have a good understanding of how to conduct a fair test. They control all variables for example and explain that the ramp must be set at the same angle, the car must be started at the same point and that no pushing is allowed. They record the results of their experiments carefully in tabular form and use the data well to make comparisons and draw conclusions.
4. Inspection findings are largely confirmed by the school's performance in national tests although pupils' performance is not currently quite as high as indicated by the test results and there is scope for further improvements in reading and writing. In 2001 the school's results were well above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Of particular note was the performance of the higher attaining pupils in reading; well over a half of pupils exceeded the national target of Level 2 and attained the higher Level 3 standard, a result that equalled that of the top five per cent of schools nationally. The school's performance in writing was also very high. In science the statutory teacher assessments indicated that the attainment of most pupils was well above average and the performance of the higher attaining pupils matched the national average.
5. By the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards in English, mathematics and science that are well above average. Most pupils are articulate and confident. They talk and listen well. They show an understanding of the thoughts and ideas of others and offer interesting contributions to discussions. They adopt the viewpoint of different villagers as they argue the pros and cons of building a by-pass around the village of Little Dozy, for example. Their standards in reading are well above average and many read avidly and extensively. They are knowledgeable about literature. Many have read Tolkein's 'The Hobbit' and 'The Fellowship of the Ring', Philip Pullman's trilogy that starts with 'Northern Lights', Susan Cooper's 'The Dark is Rising' sequence and Bronte's 'Jane Eyre'. They read 'between the lines', using skills of inference and deduction to identify layers of meaning. They enjoy Michael Rosen's poetry and many are interested in reading non-fiction texts about the universe and famous crimes. They approach extended novels competently and can pick out key themes and characters in the texts. They write good reviews of the books they have read. They hold reading conferences with their teachers where pupils explain the plot, discuss the genre and consider how they might use some of the author's techniques in their own writing. Teachers guide pupils towards books that might interest them further. Teachers and pupils recommend titles to each other and swap books from their own collections. Their writing is varied and interesting and they can write at length when this is appropriate. Pupils have written very good play scripts based on the novel, 'The Demon Headmaster', sensitive character sketches of grandparents, persuasive arguments about fox hunting and balanced reports on issues such as whaling. In one lesson in Year 6, pupils with special educational needs were supported exceptionally well by the classroom assistant. They placed a set of sentences about making a sandwich in order and then followed the sequence by actually making a sandwich to see if their instructions worked or not. They then reported back to the class on their success during a review session at the end of the lesson. In this way there were fully included in the writing activity. Standards of spelling are good and almost all pupils produce a clear, joined handwriting style. Pupils use computers well to write well presented stories.
6. The range of work produced by the oldest pupils in mathematics is impressive and includes advanced work on decimals, percentages and shape. In a lesson seen on how to convert units of length, pupils calculated accurately, checked their answers and demonstrated that they had understood different methods of working. They are particularly good at teasing out the essential elements of problems and solving them logically. They invariably consider a rough approximation

of the likely answer and check this against their solution to see if their answer is reasonable. Computers are used well in Year 5 to create complex patterns that illustrate rotational symmetry, translation and reflection. Pupils in Year 6 use spread sheets well to model, for example, how the class might spend a set amount of pocket money. Younger pupils use computers to create graphs showing the relative weights of pupils in the class, which they then analyse. Pupils use the language of mathematics, such as 'partitioning' or 'inverse operations', with confidence and good understanding.

7. In science, pupils cover the breadth of factual knowledge required by the National Curriculum in considerable depth. Their work is presented well and makes good use of their well developed literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils use scientific terminology well in their written work and this was in evidence in a lesson seen on electrical circuits in Year 4 where terms such as 'conductor' and 'insulator' were used accurately. Pupils in Year 4 re-visit work on friction that they were introduced to in Year 2 but the experiments are more sophisticated and involve careful measurement of force using spring measuring instruments to record the Newtons required to move objects over different surfaces. Pupils have produced good investigative work, linked with health education, on the effects of smoking on the lungs. Here an experiment was set up to examine what happens when cigarette smoke is filtered through cotton wool. The tar that collected and the staining of the cotton wool gave a dramatic illustration of the possible effects on health.
8. The national test results confirm inspection findings. In the tests in 2001 the schools results were well above average in English, mathematics and science; in English and mathematics they were among the top five per cent nationally. Pupils' high standards in core skills equip them well to work across all subjects. Teachers place an emphasis on ensuring that these skills are practised and extended regularly. This ensures that pupils make exceptionally good progress and perform well.

**Teaching and learning are good in the foundation stage and very good in the classes for pupils in Years 1 to 6.**

9. During the inspection, all the teaching seen was at least satisfactory; almost half was very good and occasionally excellent and almost half was good. Teaching and learning are good in the foundation stage and very good in the classes for pupils in Years 1 to 6. Teaching and learning in the reception class does not match the high standards in the rest of the school because resources are limited and the learning environment is under developed. However, throughout the school pupils' achievements were very good in the majority of lessons. Overall teaching is very good because curricular plans have been developed well so that each teacher in each year group has a clear idea of what to teach and in what order. Furthermore, each teacher receives good guidance and support about how to teach the curriculum. There is a clear teaching and learning policy. Teachers plan lessons meticulously, according to a common format. Each lesson plan, for example, includes details of the focus, such as 'Solving word problems related to time', links to previous work, teaching objectives for different ability groups, how pupils will be organised to maximise learning opportunities for all groups, details of resources, including how learning assistants will be deployed, assessment opportunities, next stages for development and homework opportunities. Many such plans also refer to separate plans for pupils with special educational needs. Plans are detailed and are of exceptional quality and promote highly effective teaching.
10. An excellent lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2 typified many of the elements that represent high quality teaching. First and foremost a quiet purposeful learning environment had been set within which routines had been established well. The literacy session started with a brisk session involving the consolidation and extension of phonic skills using the 'Early Reading Research' strategies that combine sounds with physical hand movements as pupils tap out syllables. Appropriately challenging questions were directed to different groups so that all could achieve success. During this session the learning support assistant was taking notes on the response of several pupils in order to build up an assessment of their progress. The teacher made it very clear to pupils how skills in breaking words into sound segments would help with reading, writing and

spelling. Pupils were reminded of a previous story they had read where they had discussed the characteristics of a boy's parents. Pupils then read a story together in 'big book' format, concentrating on the character of the witch in the story. They noted the punctuation and responded well to the teacher's searching questions. They were set a writing task about building a description of a person's characteristics that was modified to provide appropriate challenge for all ability groups. Learning was reinforced towards the end of the lesson when one pupil emerged from behind a screen acting as the witch, carrying a broomstick and holding a cat. He took the 'hot seat' and invited questions from the class about his character. Learning in this lesson was purposeful and also great fun.

11. High expectations of pupils' behaviour and performance are maintained throughout the school. A serious approach to learning is created. Pupils are challenged and rise eagerly to the challenges set. There are strengths in teaching and learning in many lessons. Teachers place a high emphasis on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and this supports pupils to work in all subjects. The learning support staff make a valuable contribution in supporting individuals and small groups. In most lessons, the overall objective is shared with pupils. In the best examples, the objective is translated for pupils into a 'learning outcome, such as 'Today red group are going to learn how to solve complex word problems involving more than two steps, using multiplication.' Teachers use this well during and at the end of the lesson to check that pupils know what is expected of them and to assess how well they are doing. Red group, for example, would be asked to explain what they had learned and whether they had achieved their learning objective. This promotes pupils' understanding of their own learning.
12. The best lessons are characterised by a very positive, lively atmosphere that is based on excellent personal relationships between adults and pupils. The most effective lessons contain high levels of involvement by pupils. In these, the teachers encourage and obviously value the pupils' contributions. They promote effective discussions and ask for opinions. They give opportunities for pupils to rehearse their thinking, use the correct subject terminology and to 'bounce ideas off' others. There is often good use of practical resources that motivates pupils and aids their understanding. This was highlighted in mathematics in the use of a puppet with the younger children and in learning aids such as individual white boards and number lines.
13. Pupils' behaviour is managed well in all age groups. Teachers have clear expectations of how pupils will behave and almost all respond to these. Teachers are friendly and positive and deal speedily and fairly with any minor disputes. All the adults in the school promote particularly good relationships and this provides a secure foundation for learning. Pupils are praised for doing well. In response, they settle to work quickly and use their time well. They show respect for others and work collaboratively and co-operatively if required. In many classes, pupils' efforts are celebrated by attractive displays of work.
14. As a result of the very good teaching, pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding well. They have good levels of concentration and independence. Learning in the school is an exciting experience for pupils.

**The school is led and managed very well by the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the senior teacher governors and those staff with curricular responsibilities.**

15. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are both relatively new to their posts. A clear sense of direction has been established and the headteacher has succeeded in developing the roles of senior managers and subject co-ordinators well. All are fully involved corporately in working towards further improvements. Subject co-ordinators are fully accountable to the headteacher and the governing body for standards in their areas of responsibility. They work hard on monitoring and evaluating pupils' performance and are successful in identifying areas for development. There is an excitement about the quality of work that pupils' produce and about how it could be even better. There is a shared commitment among teachers and support staff to build on the school's success and to improve provision further.

16. The headteacher has encouraged a spirit of teamwork in the school and is working closely with staff and governors to establish a shared vision and purpose. She has high but realistic expectations of what can be achieved and is energetic in her efforts to realise these. New initiatives are thought through and all implications are considered carefully. The governing body is strong and governors possess a good range of skills and talents that are used well to support the school. The governing body is led well and governors are far-sighted in their vision for improvement. They have been especially successful, for example, in arranging for five new classrooms to be built when, initially, finances were provided for only two. Governors keep a close watch on how the new buildings are progressing. They are ably assisted by the senior administrative officer who controls school administrative procedures and finances with expertise and confidence. A large financial surplus was accrued last year to supplement the costs of building the new classrooms. This year a much smaller amount of money will be left over at the end of the financial year and will be used largely to equip the new classrooms. Parents raise considerable sums of money to supplement the school's income.
17. Senior staff monitor the quality of teaching in all classes and work to overcome any weaknesses and further improve the quality of provision. All teaching staff have worked together with the governors to ensure that the national arrangements for performance management are implemented and these are contributing well towards the school's continuing development. There is an efficient committee system for governors, which ensures that individuals and groups are fully involved in monitoring the work of the school and in its continuing development. The more experienced governors, including the chairs of the committees, have a good understanding of the strengths and relative weaknesses of the school. They regularly visit and receive reports from staff. They question critically what the school does and ensure that the budget is spent wisely. Staff and governors contribute to the overall development planning systems. The written development plans outline current and future priorities and how these will be achieved. There is outline planning for several years in advance. The school is very well placed to move forward and make further improvements.

**A rich curriculum is provided and there are strong links between different subject areas.**

18. There is a strong emphasis in the school on developing skills in literacy and numeracy but this is not at the expense of developments in other areas of the curriculum. Exceptionally good work was seen in art and design. Here the high quality is achieved because skills are taught explicitly and systematically and high expectations of pupils' performance are maintained. In one very good art lesson for pupils in Year 3, based on the work of L S Lowry, pupils remembered a great deal about other painters they had studied, such as Renoir, Van Gogh and Monet. A good discussion on when he was born reminded pupils of previous work on the Victorians in history and the discussion ranged over the geographical position of Manchester, why it was so full of mills, Lowry's Victorian childhood and early life as a rent collector, the meaning of the word 'tenant' and why he could not have used a biro. The teacher showed the pupils how Lowry used to draw on brown paper bags when he ran out of pages in his sketch book. The pupils gained a clear understanding of how Lowry's paintings became sombre and dark during the war years. Pupils greeted the projection of an overhead transparency of 'V E Day 1945' with awed exclamations, 'Wow!' and as they explored the picture good links were made with the forthcoming jubilee celebrations. Discussion focused on the colours that Lowry used and pupils gained a good understanding of which colours might be appropriate for industrial landscapes and which inappropriate and why. The idea of perspective and how to use charcoal was demonstrated well. Pupils were highly motivated and produced sensitive, thoughtfully considered paintings of high quality.
19. Music is well established in the school's curriculum. Good links are made with other cultures as pupils listened to music from Senegal at the beginning of assembly during Commonwealth Week. Many pupils learn how to play a wide range of musical instruments and many play tuned and untuned percussion instruments to accompany songs. Pupils sing well in unison and a good school choir has been formed. The school has a good band that includes a good range of instruments; strings, woodwind, brass, percussion and piano. The band has played in the local church to parents and the local community. The school is currently working on a musical

performance of Hansel and Gretel in liaison with the London Opera Players. The school drama club gain many national awards for speech and drama. Other links are made with pupils from different cultural backgrounds as pupils exchange e-mails with pupils from a school in Manchester. Good links are made between design and technology, literacy, art and design and science as when, as part of a project on 'Myths and Legends', pupils in Year 5 make a dragon's head with battery powered eyes that light up and jaws that open by syringes that provide pneumatic power.

20. In an excellent lesson in the computer suite good links were made between developing skills in information and communication technology, history and literacy as pupils produced good pamphlets to promote the Saxon village of West Stowe that they had visited recently. After a visit to Dunwich on the Suffolk coast, pupils in Year 6 produced particularly good work that linked their studies in history, geography, literacy, art and design and science. They used their skills of scientific enquiry to complete a cross sectional survey of the beach and deduced that the friction at the base of a wave slows the circular motion and causes it to break when it reaches the sloping beach. They concluded that, 'When the waves reach the shore, the larger stones get thrown to the back of the beach and the smaller stones get washed away again.' They wrote evocative poems that traced the history of Dunwich from the time when it was a bustling Roman port with 'legions of soldiers marching down to the sea', through the middle ages when in the market square people 'breathed the odour of fish and the scent of freshly baked bread', before the 'powerful North Sea, fierce, cruel, gnawing, devouring, exploded on to the shore,' and 'The deserted city fell silent'. Beautifully illustrated work on this project, in the form of well presented booklets, enabled pupils to use the skills developed in art and design well. Such good links make work more meaningful and help pupils to consolidate different facets of their learning.

**Pupils' knowledge and understanding of their learning is very good because assessment procedures are used well to create individual targets for further improvement.**

21. The school analyses its performance in great detail. Soon after entry to school pupils' attainment in different areas of learning and development are assessed. The results are carefully examined to identify any particular learning needs. Careful records are kept on pupils' development, their attainment and progress. Teachers and learning support assistants make careful observations of pupils. Those who are causing some concern are given special attention and teaching is modified to meet their particular learning needs. Pupils' attainment is tested regularly and the results are used well to identify any particular areas of weakness. The results of national tests are analysed meticulously, question by question, to determine which questions pupils found easy and which proved difficult. An analysis of the reading results of pupils in Year 2, for example, revealed that pupils who did not perform as well as the others were poor at dealing with comprehension questions that required simple retrieval of detail and simple inference. Computers are used well to analyse and illustrate the results. The information is used well by teachers who concentrate on developing the areas of weakness identified.
22. The information that analyses of tests reveals is used well to create specific targets for pupils. The targets are shared with pupils and are stuck in the front of exercise books. They are clear and precise. This helps teachers and pupils to be confident in their assessments of whether or not the targets have been met. The targets are highlighted as they are achieved and pupils' self-esteem is enhanced as they see an increasing number of highlighted targets in their books. These targets are used well when teachers mark pupils' work. They often refer in their marking to the targets as reminders of what individuals or groups are aiming to achieve. This gives extra purpose and direction to learning.
23. Pupils are introduced to the target setting process from their earliest days in school. The first target in literacy, 'I can hold my pencil correctly', leads towards the most advanced target in this area of learning in the reception class, 'I can read my writing to my friends'. A target for more effective story writing for a pupil in Year 6, 'Use good vocabulary throughout – adjectives, adverbs, similes, metaphors, descriptive phrases', is much more advanced. The school has refined the target setting process well so that helpful and appropriate individual targets are developing in

literacy and numeracy. This helps to focus pupils' understanding of what they are striving towards and precisely where the next steps in their learning lie.

#### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

#### **The range and quality of reading books in Years 1 and 2, the quality of reading records in these year groups and the promotion and encouragement of a deeper knowledge of children's literature in order to improve the quality of pupils' reading.**

24. Pupils learn to read very well and develop good levels of confidence in reading. Many pupils in Years 1 and 2, however, read a narrow range of books and work their way mechanically through the books in the school's reading schemes. The quality and range of books available in the classrooms is limited. Pupils have little knowledge of the range of fiction currently published and discussions with pupils indicated that few read regularly for pleasure. They read their reading books regularly and good records are kept of the titles of the books they have read as well as the dates that they started to read a particular book and when they finish it. Opportunities are missed to record evaluative comments about pupils' reading and to record errors in reading so that they can be used as targets for improvement. Pupils have very well developed basic reading skills and their comprehension is very good but these skills are not used effectively to develop discerning readers who are developing a deep appreciation of literature. The very good practice in Years 3 to 6, where pupils are regularly encouraged to evaluate literature, is not practised in Years 1 and 2.

#### **Resources and the learning environment for children in the reception class, including the development of an outdoor play area in order to improve children's learning opportunities and their achievement.**

25. The children in the reception class achieve well but the learning environment is not developed sufficiently to ensure that they are provided with good quality learning experiences designed to maximise their achievement. Although they attain standards that are generally above average, they do not always learn as effectively as they could. The teaching is good but the lack of resources is a constraint that impedes learning and the progress that pupils are able to make. Children's achievement in the reception class does not match the very good achievement in the rest of the school. The room for the reception class is spacious but lacks colour and warmth. It has not been fully equipped with good quality resources. The dressing up clothes are not of the quality or range found in most schools. This restricts opportunities for high quality imaginative play and the development communication through role play. The furniture and equipment are worn and the toy shop has not been developed very imaginatively. Learning areas are not clearly defined and opportunities for inventive play are under developed. The reading area is uninviting and there are no imaginative displays of books to stimulate interest. The outdoor area is under developed to promote physical, social and creative activities. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developing well but the breadth of learning experiences is restricted by lack of equipment to extend it further. There is not even a clock on the wall to encourage a deeper understanding of time. There has been a lack of investment in this area of the school.

#### **The over-reliance by several teachers on the use of undemanding worksheets that restrict learning.**

26. In several classes worksheets are provided as a means of practising reading and writing skills and for consolidating knowledge that teachers have imparted. Many pupils have, for example, amassed bulky folders containing such work sheets. Many of the worksheets present little challenge and require limited skills to complete. Pupils, who can write at length and spell with reasonable accuracy, were, for example, asked to fill in a sheet that required the filling in of 'ight' to complete patterns of words such as flight, might, fight, slight. This occupied them but did not extend their learning in any way. This activity lacks purpose and is largely a waste of time. Other pupils are, on occasion, required to complete worksheets to consolidate their knowledge in history, geography or religious education. There are few examples of books produced by the class or individually produced booklets to provide a more appropriately challenging form of capturing information and extending skills. The over-reliance on commercially published worksheets in



some classes constrains achievement and does little to advance pupils' knowledge, skills or understanding.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

27. The inspection team acknowledges that several of the areas identified in this report for further improvement are already under consideration for completion when the new buildings have been completed. In order to improve the overall quality of education and raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and the governing body should:

(1) improve the quality of reading in Years 1 and 2 by:

- providing a greater range of good quality fiction in classrooms;
- encouraging discussion about the similarities and differences between authors and illustrators;
- creating displays of books that focus on specific themes, particular genre or collections of books by particular authors, poets or illustrators;
- using reading sessions to record pupils' response to books and areas for improvement;
- heightening pupils' critical awareness and their ability to discern what constitutes quality in writing.

(Paragraphs 2 and 24.)

(2) improve the quality of the learning environment for children in the reception class by:

- providing better learning resources, such as materials for role play, reading books apparatus and equipment;
- developing an outdoor play area to support the development of physical, social and creative development.

(Paragraphs 1 and 25.)

(3) improve pupils' learning opportunities by phasing out the use of undemanding worksheets.  
(Paragraph 26.)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	27
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	11	13	1	0	0	0
Percentage	7	41	48	4	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	269
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	13

#### Special educational needs

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	30

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	11	21	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	11	11
	Girls	20	21	21
	Total	30	32	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (93)	100 (98)	100 (98)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	10	11
	Girls	21	21	21
	Total	32	31	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (96)	97 (98)	100 (98)
	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	21	22	43

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	21	21
	Girls	22	20	22
	Total	43	41	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (100)	95 (97)	100 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	20	21	21
	Girls	22	20	22
	Total	42	41	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	98 (100)	95 (97)	100 (100)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	264
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21:1
Average class size	29.8

**Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	139

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	613,276
Total expenditure	561,407
Expenditure per pupil	208,701
Balance brought forward from previous year	64,024
Balance carried forward to next year	115,893

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	269
Number of questionnaires returned	101

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	32	3	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	66	30	1	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	41	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	51	5	1	0
The teaching is good.	73	25	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	48	14	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	22	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	29	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	39	48	11	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	68	29	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	29	7	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	43	15	4	10

*Figures may not total 100% owing to rounding*

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents are pleased with the education provided for their children and appreciate all the hard work that produces high standards. A small minority of parents at the meeting expressed the view that the pupils were placed under undue pressure to attain such standards. The inspection team found no evidence to support this view and, on the contrary, found that pupils relish the challenges they are set and have excellent attitudes to learning. Several parents considered that sporting activities were under developed. The inspection team found that the hall and playground are used well for physical education lessons, and for netball and hockey practice. The small field is not being used at present due to building works but the school has good plans to develop the outdoor environment when the new buildings have been completed.