

INSPECTION REPORT

Millfields Foundation Primary School

Wivenhoe, Colchester

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115261

Headteacher: Mr A Roebuck

Reporting inspector: Alan Andrews
6436

Dates of inspection: 19th-22nd March 2001

Inspection number: 197784

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: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bowes Road
Wivenhoe
Near Colchester
Essex

Postcode: CO7 9RD

Telephone number: 01206 823044

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. Greg Brisk

Date of previous inspection: 29/09/1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
6436	Alan Andrews	Registered inspector	English Art Design Technology Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? How high are the standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13481	Doug Binfield	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
7694	Martyn Richards	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Physical Education Religious Education Equal opportunities English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
1359	Lyne Lavender	Team inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum Mathematics Geography History Music	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Millfields is an average sized primary school with a total of 228 girls and boys on roll aged between four and eleven. Children are admitted full-time into a reception class at the beginning of the year in which they are five. Overall, there are slightly more boys than girls, but the gender balance varies between the younger and older children. In the reception class there are three times as many boys as there are girls, whilst in Years 5 and 6 the girls outnumber the boys by two to one. Most children come from privately owned or rented accommodation. Their achievement on entry to school varies, but is generally above that expected for their age. Eight children are learning English as an additional language and this represents a higher percentage than in most schools. The percentage of children identified as having special educational needs is well below the national average. One child has a specific statement of special educational need. Fewer children are known to be eligible for free school meals than in most schools. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the previous inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Millfields is a very good and effective school. The headteacher and staff promote a very good climate for learning. Together with the governors, they work successfully to raise standards. Provision at the Foundation Stage, gives children a really good start to school life. Standards are very good in English and good in mathematics and science. There are examples of very high standards of work in information and communication technology, design and technology, art and music. Overall, teaching is very good. Parents have a very high regard for the school and its work. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Foundation Stage gives children a very good start to school life.
- Standards at age seven and eleven are very good in English and good in mathematics and science.
- Very good leadership promotes high standards and an effective working relationship with parents.
- Governors are highly effective in supporting and promoting the school's development.
- Teaching is of a high quality and there are excellent arrangements for monitoring and supporting children's academic and personal development.
- Highly effective ethos for learning means children are challenged to work intellectually and creatively.
- Very good provision for children's spiritual, moral and cultural development. Provision for social development is excellent.

What could be improved

- There are no Key Issues for improvement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Key issues from the previous inspection have been tackled very well indeed. Standards in information and communication technology and also design and technology have improved significantly and are now good. The school has maintained its very positive ethos for learning. In other developments, the overall quality of teaching has been raised further and is now very good. Assessment and recording systems have been improved significantly and are now also very good. They are used effectively to help plan children's work. National initiatives in literacy, numeracy, Curriculum 2000 and the curriculum for the Foundation Stage have been implemented efficiently. Significant improvements have been made in English, music and children's spiritual, moral and cultural development, which are all now very good. Children's social development is now excellent.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	C	B	C	D
mathematics	D	B	C	D
science	E	B	C	C

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

Although the results in the national tests in May 2000 were not as good as in 1999, the trend over the preceding four years has been one of steady improvement. The school had predicted these lower results as children's progress was tracked carefully and the ability of each intake varies from year to year. Targets for the percentage of children to meet the expected standard set by the local authority were exceeded. The school performed as well as schools with children from similar backgrounds in science, but not as well as those schools in English and mathematics. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work of children currently in Years 2 and 6 show that standards are rising. They are well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. There are examples of very high standards of work in art, music, design and technology and information and communication technology. Standards in religious education are satisfactory. Children at the Foundation Stage are exceeding the learning goals for their age, especially in communications, language and literacy and mathematics as well as personal, social and emotional development. The school is on course to meet its Year 6 achievement targets for 2001. The targets for average or above performance are 92% in English and 85% in both mathematics and science.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children enjoy school and work very hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. High standards of behaviour are consistent throughout the school, in lessons, at lunchtimes and on the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are very good, children cooperate well with one another. They take on responsibilities in an increasingly mature manner.
Attendance	Good. Attendance figures for the school are above the national average. There is very little unauthorised absence.

Children are very eager to learn, listen attentively and take part in lessons with enthusiasm. They arrive at school on time and settle quickly to work. They are happy to help one another and are polite and respectful to adults. These features help to create a calm and orderly atmosphere and contribute positively to children's learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
55 lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Good

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

Overall, teaching is very good, although it is less strong in Years 3 and 4 where it is still good. In lessons observed, 5% were excellent, 36% were very good, 44% were good and the rest were satisfactory. Much of the excellent and very good teaching occurs in the Foundation Stage and in music and information and communication technology. The literacy and mathematics lessons are taught well, particularly at the Foundation Stage and in Year 2. Strengths in teaching stem from teachers' secure subject knowledge, good organisation and the setting of imaginative tasks that build on what children already know. Additional adult help is used very effectively to support and enrich children's learning, particularly in art, information and communication technology and design and technology. A specialist teacher with a high level of expertise and flair teaches much of the music. As a result, music is a strength of the school. Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are taught well. Teachers successfully plan activities in many lessons to extend the brighter children and the school provides extension lessons where it feels further challenge is needed. Sometimes children are not given enough responsibility to propose and try out their own solutions to scientific problems and to apply their information and communication technology skills across the curriculum.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is varied and challenging. A strong focus on literacy and numeracy is balanced with a lively programme of work in the arts and sciences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Children benefit from good quality support in lessons and some specialist teaching.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Children's progress is checked carefully and they participate fully in all aspects of the school's work.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good personal, spiritual, moral and cultural development. Excellent social development. These aspects of the curriculum are promoted very effectively through lessons, assemblies and general school activities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A very high standard of pastoral care is provided. Monitoring and supporting children's academic and personal development is excellent.

The school's caring, supportive and friendly environment helps children feel secure and confident. Health and safety arrangements receive a high priority. Parents are pleased with the school and feel that it is very successful. Many help in classrooms and with other activities. Governors make an effort to seek parents' views before arriving at some decisions. The Foundation Stage curriculum is very successful in promoting children's independence as well as their social, literacy and numeracy skills. The curriculum at Key Stage 1 and 2 meets statutory requirements and is rich in activities that meet children's needs, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. All children's progress is very carefully monitored and individual targets are set to help them improve. The collective act of worship makes a valuable contribution to children's spiritual development. Social responsibility is learned in many aspects of school life, including the children's own school council. Homework arrangements effectively help to support children's learning. Visitors, educational visits and a

good range of extra-curricular activities help to meet their developing interests.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led and managed with clear educational direction. The governing body makes a particularly strong contribution. The highly effective ethos creates a very good climate for learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are determined to raise standards further.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school evaluates its performance rigorously using statistical information to identify areas of strength and weakness and help set priorities for development.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are easily accessible and used well in lessons.

The school has undergone considerable change in the last two years, but stability and a welcoming and harmonious atmosphere have been maintained successfully. Strengths in the leadership stem from the headteacher's positive and strong approach to team building, implementation of national initiatives and emphasis on high standards and quality in children's work. He has been ably supported by the deputy headteacher. There is a good level of teaching staff and the learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to children's achievements. Subject co-ordinators are closely involved in developments and raising standards in their subject. Accommodation is good and used effectively. Resources are good and for information and communication technology they are very good. The school budget is managed excellently and the principles of best value are applied very well indeed.

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 make good progress. • The high standards of behaviour. • The happy, caring and supportive environment. • The provision for children's personal development. • The quality of teaching and management. • The very good relationships with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher standards in national tests. • Homework arrangements for older children. • More activities outside lessons.

Inspectors fully endorse parents' positive views. Inspection evidence indicates that children's current achievement in English, mathematics and science is at a higher level than for similar age groups last year. The homework arrangements for all children are effective. School clubs, sporting and music activities provide a good range of opportunities for older children outside lessons. Year 6 children are able to take part in a residential visit.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children are admitted to the school at the beginning of the year in which they are five. The intake varies, but children's attainment on entry is generally above average. The present intake has settled quickly into school and many children are already exceeding the learning goals for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and mathematics as well as personal, social and emotional development. They are becoming confident in speaking and listening and in early reading, writing and number skills. Appropriately challenging work is provided and standards are often high.
2. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced well. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work show that overall standards in English have been raised significantly since the previous inspection and are now very good at the end of both Key Stage 1 and 2. The last inspection judged them to be in line with the national average. This improvement has been achieved during a period of considerable change at the school. Most of the senior and more experienced members of staff have left because of retirement or promotion. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the last inspection. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work show standards in mathematics and science to be good at the end of both key stages. This is a similar finding to the last inspection.
3. In recent years, the school's national assessment results for children aged seven in reading and writing have been high when compared to the national picture. In mathematics the results have been more variable, but in 2000 they were in line with the national average. The results in English, mathematics and science for children aged eleven have also been variable in recent years. In 2000, they all matched the national average, but when compared to similar schools, they were below average in English and mathematics and average in science.
4. The school is now putting considerable effort into analysing data to find reasons for its results so standards can be improved. Children's progress is very carefully checked and the information gained is used effectively to plan programmes of work. Teachers ensure that lessons contain activities suitable for all abilities, including those who learn quickly and those who find it more difficult. Extension lessons in literacy and numeracy are provided for brighter children in Years 2 and 6. These are organised well and the children respond enthusiastically. The school sets challenging targets for improvement, but is well placed to meet these. Individual targets are set for children and they are reminded about these at the beginning of exercise books and in their home school reading diaries. All this is having a positive impact on the raising of standards and is expected to continue to do so.
5. Children's listening and speaking skills are very good and their standards of reading are high. Many children read with expression and very good comprehension. They

write for a wide range of purposes with very good use of language. In mathematics, emphasis has been given recently to the development of mental and oral skills. This is successfully raising speed and proficiency in number work and standards are good. In science, children set up simple experiments and understand the need for careful control of variables if a test is to be reliable. Standards are good, although children could sometimes be given more responsibility when seeking their own solutions to scientific problems.

6. Standards are very good in music and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Children learn to sing, compose and play a range of instruments very well indeed. The school orchestra plays confidently in front of an audience and includes violins, recorders, flutes and clarinets. Standards in information and communication technology and in design and technology have also been raised significantly and are now good. Some work in these subjects is of a very high standard. At the time of the last inspection standards were judged to be unsatisfactory. Resources for information and communication technology are impressive and the school is well placed to raise standards still further in this subject. Standards in art are also good, with some examples of very high quality work using a range of media. Children are achieving levels expected for their age in history, geography, religious education and physical education.
7. Scrutiny of work and lesson observations found no significant difference in the achievements of girls and boys. Children with English as an additional language speak English fluently and achieve success across the curriculum.
8. The achievement of children with special educational needs is good. Their individual education plans are written well and contain appropriate targets which both class teachers and part-time specialist teachers use effectively when setting tasks. The work of the learning support staff is valuable in helping children to experience success.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Children's attitudes to learning are very good. They really like coming to school and are keen to do their best. During lessons they listen attentively and respond well during discussions. Children work hard on written and practical tasks and show good cooperation when working in pairs and small groups. For example, an enthusiastic and versatile approach by reception children contributed to an excellent gymnastics lesson. The sustained interest and concentration of Year 5 children working in the computer suite enabled them to make very good progress on spreadsheets to illustrate their own choice and the cost of refreshments for an end of term party. The very positive attitudes, which are seen in all year groups, help to raise standards of achievement throughout the school.
10. Behaviour is very good and this contributes well to successful learning in lessons and to the calm and orderly atmosphere around the school. Children show respect for adults and for one another. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. The few children from minority ethnic backgrounds integrate fully into life of the school. There were no exclusions last year. Nearly all parents feel that the behaviour standards are very high, although a few express individual concerns about bullying. Inspection evidence indicates that bullying arises only rarely and that such incidents are dealt with effectively.
11. The provision for children's personal development is very good. Since the last inspection opportunities to undertake independent research have been provided by

additional library books, information on CD ROMS, and by access to the Internet. There is a varied programme of educational visits, including a residential visit for Year 6 children. Visitors include speakers from local churches, the police and members of the local community. Special music, drama and sporting activities are featured regularly. Some take place at other schools or are performed specially for parents. From Year 3, children are able to join a range of after school clubs. Some parents feel that insufficient activities are provided outside lessons, but inspection evidence does not support this view.

12. Children are encouraged to take on responsibilities, such as older children helping younger ones with reading and assisting in the library. The work of the school council enables children's views and concerns to be taken into account. Good support is given to charities. A joint project with St. Mary's Church has enabled over toys and £600 to be donated to help those living in a squatter's camp near Johannesburg. Relationships throughout the school are very good and this provides a firm foundation for a happy learning environment.
13. Attendance is good. Over the last three years attendance levels have been above the national average for primary schools. A particularly strong feature is that there is very little unauthorised absence. Children arrive punctually and lessons and other activities start and finish on time. Such features make an important contribution to learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the period of the inspection. The overall quality of teaching is very good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection that judged teaching to be good. It is now particularly strong in the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Years 5 and 6. It is less strong in Years 3 and 4, but still good.
15. In all the lessons observed, teachers provided a positive climate for learning so children felt valued and important. Displays of children's work enhance the environment and boost their confidence and self-esteem. Sensible routines are established and time is used well. Teachers plan and prepare lessons thoroughly which impacts positively on the progress children make. Careful assessments are made so teachers know what children need to learn next. Support staff are deployed effectively and make a valuable contribution to children's learning, particularly those with special educational needs. Parents and visiting experts are used successfully by teachers to enrich the curriculum and give additional help in lessons. This is particularly so in art, information and communication technology and design and technology.
16. Teaching at the Foundation Stage is of a very high standard across all the areas of experience. This stems from the teacher's very good knowledge of the needs of children of this age. Tasks are often imaginative and structured well so that they help to make children feel confident and secure in their learning. The teacher and support staff work really well together as a team and set a very good example to the children.
17. Early literacy and numeracy skills are taught effectively so children are developing a good vocabulary that helps them to read and to work with numbers. An example of this was a literacy lesson in which children successfully identified words beginning with the letter 'y'. Dictionaries were used competently to find words such as yawn and yak, and children joined in an interesting discussion about the word yo-yo.

18. The good teaching at Key Stage 1 and 2 includes the efficient organisation of resources and the use of a range of teaching strategies to help move children's learning forward successfully. A strong emphasis is rightly given to basic skills and the national initiatives on literacy and numeracy have been introduced well. Teachers have very high expectations of children's behaviour and successfully motivate them to do their best. Lessons have a clear structure and purpose. They often begin with reminders about previous work and how it links with the new tasks to be undertaken. An example of this was a Year 5 history lesson on Tudor explorers. During the introduction, the teacher prompted the children effectively to recall the previous lesson's work on life at sea. This helped build their confidence and understanding of what needed to be done and, as a result, they made good progress in their learning.
19. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and some have high level skills in subjects such as English, music and information and communication technology. All this is shared effectively with children and helps them to make good progress. Class discussions are conducted well and practical tasks capture children's interest and ensure high levels of concentration. An example of this was an art lesson in which Year 3 children enthusiastically and quickly began the process of moulding clay. At the end of lessons, children are frequently brought together as a class to share what they have achieved and to learn from one another. These are enjoyable sessions and children show considerable pride in their efforts. Sometimes opportunities are missed for children to propose and try out their own solutions to scientific problems and to apply their information and communication technology skills across the curriculum.
20. Much of the teaching observed was of a very high quality. Features of such teaching include:
- very good use of time, support staff and resources;
 - well organised group work with tasks that appeal to children's interests and motivate them to want to learn. An example of this was a Foundation Stage reading lesson with a range of group activities, including paired reading, dictionary work and the use of talking books;
 - imaginative presentation of ideas, such as the creation of a wall of memory pockets for children in Year 5;
 - making sure that all children are sufficiently challenged and have to think hard. For example, an information and communication technology lesson for older children in which they created spreadsheets to show the cost of carpet for each room in a house;
 - high expectations of what can be achieved in the time available, especially in mental arithmetic;
 - ensuring that children know how to improve their work. Very good examples of this were seen in the teaching of music which is a strength of the school;
 - a sense of fun and enjoyment of learning which encourages children to develop their skills effectively.
21. Throughout the school, teaching of children with special educational needs is good. Their individual programmes of work are written well and teachers ensure that class activities are matched appropriately to their needs. They receive some specialist support, mostly in class, and this helps them to make good progress.
22. The school has a small number of children for whom English is an additional language. They all speak English fluently and teachers ensure that they participate

fully in all lessons. Their progress is monitored carefully.

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

23. At the time of the last inspection the curriculum was found to be broad and balanced, although shortcomings were noted in the provision for information and communication technology, and for design and technology. The staff and governors acted quickly and effectively to bring about the necessary improvements in both subjects. Indeed, these are both now strong subjects in the school's curriculum.
24. The present curriculum is a varied and challenging one, of very good quality. It complies fully with all statutory requirements. The school attaches great importance to children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. The national initiatives in these subjects have been implemented energetically. This has been done without putting at risk the broad curriculum of other subjects, a balance appreciated by parents. Religious education is taught in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. The school has also set in place well-constructed programmes in sex education and ensures that children learn about safety and healthy living. Children begin to learn about what is involved in citizenship within a democratic society, both through explicit lessons and through taking part in representative activities, such as the school council. Lessons in science, while well taught, sometimes do not allow children sufficient opportunity to investigate problems, to propose their own solutions and to test them out.
25. Curriculum provision for the Foundation Stage is very good and links well with the National Curriculum at Key Stage 1. It successfully enables children to achieve the required early learning goals by the time they reach the age of five. As a result of very good teaching, many exceed these levels before they leave reception. Although there is no designated outdoor play area every opportunity is taken to extend learning using the facilities available. Care for plants, simple word processing, cooking, gymnastics, drawing, painting and carrying out simple experiments stimulate children's curiosity in the world around them. The curriculum is vibrant and stimulating and does much to motivate children and to promote excellent personal and social development.
26. From Year 3 the school provides a good range of club activities for the children. These vary according to the season of the year, but typically include a good range of sports, choir and recorder, computer and wildlife studies.
27. The school takes seriously the need to ensure that all the different groups of children for whom it caters can gain maximum benefit from its programmes. Its equal opportunities policy explains the measures it takes to make certain all school activities are suited both to girls and to boys. In one instance, the school has reviewed critically its curriculum and resources in the foundation class in order to meet the needs of a cohort of children in which boys heavily outnumber girls. The inspection evidence confirms the school's success in ensuring equality of provision. A good programme has been set in place to identify more able children and those with particular gifts and talents. A teacher takes special responsibility for the oversight of these children's progress. Teachers plan activities in many of their lessons to extend the children who

learn quickly and the school also provides extension lessons where it feels further challenge is needed.

28. The previous inspection found the provision for children with special educational needs was good. The co-ordinator for this area of the curriculum left the school recently and it is in the process of finding a permanent replacement. Meanwhile, a temporary, part-time teacher co-ordinates the special needs provision. She knows the school well and a good level of provision is being maintained. Class teachers ensure children share the full programme of work and that tasks they do in lessons are matched well to targets set in their individual education plans. Children receive some additional support from the part-time co-ordinator and another part-time teacher as well as from learning support assistants. This is directed well and helps the children make good progress. Their self-esteem is maintained and they are enabled to enjoy success.
29. The school roll includes children of several nationalities and ethnic groups. At the time of the inspection eight of these children were learning English as a second, or additional language. All these children are fluent in English. The school checks their progress carefully and they participate fully in all aspects of its work. Good links are maintained with their parents to make sure they fully understand how they can be involved in their child's education.
30. Relations between the different ethnic groups in the school are harmonious. There is no evidence whatever of negative or stereotypical behaviour or language in the school. A racial incidents register is maintained in case there might be incidents with racial undertones and teachers have written guidance on how to deal with any which might arise. The children all settle well into classroom life and activity, working alongside the rest of their class, undertaking the same range of activities and achieving success across the curriculum.
31. The last inspection found that the arrangements the school made to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development were satisfactory and in some respects good. The school has built on the strengths reported at that time. Provision for spiritual, moral and cultural development is now very good and makes a very important contribution to the all-round richness of the school's curriculum. The arrangements made for social development are excellent. The school has a thorough written policy setting out how it intends to maximise children's development in these areas of learning. The policy helps teachers to make the most of opportunities that arise in the course of lessons in many subjects.
32. Through its highly effective assemblies and acts of collective worship, children are encouraged to learn about the beliefs and values of others and to think about their own. Their spiritual development is further extended in religious education lessons, especially when they are taught about the range of manifestations of religious faith across different cultures. In subjects such as art, science and English the children are often struck by wonder at life forms, empathy with others in need, and moved by poetic expression and feeling.
33. Children refine their understanding of right and wrong in discussions about plot and character in literature and about their duty to the environment in science. In an excellent assembly, they watched a short improvisation about cloning, provided by

Year 6 children. Not only was this an acknowledgement of the start of National Science Week, but it also drew the children into reflection on a serious and contemporary moral issue. In class, teachers set an excellent example of fairness and they expect honesty and generosity from their children.

34. Social responsibility is learned in many aspects of school life and is a real strength of the school. In lessons, children learn to collaborate well in small groups. They take on duties as librarians and as monitors for dinner times, for infant play times and for collecting registers. They elect representatives to the school council, learning in the process something of how a representative democracy works. Older children support the learning of younger ones in reading and computer activities. Swimming is organised so that the youngest children are helped on the coach and in the changing room, by older children. Family service at lunchtime is a civilised social occasion in which children learn manners and look after each other's needs. It makes a very important contribution to the polite and courteous ethos of the school. A strong programme in support of charities, such as the Meningitis Trust, brings home to the children their wider social responsibilities. An annual residential study trip for older children helps them learn about social living outside the home environment.
35. The school's strong programme of work in the arts lays a good foundation for children's cultural development and parents are rightly appreciative of this provision. A thorough multicultural policy is implemented to help the children come to understand the breadth of cultural activity celebrated in Britain today. Visitors to the school share their own cultural experience with the children. For example, a Japanese lady enjoyed telling the children about life in Japan as she taught them some traditional Japanese crafts. Children e-mail French and American penfriends. Links have been established with schools and children's centres in third world countries, such as Senegal and Gambia. The school has joined in a parish initiative to support a centre for displaced children in Johannesburg. Studies in local history contribute well to an awareness of more local culture, for example why the area has developed in the way that it has and how people earn their living there.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. Very good provision is made for children's welfare and guidance. There is a friendly atmosphere in the school that enables children to feel secure and to have confidence in raising any concerns. Teachers and other staff ensure that a high standard of pastoral care is provided. Such features are much appreciated by parents.
37. Health and safety arrangements receive a high priority and include a regular programme of staff training. Children are benefiting from improvements to outdoor play facilities and alterations to the entrance to improve road safety. Illness and accidents are dealt with competently, although the treatment area has limitations. Governors have approved plans for a new quiet/sick room and intend that works will be undertaken as soon as funding becomes available. There are effective procedures

in place for child protection. The health education programme includes good provision for sex education. The school is working closely with Colchester Borough Council and the police so that older children receive good advice about the dangers from drug abuse. There are effective arrangements for dealing with any child protection issues that may arise.

38. Excellent arrangements are made for monitoring and supporting children's academic and personal development. This reflects improvements made since the last inspection. There is an on-going process whereby class teachers carefully assess children's performance and set individual targets for improvement. This provides a firm basis for helping children to progress and for advising parents at consultation meetings and in written reports. Personal development is well supported through the opportunities provided by school visits and extra curricular activities.
39. Very good arrangements are in place for promoting high standards of behaviour and good attendance. Parents are given very clear advice about the school's procedures for attendance and cooperate well. They give prompt notification of the reasons for absence. Registration work is undertaken efficiently and the education welfare officer visits half-termly. The behaviour and anti-bullying policies provide clear procedures to support the school's high expectations. They are implemented in a fair and consistent manner, including sanctions for dealing with misdemeanours. The school rules are made clear to the children and very good behaviour is recognised by certificates and commendations at assemblies.
40. Significant improvements have been made in the school's assessment and record keeping systems since the last inspection. Children's progress is closely monitored from the time they start school until they leave. Very clear procedures have been laid down for assessing literacy and numeracy on a regular basis, for example, by termly tests in reading, writing and mathematics. The results of these checks are computerised and used to plan new work matched to children's differing abilities in order to improve their levels of achievement. As a result, assessments give a better picture of each child's progress, enabling specific targets to be set for improvement. In addition, staff keep their own records of what has been achieved and pass these on to the next teacher. The school assessment leader keeps a close eye on how well the systems are working and helps staff develop their own expertise in assessment. Teachers keep marking up to date and provide helpful comments so children can see how to improve their work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. There is a very high level of parental satisfaction and parents feel that this is a very successful school. They greatly value the wider aspects of education that are provided which is especially helpful in children's personal development. Nearly all parents are very pleased with their child's progress, the high standards of behaviour and the quality of teaching and management. The happy, caring and supportive environment is commended and the school has very good relationships with parents. Inspectors fully support these positive views.
42. Some parents would like to see higher standards in the national tests. A few are concerned about homework arrangements for older children whilst others feel there should be more activities outside lessons. Inspection evidence indicates that children's current achievement in English, mathematics and science is at a higher level than for similar age groups last year. The homework arrangements for all children are effective. School clubs, sporting and music activities provide a good

range of opportunities for older children outside lessons.

43. The school has very good links with parents. Regular newsletters are sent about school events and parents are advised early in the autumn term about the main areas to be studied. A particularly strong feature is the welcome given to parents and the friendly and helpful manner in which any queries can be discussed informally with staff. The termly consultation meetings enable parents to keep up to date with how their child is getting on. The contents of annual written reports provide good information on achievements in all subjects and identify targets for improvement. The prospectus and the governors' annual report contain very helpful information about the school. However, they do not fully comply with legal requirements. The prospectus needs to include a reference to parents' rights to withdraw their child from religious education and collective worship. The governors' report needs to include the required information regarding provision for children with disabilities as well as progress on the Action Plan arising from the last inspection.
44. Parents' contributions to the life and work of the school are very good. A number of parents undertake voluntary work by helping in classes, with extra curricular clubs and school visits. The support parents give to children for work undertaken at home makes an important contribution to their learning. Governors consult parents when reviewing policies, for example the home/school agreement and the revised admissions policy. The Friends of Millfields receive good support in their full programme of social and other fund raising events. Over £4,000 was donated to the school last year to improve facilities for the children, including the provision of two playhouses.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. The previous inspection showed the management and efficiency of the school were good. The report concluded that leadership was purposeful and included a clear vision of the school's future. The school has undergone considerable change in the last two years. Most of the senior and more experienced staff, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, have left, mainly because of retirement or promotion. In addition, a significant number of governors are new to their role. The school has moved from Grant Maintained Status to Foundation Status and has changed its admission policy to give first priority to children living within its recognised catchment area. Through all this the school has maintained its very good climate for learning as identified in the earlier inspection.
46. The new headteacher and deputy headteacher work very well together. Leadership is very good and provides a clear sense of direction with the interests of children put first. It is held in high regard by parents. Strengths in the leadership stem from a positive and strong approach to team building, successful implementation of national initiatives and emphasis on raising standards and quality of children's work. Realistic targets for improvement have been set and everyone is determined they will be met. Policies and schemes of work are updated regularly and give good guidance to teachers about programmes of work and the management of children. There is a clear expectation that children take pride in their work and develop a mature and responsible attitude to learning. This expectation centres not just on their academic achievements, but also on social, cultural and artistic skills. Parents support this approach because they want the school to be concerned with the development of the "whole child." They value the way the school has ensured that subjects, such as music, art and drama, remain important within the curriculum.
47. Day to day management of the school is very good and enables all staff to get on with their jobs successfully. Visitors are made to feel welcome and are dealt with in a very

pleasant manner. Examples of this were seen with visiting experts and parents helping in classrooms. Staff and governors are proud of the atmosphere and environment in which children work. The school's ethos is reflected successfully in its daily life and includes very good relationships and equality for all.

48. The headteacher rightly places emphasis on the importance of monitoring, evaluating and developing further the quality of teaching. He has undertaken a programme of formal observation of lessons with feedback to teachers that has included agreed actions and strategies for support. This is particularly important because of the changes in staff over the last two years and because it helps to identify issues for discussion by the school.
49. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and keen to raise standards further in their areas of the curriculum, although some are relatively new to the responsibility. They monitor standards by looking at teachers' planning and children's work. Particular importance has been placed on literacy and numeracy and this has helped to bring about significant improvements, especially in literacy.
50. The school's approach to the teaching and management of children with special educational needs is good, but is currently under review. This is because the school is in the process of replacing the special needs co-ordinator who left recently. The current temporary arrangement of a special needs co-ordinator for only one day a week is working well at present, but it is difficult for her to have a full management oversight of all aspects of the school's provision. The arrangement relies heavily on an already well-organised system of support for the children and the determination of the temporary co-ordinator to ensure that this is maintained. The headteacher and governors are aware of this and are considering options for the future.
51. The school manages its budget excellently. The present budget is likely to show a small deficit that will be met from accumulated surpluses. This will leave a smaller but adequate sum in hand for any unforeseen circumstances. A good development plan identifies priorities clearly and funds are allocated to meet these. The headteacher and governors rightly see the need for additional expenditure on the library and on information and communication technology, as priorities. They are also reviewing the management structure of the school to ensure that it meets the school's changing needs. Governors regularly review the effectiveness of the implementation of their development plan and make adjustments as necessary during the year. Money allocated for specific purposes is used correctly.
52. A recent audit of the school's finances makes only minor recommendations, some of which have already been implemented. The governors' oversight of spending is very effective indeed.
53. The governors are sharply aware of the school's academic and pastoral performance. They analyse data on children's attainment carefully and they know how they are placed in comparison with other schools. They set good targets for improvement and show a clear determination to raise standards still further.

Spending in major areas is always subject to competitive tendering. For staff training in information and communication technology for example, several potential contractors were invited to make presentations before one was selected to provide the training programme. This very effective management of resources, together with the achievements of the school, means that it gives good value for money.

54. The school is well staffed with qualified teachers and learning support assistants. It is a deliberate policy of the governing body to provide additional support wherever possible to ensure that children make good progress in their work. For instance, the deputy headteacher does not have a class responsibility but teaches small groups, mainly in Year 2. This enables him to carry out managerial duties efficiently alongside his teaching commitments. A part time member of staff teaches music ably to older children and also takes groups for mathematics. The reception class has two qualified nursery nurses who work closely with the class teacher for the benefit of children newly starting school. A substantial amount of the school's resources is used to keep class sizes to 30 or below which ensures that more individual attention can be given to children of all abilities. Teachers have been effectively trained in the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and, more recently, in information and communication technology. They are appraised regularly under the national scheme and relevant teaching and management targets are set. New staff are carefully inducted into the school in line with a thorough policy drawn up since the last inspection.
55. The school and grounds continue to be well maintained. They are set in attractive surroundings and the building provides a welcoming atmosphere in which the high quality displays of children's work are a significant feature. Although teaching areas are satisfactory for teaching the National Curriculum, the open-plan nature of the school means that there are limitations on quiet times. Since the last inspection, the computer suite has been brought fully into operation and is supporting the development of information communication technology effectively. The library area is small and is also used for group teaching. As a result, children have limited access to it for research work. The school grounds have been imaginatively developed and are used effectively to extend the curriculum beyond the classroom, for example, in orienteering.
56. Resources have improved since the last inspection and are now good. For information and communication technology they are very good. Learning materials are bright, attractive, organised well and easily accessible. A good range of apparatus in physical education and instruments in music effectively supports teaching and learning. A concerted effort has been made to improve resources for both children and staff in the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Good use is made of the local environment and topic loans from the public library.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. There are no Key Issues, but in order to improve the school still further, governors, headteacher and staff should consider the following minor weaknesses for inclusion in an action plan:
- (1) the need to give children greater responsibility in proposing and trying out their own solutions to scientific problems;
 - (2) the need to increase opportunities for the application of information and communication technology skills across the curriculum;
 - (3) improvement in the school's library facilities;
 - (4) ensuring that the school's prospectus and governors' annual report to parents comply fully with legal requirements.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	55
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5%	36%	44%	15%	0%	0%	0%

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

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)	0	228
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	19

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	15

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	3.35	School data	0.3
National comparative data	4.6	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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	17	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	15	16
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	28	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (91)	90 (91)	93 (100)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	16	17
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	28	28	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (94)	93 (98)	97 (98)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	13	14

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	10	11
	Girls	13	10	13
	Total	21	20	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78] (80)	74 (80)	89 (89)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	10	10
	Girls	13	12	14
	Total	20	22	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (91)	81 (91)	89 (94)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	195
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	28.5

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	124

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	477,711
Total expenditure	470,562
Expenditure per pupil	2,020
Balance brought forward from previous year	46,092
Balance carried forward to next year	53,241

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	228
Number of questionnaires returned	98

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	39	7	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	50	9	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	65	1	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	50	14	4	0
The teaching is good.	49	43	5	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	47	14	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	45	4	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	47	7	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	42	39	12	1	6
The school is well led and managed.	35	53	4	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	54	6	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	46	16	3	10

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

58. Children receive a very good education in the reception class. The standard of teaching is extremely high and children make very good progress as a result. Many have exceeded the early learning goals and are now working at or above National Curriculum Level 1. Planning for the foundation curriculum is thorough and based on individual assessments made soon after children enter school in September. The results of these assessments show that the ability of each intake varies from year to year and is above average for the current year.

Personal, social and emotional development

59. Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. Teaching places great emphasis on this aspect of the curriculum and activities are planned thoughtfully. Children settle quickly into class routines and thrive in the secure learning environment. Relationships in the teaching team are excellent and children respect the adults who work with them and copy their very good example. They learn to respect their classmates through listening to everyone's opinions in discussions and take turns to speak. All are eager to take part in the rich and varied activities and grow in self-confidence and esteem as their skills and knowledge increase. They enjoy sharing their own and others' achievements, such as receiving certificates for good reading in assembly.
60. Whatever the activity, whether working alone or in groups, children can be relied on to carry out the task well. They work independently and can make personal choices, particularly when they are the 'star of the week'. One child asked his father, an officer in the fire brigade, to speak to the class about his job. Everyone learnt a great deal and many children asked relevant questions, particularly about the uniform and equipment. Parents value this opportunity for children to shine. One comment in a child's reading diary stated that "A. had enjoyed his week being a 'star'. He's a different boy!"

Communication, language and literacy

61. Very good progress is made in all aspects of literacy. Teaching is very skilful and many different approaches are used to develop children's speaking and listening, reading and writing skills. Adults talk to children at every opportunity and in such a way as to draw out their responses. They are trained to listen well and all carry out instructions quickly and quietly. Imaginative role-play activities are created for children to improve their spoken language. In the veterinary surgery, for instance, they take on different character parts. Children dress up as the vet, assess the needs of the pet animals brought to them by others, including the teacher, and make written appointments for the next visit.

62. In small groups, children listen to stories on headphones, following the text closely, and use picture dictionaries for finding information. In paired reading, children value sharing a book with Year 6 partners who have been trained well to help with this weekly activity. They become great friends and relate to each other in the playground and around the school. One Year 6 child wrote some excellent comments in the reading diary, which said "N read *The Chase* really, really well. All his sight words were read correctly ... Well done! PS. See you next week, I'm looking forward to it." Children practise handwriting and learn to write their names legibly. Some write a story in simple sentences and make little booklets about what they like and dislike.

Mathematical development

63. Children do well in mathematics as staff take great care in matching work closely to their ability levels. Through challenging activities they develop matching, sorting and counting skills. On one such occasion, the class sat on the carpet and listened for the number of beats made by an adult on a wooden block. Children wrote their answers correctly on a marker board and held these up to be checked. Many count forwards and backwards and use numbers, often beyond twenty, which they can chant aloud. They estimate sensibly how many sweets are in a jar and check the number who stay for lunch and sandwiches.
64. Great emphasis is placed on writing numbers correctly and developing an extensive vocabulary. Children can explain in simple terms how they have worked out an addition or subtraction sum and record this on paper. They are becoming more accurate in solving simple mental arithmetic problems. Mathematical language is used well to describe flat shapes, such as circles, squares and rectangles and three dimensional cubes, cones and cylinders.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

65. Teaching is imaginative and activities are closely linked to ensure that children have a good knowledge and understanding of the world. For instance, in science activities they can tell the difference between objects that float and sink and record their results in a clever and artistic way. In gardening, they sow seeds and take care of the plants growing in the classroom and their small garden. Computers are used effectively for simple word processing using different colours and fonts. Children know how to use a computer mouse correctly and are able to put weather features on a map of the British Isles. They access CD-Roms with talking books and an encyclopaedia to develop reading skills. In cooking, children make gingerbread men and count the number of buttons on the coat. Making pancakes is popular and they love to toss and eat them afterwards. Parents and grandparents visit to talk about the past. The story of Noah's Ark stimulated a discussion on promises. Members of the class came up with ideas of their own, for example, not to swallow the toothpaste when cleaning teeth and not to get up in the night.

Physical development

66. As a result of excellent teaching, all children do exceptionally well in gymnastics and achieve a high standard. They show good control of their bodies when travelling around the hall and working on apparatus. Many are skilled at making different shapes and balancing on mats and benches. All have good spatial awareness and know how to change their positions without bumping into each other. They create imaginative sequences of movement to include walking, jumping, hopping, skipping and making shapes. They work with enthusiasm, showing skill in everything they do. The teacher gives consistent praise for effort and they delight in doing well. Although the reception class has no designated activity area of its own outside, every opportunity is taken to use the existing playground equipment fully. In the summer, large apparatus is set out on the grass to help improve physical proficiency. Where more precision is required, most children show good manipulative skills in cutting, sticking and painting. The teacher expects tools and equipment to be used safely and children use them responsibly.

Creative development

67. Through drawing, painting and modelling with a variety of materials, children are able to express their ideas fully. They explore different techniques, colour and texture, and make large composite pictures such as one of a garden showing animals and birds. The teacher expects all to create their own ideas. To help, she gives structured choices, for example, in press printing, where they designed a pattern and selected the paint shade. Staff value children's work highly and display it attractively for all to see and share. The class teacher is an experienced musician and lessons are excellent. She encourages children to take an active part in the work, paying close attention to different types of music. They compare brisk and leisurely pieces and discuss which one they prefer, likening the fast music to "a king and his army" and the slow to "a snail slithering along". Most children know the names of percussion instruments and play them with great zest and enthusiasm when accompanying fast pieces, such as "The Flight of the Bumblebee."

ENGLISH

68. The previous inspection found that overall attainment in English was in line with national standards. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work during the present inspection show that there has been a significant improvement. Children's attainment at the end of both Key Stage 1 and 2 are now well above standards expected for that age.
69. The school's results over the last four years in reading and writing national assessments for children aged seven have been consistently much better than the national average. The results in English over the same period for children aged eleven have been more variable, although there was an upward trend. The 2000 results in English for the older children were in line with the national average, which was not as good as the previous year. The percentage of them reaching the higher levels was below average and compared to similar schools, the 2000 English results were also below average. The school had predicted the lower results for children aged eleven because their progress had been tracked carefully and the ability of each intake varies from year to year. It expects the 2001 results to be higher and the inspection findings indicate that this is likely to be so.
70. The National Literacy Strategy has been introduced effectively and teachers feel it is helping to raise standards. Texts are chosen well and appeal to the children's interests. Teachers ensure that literacy skills are reinforced in other lessons. For

example, in a Year 6 history lesson about exploration children were encouraged to use key words correctly, such as indigenous, trade and colonisation. Children's learning over time and in lessons at both Key Stage 1 and 2 is good, including those with special educational needs. Progress is checked carefully so teachers know what children need to learn next. Brighter children in Year 2 and 6 are taught in small groups. This assists their progress, but also benefits other children in the year groups because they are able to receive more attention from their class teacher.

71. Children's speaking and listening skills are very good. Almost all children speak confidently and communicate meaning clearly. They listen attentively, respond correctly to directions and answer questions well, often using their own experiences to illustrate a particular point. By the age of seven, many children are able to offer opinions and express preferences. Examples of this were seen in a Year 2 lesson in which children responded to questions about why they liked a poem by Colin McNaughton. Some said "because it's funny" and one said "I like the style." Junior children express ideas fluently using a good, wide vocabulary. They use appropriate subject terminology, such as in mathematics and science, and speak confidently to different audiences. An example of this was an assembly led by a Year 6 drama group in which children took the part of robots in a consideration of the issue of cloning. They used humour successfully to help younger children begin to see the problems involved.
72. Children's reading skills are very good. They enjoy books and read regularly at home and at school. Home school reading diaries are used effectively as a means of dialogue between parent, child and teacher. They include targets to help children improve. At the infant stage, children use letter sounds successfully when tackling new words, but many also use illustrations, context and prediction to help them. By the age of seven, most read fluently and expressively. They have favourite books and authors and express likes and dislikes. Junior children read a wide range of texts and many speak knowledgeably about different authors. By the age of eleven, most read confidently and fluently, often with very good expression. They show good understanding in discussions about characters and storylines. Many older children are able to read and understand complex material. For example, they have studied Shakespeare's Macbeth and have been to see a stage performance of the play. Almost all children understand how to use the small school library for reference and many have very good research skills to find information.
73. Children's writing skills are good and they are happy to work at tasks that challenge them. Many infants use simple grammar and punctuation correctly to present their imaginative and factual writing. They write stories, poems, letters and character profiles, for example, and use writing well across the curriculum. They understand the importance of clear and neat presentation and are often able to communicate their meaning very effectively. For example a Year 2 child wrote, "My garden on Saturday morning was completely white as though someone had covered it with glittery cotton wool."
74. Junior children build well on their literacy skills. Spelling and punctuation are mostly correct and handwriting is of a good standard. At the age of eleven and earlier, many children have a good knowledge of grammatical structure. For example, Year 3 children have a growing understanding of the use of plurals, connectives,

apostrophes and alliteration. Appropriate attention is given to the planning and drafting of written work and the results often show imagination and good use of vocabulary. For example a Year 6 child wrote, "The oddly lit moon showed the gloomy and dull flowers leaning limply towards the ground." In another example, the child wrote, "Where there was once a vegetable garden there was now a barren, infertile space, silent and still."

75. As in the previous inspection, the quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory. In ten out of the twelve lessons observed, it was good or even better. This includes the specialist teaching of children with special educational needs. Teaching is particularly strong at Key Stage 1 where it is usually very good. All teachers show a good understanding of the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy and share their subject knowledge effectively with children. Lesson planning is very clear and teachers know what children are to learn and how.
76. Classes are managed very effectively and children are motivated to do their best and behave well. They have very good attitudes towards tasks set and this means they work quickly and with a sense of purpose. Activities are matched appropriately to children's needs and questions are used skilfully to assess their understanding and to move learning forward. This has a positive impact on children's progress. The best teaching stems from high expectations of what children can achieve in the time available. Explanations and directions are clear and work builds systematically on what children already know and can do. An example of this was seen in a Year 2 lesson in which children studied the text, "The Tummy Beast", by Roald Dahl. The teacher enabled the children to capture the mood of the poem quickly and accurately by getting them to read with considerable expression. They enjoyed using the text to tease out the meaning of particular words and phrases. At both the junior and infant stage, but more particularly at the junior stage, homework is used effectively to support and enrich children's learning.

MATHEMATICS

77. Attainment in mathematics is above average at both key stages. This was so in the last inspection. The results in Standard Assessment Tests during the intervening time show a more mixed picture. In 2000 standards were in line with national averages, but below when compared to similar schools. Since then, much effort has been put into analysing data to find the reasons for this so standards can be improved. Progress is now more closely checked and results regularly recorded on computer. Teachers use this information to plan lessons carefully based on what has been taught before and the ability level of their children. At both key stages brighter ones are taught in small groups by the deputy headteacher and an additional support teacher. Class sizes are inevitably smaller and all children receive more attention as a result, including those with special educational needs. The National Numeracy Strategy is being successfully implemented and new mathematics textbooks have been introduced. All these steps are helping to raise attainment.
78. The school has focussed on several aspects of mathematics recently including the development of mental and oral skills. This is helping to improve speed and proficiency in number work and enables children to tackle new tasks effectively. It is evident that they enjoy these sessions, particularly when there is a competitive element and a tight time limit. Multiplication tables are taught and it is expected that

they will also be learnt at home. Every opportunity is taken to practise and reinforce number bonds and to use these effectively in calculations. Great emphasis is rightly put on the correct vocabulary and time is given for children to explain how they work out their answers.

79. By the age of seven, children can read and write numbers to 100 and beyond and explain the value of the digits they use in their sums. They know that subtraction is the opposite of addition and halving the inverse of doubling. Most recognise simple fractions and write down their equivalents, one boy explained that "you put things (fractions) together to make a whole one or a half." In shape work, they use centimetres accurately to measure straight and "wiggly" lines with rulers and string. Children name flat and three-dimensional shapes correctly and talk about their characteristics. They identify and draw the half, quarter and three-quarter hours on a clock face.
80. By the age of 11, the majority of children are competent mathematicians and ably use their knowledge to work out answers to a range of problems. Year 6 like to play the game of "auction" in oral mathematics where they challenge one another's ability in numeracy. Skills, such as finding the missing number, rounding, doubling, halving, approximating and estimating, are used effectively in mental and written calculations. In practical shape and measures work, children learn how to use formulae to calculate the area of rectangles and then triangles. During the follow-up work most complete further examples, showing how much they had learned in the lesson introduction. Others, including those with special educational needs, are given additional help to do this. In grid work, children plot co-ordinates, draw two-dimensional shapes and rotate these four ways correctly. They know how to present data in a variety of forms, such as pie diagrams and bar charts, and can discuss which clearly gives the best information. A display in Year 6 showed some exemplary work on spreadsheet modelling using room measurements and multiplication facts.
81. Teaching is very good at Key Stage 1 and upper Key Stage 2 and good elsewhere. Lesson plans are thorough and based mainly on the national strategy. Most lessons contain a good balance of oral, practical and written work and are taken at a brisk pace. Children are very clear about what is expected of them as the learning objectives are written on the board and referred to throughout the lesson. They have very positive attitudes to mathematics, work hard and behave well. Written work is neat and exercise books show evident pride in their work. Marking is done regularly and helpful comments made for when corrections have to be done.
82. Teachers spend considerable time making their own high quality resources. Group work within the classroom is organised well and children seize the opportunity to exchange ideas and help each other recall previous work, for example, on right angles. Those with special educational needs make good progress because of the additional help given by learning support assistants. Homework is given which is often an extension of work taught in class. The use of the new commercial scheme occasionally restricts the development of more imaginative teaching approaches.

SCIENCE

83. When the school was last inspected children's attainment in science was found to be above average. They made good progress, although older and more able children did not have enough opportunity to develop and conduct simple experiments of their own. Today, science is a buoyant and prominent subject in the school's curriculum. Good standards have been sustained, with children at the ages of seven and eleven still

achieving above national expectations. However, the reservation previously made still pertains, because children are sometimes not given enough responsibility in proposing and trying out their own solutions to scientific problems.

84. In the 2000 programme of national tests and assessments, the attainment of the eleven year olds was similar to that of children in other schools nationally, and similar also to that of children in schools with a comparable intake to Millfields. This does not reflect any lowering of standards in the school. In fact the assessments show steady improvement over the past four years. However, national standards have risen even faster over that time, and the gap between attainment at Millfields and that in other schools has narrowed.
85. The children's work programme covers all the required areas of study in the National Curriculum. Most children by the age of seven can set up simple experiments following their teachers' directions. They observe results carefully and record them in words and pictures. Several can predict what will happen in an experiment and they always handle equipment safely and sensibly. They know the main stages of the life cycles of plants and animals, and they have learned why food and exercise are necessary to keep them healthy. They know that some materials in daily use, such as foodstuffs, are soft and easily manipulated, while others need special treatment before they change form. Most of the children use terms like "liquid" and "solid" naturally and correctly.
86. By the age of eleven, children have built very effectively on this sound foundation. They carry out experiments following accurately the instructions given and understand the importance of controlling factors that might make their experiment unreliable. They have learned about how species and habitats interact and about the interdependence of species as demonstrated by food chains. Children know something about micro-organisms and the spread of disease. Some very good individual study, conducted as homework, helped them learn about how vaccination and antibiotics contribute to the control of disease. They have a good understanding of how the properties of particular materials, such as insulation or conductivity, are important in their daily use. They have studied forces, including friction and gravity. In a very good unit of work, a visiting parent helped children make parachutes to demonstrate and measure the effects of air resistance. The children understand the units in which forces are measured and the equipment used for such measurement.
87. Children with special educational needs reach good levels of attainment in relation to their abilities. This is because teachers plan work suited to their needs and make sure adult help is on hand if necessary. Children learning English as an additional language are fluent and confident in their science work.
88. As at the last inspection, science teaching throughout the school is good. Its strengths lie especially in good organisation, confident direct teaching and the skilled use of additional adult help. Teachers notice and correct children's misunderstandings quickly and are alert to opportunities which arise to extend learning beyond the original lesson plan. In one good Year 2 lesson children worked in five groups to explore the extent to which some common foodstuffs can be changed by manual action, while others cannot. Later work will involve changing these materials by the application of heat. The children pulled, pushed and squeezed their samples, noting, for example, that bread was very tractable, while popcorn grains were not. Each of the five groups of children was supervised by an adult,

including a parent and a visiting governor. Children in one group had broken and whisked an egg into a basin. One child noticed that bubbles had formed on the surface of the liquid egg:

Child: Where did those bubbles come from?

Child: They must have been inside the egg.

Adult: Were they there when you broke the egg?

Child: No. I think they've got air in them. They were smooth to begin with.

Adult: How did the air get in then?

Child: It must have come in when we whisked it.

Adult: Where from?

Child: I think it came out of the air round us and into the egg.

89. A discussion like this, with excellent questioning leading to new insights, was made possible by the close presence of skilled adults in a lively practical activity which captured the attention of the children.
90. There are some minor weaknesses that need to be addressed. Teachers sometimes define too precisely the experiment to be conducted and children do not have sufficient chance to think of their own ways of solving problems and to test them out. The use of information and communication technology to extend science work is improving but could be used more. The school's science policy is currently under review and these are issues to be considered in that context.
91. Children have very good and positive attitudes to their work in science. They enjoy discussion and predicting the outcomes of experiments. They work enthusiastically and very cooperatively in groups and they present their work with care. They are proud of what they achieve. While these good attitudes owe much to the quality of science teaching, the school's overall provision for the subject also promotes interest and engagement. National Science Week was recognised in an excellent assembly that explored the moral and scientific issues involved in cloning, drawing on a short drama improvised by Year 6 children. Parents and governors with a particular interest in the subject help in lessons and share specialist expertise. During the inspection, a senior teacher from a local secondary school visited Millfields to meet Year 6 children and to work with them on experiments in light transmission. The school has very useful and well-maintained outdoor study areas and ponds. It also makes good use of field trips and residential study trips to enrich children's science learning.

ART AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

92. Four lessons were seen during the period of the inspection, three of them at Key Stage 2. Judgements were informed by a review of previous work, teachers' planning and interviews with a group of older children. Sufficient time is given to this area of the curriculum and the programme of activities is often lively and interesting. Overall, children are achieving above the level expected for their age and some work is of a very high standard. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in design technology where standards were found to be unsatisfactory. Standards in art at the last inspection were judged to be in line with those expected for children of a similar age with some examples of good work.

93. Children's learning, including those with special educational needs, is good in lessons and over time. At both key stages, children use materials and equipment sensibly and show increasing confidence and imagination in experimenting with different media. They generate good ideas and plan the design and making of products effectively, many with moving parts. For example, Year 1 children have made moving pictures in which they have successfully explored levers and sliding mechanisms. In another example, Year 2 children have successfully made moving toys which include simple winding mechanisms to help tell the story of Incy, Wincy Spider. Many children understand the importance of adapting and refining what they make in order to bring about improvements. They think about the order of their work and choose materials, tools and techniques carefully. Emphasis is rightly given to being aware of the purpose for which a product is made. An example of this was the design and making of slippers by Year 6 children. Their work included disassembling the headteacher's slippers to find out how they were made. They considered a range of needs, including appearance, safety, warmth and size. The slippers produced by the children showed designing, making and finishing skills of a high quality.
94. Children at both key stages show good skills in drawing, painting and colouring. This often helps them illustrate work effectively across the curriculum, for example in history and science. Their work also includes good quality printing, collage and the making of computerised pictures. They use digital cameras successfully to help them in their studies. As they move up through the school, their observational skills improve and they show growing confidence in the ability to represent what they have seen through pictures. For example, Year 6 children have used pastels to produce very pleasing pictures of the countryside. Children learn successfully about colour, shape, pattern and texture. An example of this was seen in a Year 1 lesson in which children began the process of creating a textured collage using a wide range of natural materials and objects they had collected, including shells, pebbles, leaves, feathers and twigs. The children made careful choices about what should go into the collage and much of their work was of a high quality. Appropriate attention is given to the work of well-known artists such as Van Gogh and Seurat. Children copy their styles effectively, such as when Year 4 children produced their own versions of "Checkered" by Wassily Kandinsky. These studies help children to appreciate the wide variety of ways different artists represent their feelings and experiences.
95. Teaching overall is very good. It is particularly strong at Key Stage 1. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm with the children really well. This has a positive impact on their progress. Lesson planning is very good and teachers ensure that appropriate resources are to hand. Visiting experts are used very effectively to demonstrate particular skills and to assist the children in their studies. This helps capture the children's interest and fire their imagination. For example, a potter was invited to help Year 2 children with clay work and their enjoyment throughout the lesson was obvious. They became engrossed in the task and produced work of a very good quality. Teachers ensure that children build up skills systematically. They use questions skilfully to assess understanding and to help children know how to improve their work. They make sure that opportunities are provided for children to select materials and equipment for themselves and to use a range of tools. This helps build their sense of responsibility. Children have very good attitudes towards their work and they behave really well. This means they remain on task and consistently do their best.

96. Displays of work around the school are often of a high standard. They help build children's visual awareness and creative development.

GEOGRAPHY

97. In geography, two lessons were seen, one at each Key Stage. A discussion with Year 6 children, scrutiny of lesson plans and displays and analysis of past and present work, show that attainment is average at both key stages. This was so at the last inspection.
98. There are some good features in the provision for geography. The school makes effective use of its grounds and nearby environment for first hand practical learning such as map reading. Orienteering skills are taught in a newly developed trail so that children understand compass bearings. During the inspection, the Year 5 class was prevented from studying the locality because of bad weather. In earlier class work they found towns and tributaries in the British Isles and Europe using large scale maps. In Year 6, children know facts about rivers, such as the Nile is the longest in the world and the Amazon the widest. Good links are made with history such as in studies on Ancient Egypt.
99. In Year 2, children are well supported by two teachers. They locate Jordan in the atlas and, with help, some can find map grid references. Through the travels of Barnaby Bear children learn about other places in the world and make comparisons with where they live. For example, one child wrote, "Japan has big buildings like the (Essex) University." Effective links are made with other subjects through, for instance, a study of George Stephenson and the invention of the Rocket and the first railways. Children then compared it with rocket travel into space, found Cape Canaveral in the atlas and searched a CD-Rom for information on Neil Armstrong.
100. Teachers are very good at making the subject interesting and alive for everyone, achieving an equal balance between using skills and gaining knowledge. Parents contribute to the work effectively by talking to classes about their own experiences, as in the example of Jordan. Children write to pen pals in America and this enables them to compare life styles in different countries. Much of the teaching is suitably linked to environmental issues, such as pollution and global warming and their effects on weather and sea levels. Staff organise a school journey every year to the Norfolk coast and the programme includes fossil collecting and studying coastal erosion. Children respond well to practical investigative work such as this and are looking forward to their visit next term. Very good links are made with literacy in Year 6 where they write evocative poems about the weather. They include verses such as:
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Snow sweeps about</i> | <i>Sun shines her golden rays</i> |
| <i>Crushing all in its icy talons</i> | <i>She shone on me</i> |
| <i>Mercy he is without</i> | <i>And moved away</i> |

HISTORY

101. Two history lessons were seen during the inspection. It is clear from this evidence and an examination of planning that children reach the expected levels in the subject. Standards have therefore been maintained since the last inspection. This is confirmed through discussion with Year 6 children. Displays, such as those on Tudor exploration, are effectively used to stimulate further interest in current topics.
102. Children demonstrate a thorough understanding of historical occasions events based on their studies of the Indus Valley civilisation, Tudors and Victorians. Older classes are enthusiastic about the visits made to support work in history, particularly to Kentwell Hall where they re-enacted Tudor customs and domestic life. They vividly recall dressing up in period costumes that they made in school with parent help. Another memorable visit was to the Imperial War Museum and the Cabinet War Rooms where children learned more about the Second World War. Afterwards, they acted as evacuees and remember wearing name tags, carrying gas masks and lunch bags.
103. When classes return from a visit they record their observations and find further evidence using information books, videos, CD-Roms and the Internet. Children have a natural curiosity about other cultures and are eager to know more about the traditions of countries such as Egypt during the time of the Pharaohs and the building of the pyramids. Those in Year 6 remember visiting the Colne Valley railway during their study of the Victorian era and came to understand how different classes of society lived and travelled in those times.
104. Teaching is good and tasks are well matched to interests and ability. Teachers go to great lengths to provide first-hand experiences wherever possible and good reference material when it is not. They borrow historical artefacts for children to handle, photographs and other resources. Good use is made of the history in the local environment, such as the siege of Colchester during the Civil War in the seventeenth century. In group discussion during one lesson, the class was asked to explore the different reasons for Drake's voyage round the world and to put them in order of importance.
105. Effective questioning by class teachers, who are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subject, helps to keep children motivated and focused on the topic. For example, one child described how grateful he was to his class teacher for urging him to learn more and to do further research at home during a topic on World War II "which sparked me off." Children like the way a history topic is introduced through time lines and questionnaires about what they know.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

106. Great strides have been made in this subject since the last inspection. At that time attainment was below average at the age of seven, and well below average at the age of eleven. Provision did not meet statutory requirements. The work programme was narrow, and information and communication technology skills were not applied in other subjects. While new hardware was being installed, this was not yet fully in use. Software provision was poor and staff lacked confidence in the subject. Information and communication technology became a key issue in that inspection.
107. Improvements since then have been dramatic. Children's work programme in

information and communication technology fully complies with statutory requirements and all areas of the National Curriculum are addressed. The programme now is dynamic and varied. An excellent new scheme of work is in place to make sure children's learning progresses smoothly from class to class. The new computer room, with fifteen, modern fully networked computers, is heavily timetabled and imaginatively used. The school is equipped with scanners and digital cameras and these are also fully used. A very good provision of high quality classroom computers ensures lessons in other subjects can draw on information and communication technology skills where necessary, although this does not always happen. Software provision is very good and extensive additional training has raised teacher skills and confidence to a high level.

108. The attainment of children at the ages both of seven and eleven is now above national expectations. By the time they are seven, the children are skilled in the use of the keyboard and mouse. They use items from file and edit menus and they know how to correct and alter their work. They use programmes such as Word and Publisher to design and set out their own written work, exploring a range of print fonts and colours. Many of the children import graphic elements from other programmes and place these correctly within their own texts. They know how to make simple graphs and charts to display mathematical or scientific information, and the more able can find and print items of information from a CD-ROM.
109. By the age of eleven, they have built strongly on these foundations. They have learned more advanced skills of page and text design through simple desk-top publishing. They can build and use spreadsheets and many have learned how to produce graphs and charts from spreadsheet data. They have learned about how computers can be programmed to control external devices. Year 5 children used CD-ROMs very well to search for information about Sir Francis Drake. Children in Year 6 used the Internet as part of their religious education programme to learn about Judaism, finding an information site about the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem which included a valuable video clip. Many older children regularly e-mail penfriends in the United States and some know how to attach photographs to their e-mails. Children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language take a full part in lessons and achieve well.
110. The teaching in every information and communication technology lesson seen was very good. This stems in part from the number of staff available to work with children during their timetabled lessons in the information and communication technology room. Sometimes the facilities are used for half a class of children at a time, with one child to each computer. At other times, whole classes use the room with children working in pairs. On most occasions, there are three adults present and, in lessons observed during the inspection, there were never fewer than two. In addition to the class teacher, the deputy head, an additional part-time teacher, skilled learning support assistants and volunteer parents all support the children in their work. This means that misunderstandings are detected very early and that children who find work simple can be challenged to extend themselves further. Lessons are imaginative in content and contribute to studies in other areas of work. The teachers are enthusiastic about the work and their lively, expressive manner communicates itself to the children. In one very good lesson, Year 6 children constructed spreadsheets. Their problem was to find the cost of carpet for each of the rooms in a house and then to use a simple statistics programme to display their comparisons graphically. This was an enjoyable and challenging lesson in which children had to apply skills learned previously to a new problem, and which augmented their mathematics work in a valuable way.

111. The staff are very aware of the importance of using the possibilities presented by information and communication technology in other subjects right across the curriculum. In most subjects some such applications have already been used. This is especially true in English. In other subjects, such as science, opportunities to deepen children's learning through the use of information and communication technology are not yet fully grasped.
112. Children's attitudes to the subject are very good. They are excited by the good quality of the hardware, and thrilled by their own successes. They delight in demonstrating their skills and achievements. They are confident in moving within and across programmes, print, save and file their own work independently and explore new applications with great enthusiasm. They work very maturely with one another. They are at ease with the language of the subject, and are excited by how much they still have to find out. These positive attitudes help them learn quickly. While they stem particularly from the very good teaching the children receive and the very good equipment available, there are other important factors. Governors and parents take a close interest in the children's information and communication technology programmes and contribute strongly to them. The chairman of governors oversees the subject on behalf of his colleagues. In an after school club, older children explore advanced techniques, such as making speaking books with animated graphics. The school is involved in a national information and communication technology research project and all the teachers are taking part in a high level national training programme. The school's response to this key issue in the last inspection has been excellent.

MUSIC

113. Music is a strength of the school. Children do well and reach above average standards at both key stages. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection when standards were in line with national expectations. Very good teaching, the provision of a wide and interesting range of musical instruments and the positive attitudes displayed by children towards the subject have led to the rise in standards. Excellent progress is made in reception and this is effectively built on through the school.
114. In assemblies, children sing in unison and two parts, often attempting quite difficult pieces, such as "Land of the Silver Birch." Many volunteer to play percussion instruments, such as tambourine, maracas and wood blocks to accompany this. The school orchestra performs well in front of the whole school with children playing violins, recorders, flutes and clarinets. When entering and leaving assembly, children listen attentively to music by classical and modern composers.
115. Already by the end of Key Stage 1 children know the names of many instruments and explore the different sounds they can make. They learn about pitch and tempo through playing the guiro, cabassa and bongo drums, for instance. All show good control, hold the instruments correctly and play enthusiastically. Together, in small

groups, children compose their own music to the story, "We're going on a Bear Hunt," sensitively taking each other's suggestions into account. Where there are small 'disagreements' about what instrument to play and when, the music teacher explains how to work this out sensibly. Children are very much involved in their own learning and are given every opportunity to be creative.

116. By the end of Key Stage 2, most children can sight read or perform by ear from simple notations. The few, who are not able to do so, accompany music making with singing, often recalling songs they have learnt in the past. Many can improvise tunes using xylophones, keyboards, drums and glockenspiels. In the Year 6 lesson, children practised "Stars, Hide your Eyes" for a future assembly. They made changes to their performance in the light of advice from the teacher and their own evaluations. The players were fired up by their success and suggested extending it further into dance, drama and 'dressing in black.'
117. The teaching of music is of a high quality throughout. It is taught mainly by a specialist who is a very good musician. This teacher has enormous flair and expects children to achieve high standards. In return, they are enthusiastic, confident and pleased with what they are able to do. Classes are very well managed, lessons are brisk in pace and no time is wasted. Other teachers are present and give additional support and guidance in lessons. This means that all children, including those who have learning difficulties, get the help they need at the required time and make good progress. Some have individual music tuition during school time that is provided by visiting specialists and this enriches their knowledge and understanding of the subject.
118. In addition to music lessons children attend choir, orchestra and recorder clubs. They perform concerts for parents and the community, who appreciate their high standard. There are good links with other schools at area music festivals. Resources are continually being improved, including CDs of ethnic music, thus supporting topics, for example, on India and reflecting the wider world.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

119. When the school was last inspected children's attainment in physical education was in line with national expectations at the ages both of seven and eleven. This is still the case.
120. The school's programme in the subject is a very thorough one, addressing all the required areas of the National Curriculum. Girls and boys have full access to all the activities, and children with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, participate fully.
121. Only a small number of lessons were seen during the present inspection. Two were gymnastics lessons for children in Years 1 and 2 and the other was a games lesson in Year 6. By the end of Year 2, most children show good levels of control and co-ordination in their gymnastics work. They use space well, with an awareness of the needs of others. They demonstrate a range of ways of travelling, rolling, jumping and alternating movements. All children are able to combine some of these movements into a sequence which can be refined and improved. They maintain balance and hold positions well in motion and in stillness. Most children are imaginative in their interpretations of set tasks.
122. By the age of eleven, children can maintain vigorous movement over a considerable

time, building up their general stamina. They understand and apply the rules of games, such as touch-rugby, well. They send and receive passes accurately and with a good appreciation of the needs of their partners in team or group activities. All children show a strong sense of sporting behaviour, recognising and praising each other's good performance.

123. The lessons seen were all taught well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to challenge and coach the children effectively. They explain tasks clearly and make effective use of children to demonstrate good performance. They encourage children to reflect on their own work and to refine it through practice. The importance of safety factors is stressed and teachers ensure children have a good understanding of the health implications of good exercise.
124. The school offers a good swimming programme. All classes from Year 1 enjoy swimming in a local pool for one term in the year. The school has arranged the programme so that older and younger classes swim in the same terms – older children helping younger ones on the coach and in the changing rooms. This contributes to the excellent social development of the children in the school. In most years, all the children are able to swim at least 25 metres by the time they leave at 11.
125. Although no dance lessons were seen during the inspection, it is a popular activity for the children. Athletics is an important part of the summer programme. The school makes excellent use of its outside areas for adventurous activities. A very good adventure apparatus course has been set up and this is used for orienteering activities. Children learn to follow a course around and through the obstacles using a sequence of signs and instructions.
126. Children enjoy the subject and take part with great enthusiasm. They behave very sensibly when expected to plan activities in response to set tasks, and work very well in groups or teams. They are attentive to their own and each other's safety. Relationships in lessons are very good and a sense of sportsmanship is evident on all occasions.
127. A good range of extra-curricular club activities supports the work in the subject. Children participate in tennis, football, netball and rugby clubs. There are also opportunities for rounders, dance, athletics and cricket. The school participates in local sports events and leagues and this helps to extend the children's knowledge and understanding of the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

128. Children's attainment in religious education when they reach the ages of seven and eleven is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection.
129. In their programmes of work children learn about beliefs, values and attitudes as well as about different religions. By the age of seven, most children can describe days which are specially important to them, and recognise that other people also have their own special days. They learn that many people celebrate particular times of the year, such as the Hindu Divali and the Christian Advent. They learn that people in different cultures celebrate important events, such as naming ceremonies, weddings, or

coming of age, in different ways. They know about the main events in the life of Jesus, about how and where Christians worship and about some key festivals in the Hindu and Jewish year.

130. By the age of eleven, children have built on this knowledge. They know about the books which are sacred to different faith groups and they have found out about the structure of the Bible. They have compared different versions of the creation story and reflected on the commitment placed on people to value and protect their environment. Children know something of the early history of the Jewish people, and particularly the events of the exile in Egypt. They can describe the leadership qualities of Moses and reinterpret the Ten Commandments in present day terms. They have studied prejudice and persecution, from the Roman assault on the Zealots at Masada, to the more recent holocaust. Children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language join in lessons confidently and successfully.
131. Children's learning is less secure in some aspects of the work programme than in others. In particular, they have rather a patchy knowledge of the key tenets and practice of Christians, and of the contents of the New Testament. Similarly, their knowledge of Hinduism as required by the syllabus is limited. These gaps are understandable. The school changed its syllabus when its grant maintained status came to an end. Under the old syllabus, time was spent studying some major areas of work no longer required. As a result, elements of the present programme received less attention. The new scheme of work is now in place throughout the school, and children are building up an appropriate body of knowledge.
132. Religious education teaching is good. Teachers lead class discussions well and appreciate the importance of debate and reflection in this subject. They treat matters of faith and religious custom with reverence and ensure that the children do likewise. They select interesting and engaging methods for their lessons, to capture the children's enthusiasm and help them understand ideas which are often complex. In one lesson, children read the events of Holy Week from Palm Sunday to the Last Supper. The teacher helped the children understand how Jesus must have felt at the time, through a short dramatic improvisation. One child was a witness at the Last Supper. The other children pressed him about how Jesus looked and felt. This helped them to an imaginative realisation that Jesus, alone among those present, knew about his impending death.
133. In another imaginative lesson, the class was learning about anti-Semitism and persecution. Many of the children already knew about the "Diary of Anne Frank" and this lesson explored the events surrounding the kindertransport – the forced evacuation of Jewish children during the Second World War. The fear and loneliness of the evacuees, travelling to foreign countries and with no assurance of seeing their parents again, made a deep impression on the class. This was brought home to them by the use of short original statements by the kindertransport children themselves. This good methodology helped the children appreciate the history of the Jewish people as a history of persecution.
134. The children have positive attitudes to their work in religious education. They are articulate and thoughtful. They treat matters of belief seriously and discuss them sensitively. They work well together in group activities, and always give their best

effort to their work.