

INSPECTION REPORT

**GREAT EASTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Dunmow

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115177

Headteacher: Mrs G Hopkins

Reporting inspector: Mr A Everix
23079

Dates of inspection: March 4th – 6th 2002

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Great Easton CE Primary School Snow Hill Dunmow Essex
Postcode:	CM6 2DR
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Pickford
Date of previous inspection:	February 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23079	Adrian Everix	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? What should the school do to improve further?
19653	Elizabeth Dickson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes behaviour and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
31421	Susan Rogers	Team inspector	English Art History Special educational needs English as an additional language	How well is the school led and managed?
27654	Robina Scahill	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography Music The Foundation Stage	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Great Easton Church of England Primary School teaches pupils between the ages of 4 and 11. At the time of the inspection, there were 138 pupils on roll. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds although none are from minority ethnic groups. Approximately five per cent of pupils claim free school meals, which is below the national average. About half of pupils live in areas other than Great Easton and rely on buses and taxis for transport to and from school. Nearly one-fifth of pupils require support for special educational needs which is around the national average. Eight pupils have statements for their needs, which is a high proportion when compared with most primary schools. These pupils have learning, physical, behavioural and visual difficulties. The attainment of pupils starting school is typical of that nationally. The school was judged to require special measures when it was first inspected in 1997. When re-inspected in 2000 by HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectors) it was found to have made sufficient improvement and was removed from this category. The current headteacher took up her post after the 2000 inspection. No teachers have left the school for a year. However, prior to this there had been a large turnover of staff. Confidence in the school is growing and twenty more pupils are being taught now than during the 2000 inspection. During the last school year, seventeen pupils joined the school and fourteen left, other than at the usual times. This was a high proportion of the school's roll and was mainly accounted for by families relocating.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school that is managing its improvement well. The school is very well led with the clear aims of raising standards and improving learning. Pupils' attainment by Year 6 is now above average in the key subjects of English and mathematics and, except for information and communication technology, meets national expectations in other subjects. Teaching is good overall, with several examples of very good teaching. However, there are weaknesses in the teaching of writing in Years 1 and 2. The school successfully promotes the personal development of its pupils. Although the cost per pupil is high, the school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Children in the reception class are taught very well and make rapid progress.
- Very effective teaching in Years 4 to 6 has led to pupils' good achievement in English and mathematics by the age of 11.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership which is driving the school's improvement.
- Pupils learn a sense of moral responsibility, to take learning seriously and to get on well with each other.
- Support staff work very well with teachers to enhance learning throughout the school.
- Very good relationships within the school community promote a caring and harmonious atmosphere.

What could be improved

- Pupils' achievements in information and communication technology (ICT).
- The standard of pupils' writing in Years 1 and 2.

These are the main areas for improvement and will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 2000. Overall, there has been good improvement since this time. Standards in English, mathematics and science are now higher by Year 6 compared to those in 2000. There is now a greater proportion of good or better teaching. Much has been achieved in addressing the key issues from the last inspection and further work on these is identified in the school's development plan. This document is now much improved and provides a clear, long-term agenda for the school's future and is linked well to finance. Better curriculum planning has ensured that more time is devoted to subjects other than English, mathematics and science, although there is still not enough emphasis on ICT. Assessment procedures have been developed well, especially in English, mathematics and science. The use of assessment to help curriculum planning in some other subjects is

still being developed. The leadership of nearly all subjects has improved and greater opportunities are planned for co-ordinators to monitor learning.

STANDARDS

The table of grades which is usually included in inspection reports and evaluates the school's performance in the Year 6 national tests, has been omitted. The number of pupils who took the tests in 2001 was less than ten. This means that the grades are not reliable indicators of the school's performance. When English, mathematics and science results were added together, the overall performance in tests was below the national average in 1999 and 2000 and above average in 2001. The school has been awarded a School Achievement Award for the improvement in its test results over the past few years. The targets set for the 2002 test results for 11-year-olds in English and mathematics are suitably challenging.

Inspection evidence shows that attainment in English and mathematics is above average by Year 6. In science, standards are average. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress throughout the school. The most able pupils achieve well by the end of Year 6. Taking these factors into account, pupils' achievements are good overall by the age of eleven. At the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is average in mathematics and science. In English, standards are above average in reading, speaking and listening but below average in writing. Punctuation skills are below those expected and pupils' writing lacks the depth and structure expected for this age.

In ICT, standards are below those expected in Years 1 to 6. The subject has not been taught to a high enough level. Pupils achieve good standards in art throughout the school. In those aspects of work seen in other subjects, standards broadly meet those expected nationally by the end of the infants (Years 1 and 2) and the juniors (Years 3 to 6). In the reception class, children are making rapid gains in their learning and are achieving good standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. Behaviour around the school is calm and orderly. Pupils' behaviour was good or better in four out of five lessons observed. Occasionally, younger junior pupils are noisy in lessons and this slows their progress.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships in the school community are very positive and support learning. Pupils have developed a mature approach to school life by the time they reach Year 6. They initiate ideas, express opinions in school or class councils and willingly take on responsibilities.
Attendance	Attendance rates were average in the last school year but have been higher in the past two terms. There is no unauthorised absence and punctuality is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2 (Infants)	Years 3 – 6 (Juniors)
Quality of teaching	Very good	Satisfactory	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.

A very good range of stimulating activities ensures that children in the reception class make rapid progress and develop a very positive approach to learning. Teaching in Years 4 to 6 is, on occasions, very good or excellent. In this part of the school, lesson time is used particularly well, work is consistently challenging for all levels of attainment, and techniques for motivating pupils are especially successful. Consequently, pupils concentrate on their tasks and work hard. All teachers are good at introducing lessons and generating interest amongst their pupils. English and literacy skills are taught well in most classes. However, in the infants, expectations of pupils' standards in writing are not high enough. The teaching of mathematics and numeracy skills is good overall although there is variation in the challenge for the higher-attaining Year 2 pupils. Apart from computers, teachers use resources effectively to aid learning. Overall, the school meets the needs of its pupils well. In all classes, support staff work in a strong partnership with teachers and have a very positive impact on pupils' learning, especially those with special educational needs. Higher-attaining pupils are usually taught well and teaching in extension groups for English and mathematics is effective.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall, a satisfactory balance of subjects and approaches to learning. The curriculum for reception children is very well planned. In Years 1 and 2 there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their writing. Insufficient use is made of ICT in Years 1 to 6. The enrichment afternoon provides a very good opportunity for pupils to develop their talents and interests. The very good planning of personal, social and health education contributes to the effective teaching of this subject. Strong links with the community enhance pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils' individual education plans are clear and reviewed regularly. Very effective support, provided by learning assistants, ensures that pupils are successfully included in all activities and, overall, make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	No pupils are currently at the early stages of learning English. Appropriate support is provided when required.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision overall, with significant strengths in moral and social development. In and out of lessons, pupils learn to mix well together, to be considerate to others and to take responsibility for their actions. A good range of activities helps pupils to understand their own and other cultures and values.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school looks after its pupils very well. Arrangements for matters related to health and safety are very good. Pupils are valued as individuals and care is taken to include them all in the life of the school. They understand the clear code of behaviour and are consulted on issues relevant to them. Good procedures for assessment help teachers to monitor pupils' progress carefully, especially in English and mathematics.

The school has an effective partnership with parents. They are actively involved in several aspects of school life and have a significant impact on its work.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is providing very good leadership and a clear direction for the school's development. With senior staff, she has established a positive ethos for learning, and a shared commitment to raising standards. This places the school in a strong position to sustain its improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their statutory duties very well. They are supportive of the school and have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Governors work in a strong partnership with the headteacher and staff to plan the school's future.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school monitors its performance very well. Targets in the school development plan are evaluated and adapted to ensure they are successfully achieved. The careful monitoring of teaching and learning has led to many improvements, although there is still work to do to ensure they are consistently good. The analysis of pupils' performance in national and other tests is used very well to identify where learning can be improved.
The strategic use of resources	The use of finance is carefully planned and very well matched to the priorities for school development. The school is very keen to provide and obtain best value. It considers several factors, including the views of parents and pupils, before making decisions.

There are sufficient teachers and a good number of support staff. Together they form an effective professional team. Learning resources are good and, apart from ICT, are used well to support learning. The school's accommodation is good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • The school is well led and managed • The teaching is good, children are expected to work hard and they make good progress • Behaviour is good and children are helped to become mature and responsible • The headteacher and staff are approachable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way the school works with them, especially in keeping them informed of their children's progress. • The amount of homework, especially for older pupils.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. Inspectors judge that, overall, the school does well in developing positive links with parents and that there are satisfactory arrangements for keeping them informed about their children's progress. Information on pupils' reports, and the arrangements for parents' evenings, are satisfactory. In addition, the school has recently reminded parents that they can make appointments to see the headteacher or teachers at any time during the term. Inspectors agree that homework arrangements, particularly for the older pupils need to be improved. There is inconsistency in the amount set and there is not a clear system for telling parents, nor reminding pupils, what has been set and when it is due to be returned.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the school with skills and knowledge broadly typical of those found nationally. Those currently in the reception class have made rapid gains in their learning and nearly all are likely to meet the required standards by Year 1. There are particular strengths in children's mathematical, creative and social development, where many are likely to exceed the standards expected. Currently, children's attainment is above average in the reception class and they are achieving well.

2. Results in the National Curriculum Tests for 7-year-olds in 2001 were above the national average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics. In previous years, the results have fluctuated but have been broadly average overall.

3. The overall attainment of pupils currently in Year 2 is average and their achievements are satisfactory. In English, attainment is average overall. Standards in reading, speaking and listening are higher than expected but in writing they are below average. Pupils are not learning to write in sufficient depth and are not developing their writing skills sufficiently in other subjects. For example, in science, attainment is average overall but the highest attaining pupils are not achieving the standards of which they are capable in their written work. Attainment in mathematics is broadly average. Inspection judgements are at variance with most of the school's 2001 test results for 7-year-olds. The judgements are based on an evaluation of current work; contributory factors for the differences are given beneath.

4. The current above-average attainment in the reception class and the average standards in Year 2 refer to different groups of pupils. This does not therefore mean that progress is unsatisfactory between reception and Year 2. There are also varying ranges of attainment within each year group in the school. These differences, and the fluctuations in year to year test results at ages 7 and 11, are attributable to a number of other factors, including:

- ◆ Large variations in the size of year groups.
- ◆ The high proportion of pupils who have statements for their needs, currently eight.
- ◆ The high turnover of pupils; seventeen left the school and fourteen joined in the last school year other than at the usual time. This represented twenty eight per cent of the school roll then.
- ◆ The high turnover of staff prior to 2001, including the employment of a number of temporary teachers at that time.

5. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum Tests for pupils aged 11 are unreliable indicators of pupils' attainment as only nine pupils took the tests. Results in individual subjects for the two previous years have to be treated with great caution as just eleven pupils took these tests, and each pupil therefore represented nine per cent of the overall results. When English, mathematics and science results are added together, the overall performance in tests was below the national average in 1999 and 2000, and above average in 2001. Mathematics results have been higher than those in English during this period. The overall trend of results has been upward and in line with the national picture.

6. The current Year 6 has twenty-four pupils and this provides a more secure basis for judgements about standards. Attainment in English and mathematics is above average. The high quality of teaching and learning, especially in Years 4 to 6, has led to pupils achieving well in all aspects of the subjects. In science, pupils' attainment is average.

7. In other subjects, judgements are similar at the end of Years 2 and 6. Attainment in ICT is below average. Weaknesses in teachers' expertise (which are to be addressed very soon with training) mean that some aspects of the subject are not taught to a high enough level and computers are not used sufficiently to support learning. The quality of art seen in all year groups is good. Techniques and skills have been taught well. Standards in history and geography are broadly in line with expectations. Not enough work was seen to make an overall judgement in design and technology, music and physical education. However, standards in singing were at the levels expected for pupils' ages and some good quality gymnastic work was observed in Years 5 and 6.

8. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall. In nearly all instances, good quality support by teachers and support staff helps them to make clear, measurable learning gains in the targets set for them. It is not possible to make an overall judgement about the progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language as only one pupil is involved. Higher-attaining and gifted pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and good progress between Years 3 to 6. In these higher years there is particularly effective teaching of the most able in small groups for English and mathematics, and these pupils are usually set challenging work in class lessons.

9. No significant differences were noted in the inspection between the attainment of boys and girls.

10. Pupils' achievements are judged to be good overall by the age of eleven. This takes into account the above average standards in English and mathematics in Year 6, the good progress of higher attaining pupils in the older classes, and the good progress of pupils with special educational needs.

11. Only English, mathematics and science were reported on in the last inspection. Improvement in the standards achieved by Year 6 has been good in all three subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Throughout the school, pupils have very good attitudes. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that their children like coming to school. In lessons, pupils are attentive and well behaved. They generally listen when their teachers are addressing them and concentrate on their tasks. For example, pupils in Year 6 showed good levels of concentration in a literacy session, co-operated well and persevered when they found the work challenging. Pupils take pride in their work. During a Year 4/5 English lesson, pupils' poetry was thoughtful and well presented. Attitudes and behaviour were good or better in four out of every five lessons seen.

13. Pupils' behaviour, both in and out of class, is good overall. In lessons, pupils respond readily to the requests and instructions of teachers and teaching assistants. On occasions, the noise level rose in a younger junior class and this slowed pupils' progress. At playtime, pupils play well together, with some older pupils acting as playground leaders, befriending younger ones. The pupils are polite and courteous to each other, to staff and to visitors. They are trustworthy and show respect for property, treating the resources they use with care. There were no exclusions from the school during the year prior to the inspection. Inspection findings confirm the views of parents that behaviour in the school is good.

14. Pupils' personal development is very good. They respond enthusiastically to opportunities for taking responsibility, of which the school council is a good example. This is ably run by the pupils themselves and is effective in allowing their opinions to have some influence on the running of the school. Pupils also initiate fund-raising for charities, such as the 'Crazy Hair' day they held last term in aid of Children in Need. Pupils are proud of the school and value the opportunities it provides. They particularly appreciate and enjoy the Enrichment Afternoon every Wednesday. Many of the children

have a personal confidence that not only makes them agreeable people to meet, but also contributes to their learning. During the inspection, pupils in Years 4 and 5 devised their own class assembly which they performed to the school. They spoke confidently and coherently, and showed a mature approach to the issue of smoking, which they dealt with in their performance.

15. Pupils reported that there are very few instances of bullying and that the school takes any known cases seriously. Year 6 pupils stated that the school had a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying. Relationships within the school are very good. Pupils follow the model set by adults and are considerate and sensitive to others.

16. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development were a positive feature of the school in the last inspection and continue to be so.

17. Attendance for the academic year 2000/01 was broadly in line with the national average. There was no unauthorised absence. Attendance data for this year to date shows an improvement in the rates of attendance. Punctuality is good and registration sessions are brisk and efficient.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching observed was good overall and ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Just over seventy per cent of lessons were judged to be good or better. This is good improvement since the last inspection, when around a third were found to be good and nearly all the rest satisfactory. The most effective teaching was in the reception class (Foundation Stage) and in Years 4 to 6.

19. In the Foundation Stage, work is planned very well to ensure children are actively learning throughout the lessons. This is achieved through lively teaching of the whole class and very good opportunities for children to work independently and in small groups. Learning is very well supported by able classroom assistants. Further details of teaching in this part of the school can be found in the Foundation Section of this report. The remainder of the very good teaching, which was observed in Years 4 to 6, was characterised by a high level of challenge and a rapid pace of learning. For example, in a Year 6 lesson for a higher-attaining group, a series of estimation activities and effective questions quickly developed pupils' ability to compare and convert metric measures to imperial.

20. Most aspects of teaching are satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 (infants) and good in Years 3 to 6 (juniors). Effective support staff are deployed well in lessons throughout the school and, in most classes, pupils are managed well. In an excellent Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) session for the oldest pupils, a teaching assistant's sensitive questioning and sympathetic response enabled pupils to explore and express their own feelings. Teachers have clear expectations about behaviour and this usually results in pupils working hard. Pupils are often asked to work collaboratively, for example when planning and making decisions in science; this contributes well to their independence and social development. Occasionally, the youngest junior pupils are allowed to be too noisy and this slows their learning.

21. In Years 1 to 6, teachers have a sound knowledge of the curriculum. Where teaching was most effective, this was a strong contributory factor, enabling teachers to answer pupils' questions confidently, give clear explanations and use subject vocabulary well. This was evident in mathematics where teachers use accurate vocabulary. For instance, a teacher explained to pupils that their shapes were not symmetrical because they were rotating them rather than reflecting them on an axis. The main weakness in teachers' knowledge is in ICT, and further training is planned to ensure computers are used more effectively in lessons.

22. Basic skills in reading, including phonics, are taught well throughout the school. This has led to

above average attainment and positive attitudes towards books and reading. In Years 1 and 2, the teaching of writing skills is unsatisfactory. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Spelling is taught satisfactorily but there is not enough emphasis on teaching pupils to structure their writing, nor on developing their punctuation skills. Writing skills are taught well in the rest of the school and, overall, there are high expectations of pupils. Numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2. The higher-attaining pupils' rate of learning, although satisfactory overall, is inconsistent as the degree of mathematical challenge in the work varies. In the remainder of the school, the teaching of mathematics is good and pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress.

23. Teacher's lesson planning is usually effective. Learning objectives are clear and these are shared with the pupils. This helps them to understand what they are learning and why. Teachers are good at introducing lessons and create a good level of pupil interest and enthusiasm. In one of the Year 1/2 literacy lessons, the teacher's lively introduction and good questioning encouraged pupils to think deeply, and respond enthusiastically with their feelings about two poems. In most lessons, time is used effectively and the methods used by teachers are matched well to the purpose of the learning. In a very good Year 5/6 literacy lesson, the teacher's open-ended questioning produced some very well expressed answers. For example, pupils clearly identified the elements of magic and fantasy in a text. Occasionally, time is not used in the most effective way and, in parts of lessons, this slows pupils' learning. In an infant lesson, some pupils wasted time as they queued to have their work checked by the teacher. Apart from ICT, teachers use resources well to support learning.

24. During nearly all lessons, teachers assess pupils' progress and give good individual support. However, the quality of marking varies. There are examples of good practice where teachers have made useful evaluations of pupils' work, including stating how well they have met the objective of the lesson. In other cases, marking is not of this quality and there are instances of teachers carefully preparing individual work and not insisting that pupils finish it. The inconsistencies in marking mean that pupils are not always clear about how successfully they are learning, nor how they can improve. Homework is not used consistently well to support the learning of older junior pupils. There are too many variations in the amounts given, and parents are not clear when work has been set or when it is due back.

25. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Support staff and teachers work together effectively and this ensures that these pupils' needs are usually met well. Great care is taken to ensure that all pupils are fully included in activities.

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

26. The school's curriculum meets legal requirements. The key issue from the last inspection regarding insufficient time devoted to subjects other than English, mathematics and science, has been largely resolved. Strategies for teaching numeracy and literacy are fully in place. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage contains a good balance of all the required areas of learning. However, there are weaknesses in the breadth of the curriculum in Years 1 and 2, where there is insufficient focus on teaching writing, especially in subjects such as history, geography and science. Not enough time is currently given to teaching ICT in these years, and in older classes insufficient use is made of computers to support learning in different subjects.

27. The curriculum has been carefully planned to take account of the mixed age classes. Good opportunities for extension work in small groups for English and mathematics enhance the progress of the higher-attaining pupils. The good provision for special educational needs ensures these pupils are fully included in all learning and make good progress. Early literacy support is provided and this is very

effective. Individual education plans have clear, measurable targets which are used well to guide pupils' learning.

28. Learning opportunities are significantly enhanced by enrichment activities. The school's teaching hours are forty minutes above that recommended nationally. It has chosen to use this time imaginatively by devoting one afternoon a week to a variety of extra lessons. Specialist instructors supplement teachers and support staff, enabling pupils to be taught in small groups. All pupils have to choose one of the physical education (PE) activities for half the afternoon, as these form part of the compulsory curriculum. Adults with expertise in PE, such as gymnastics, football and netball, widen the opportunities available to pupils. The other 'extra curricular' activities are wide-ranging and currently include Latin, French, collectors club, chess, craft and hand-bells. The school endeavours to meet pupils' main preferences so that they can develop their talents and interests. The arrangements ensure the inclusion of about half the pupils who, because they rely on taxis and buses to take them home, had previously been unable to attend after school activities. Pupils and nearly all parents are very enthusiastic about enrichment afternoon.

29. In addition to the above, older pupils take part in various competitive sporting events. Residential trips for Years 5 and 6 support pupils' social and physical development. The school ensures that all pupils, including those with physical or behavioural difficulties, participate in the residential and many other educational trips. Both boys and girls are included in all activities. These arrangements highlight the school's success in promoting equal opportunities.

30. Provision for personal social and health education is very good. A very well-planned sequence of topics, based on the Healthy Schools' Project, includes citizenship, sex education and substance abuse.

31. Strong links with the community support pupils' learning. Pupils perform in musical events, such as those at the local church, the senior citizens' home and at nearby festivals. Local residents come into the school to talk about their lives, for example, to explain their faith or describe their experience as wartime evacuees. The nearby area is studied in history and geography projects, and the local history archives are used as a resource. Representatives of several local organisations have been involved in organising the 'walking bus' which helps pupils' understanding of road safety issues. Local sporting links, such as those with Cambridge United FC, widen learning opportunities by providing specialist teaching.

32. Much work has been done in the past two years to establish good, constructive relationships with other schools. Local playgroups and nurseries are visited by staff prior to children starting school. The sharing of costs with other small schools is helping to give pupils wider learning opportunities. For example, as part of their preparation for secondary education, Year 6 pupils and others from local small schools are to work together with a visiting actor and an artist. Positive links with the secondary school include participating in their advent concert, and a visit of Year 7 pupils for a drama performance.

33. The headteacher and staff have made it a priority to improve the ethos of the school. This is reflected in the overall very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is good improvement since the last inspection.

34. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. The daily act of worship provides a good foundation for this aspect of personal development. Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on such topics as 'hope' and how this is seen in the world around them. This theme develops an awareness of the needs and values of others, for example through their involvement in the 'Seeds for Africa' project. Lessons also make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. The youngest children were

encouraged to look at and talk about the buds and blossom they were about to draw. Older pupils wrote about the wonder of clouds from poems they were studying. Work displayed in Years 5 and 6, shows how pupils have reflected on and expressed their own values and beliefs.

35. Provision for social and moral development is very good and this is a significant reason for the pupils' very good personal development and relationships. Staff offer very good role models. From the earliest days in school, pupils are taught to share, take turns and to look after their environment. The school works hard to raise pupils' respect for themselves and others in a wide range of ways. Positive attitudes are fostered through the school's PSHE lessons, where friendship and personal relationships are discussed. Throughout the school, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and to help others. The pupils appreciate their involvement in decisions through the school and class councils, where issues of concern are debated. The enrichment afternoon promotes very good social development as pupils mix with different groups sharing a common interest. Further opportunities are provided through numerous visits, and residential trips for older pupils. Pupils are encouraged to consider wider moral issues and will often initiate ideas to raise funds for causes they support. The school encourages pupils to follow through their ideas and take full responsibility for organising the events.

36. Provision for cultural development is good. The experiences that the school provides broaden pupils' horizons considerably and enrich their cultural appreciation. They listen to music from a number of different cultures and learn about the key features of major world faiths. There are close links with the village church and pupils have visited a synagogue. A Buddhist visitor enriched pupils' work on Nepal. Pupils visit places of interest locally and further afield, such as a recent trip to Colchester Castle. Enrichment afternoon activities such as chess, Latin, French and music all contribute well to pupils' cultural development. Pupils are taught to appreciate their own cultural traditions, as they participate in musical events and attend theatrical productions and concerts.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. Staff have created a caring, secure environment where all pupils are known individually. The procedures for child protection, first aid, and health and safety are very good and pupils are supervised well at all times.

38. Child protection procedures are securely in place. All staff receive training in this area and the headteacher is the designated person with responsibility. Governors carry out regular health and safety checks and any concerns are dealt with swiftly. Arrangements for the medical welfare of pupils are effective, and all incidents and injuries recorded appropriately. Staff have a good awareness of the children with specific medical needs and respond appropriately.

39. Measures to monitor and promote good attendance are very effective. Parents who do not inform the school are telephoned on the first day of their child's absence. Registers are filled in properly and the school receives regular support from the Education Welfare Service. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. Pupils were consulted when the school recently reviewed its behaviour policy. This helped to develop a clear code of behaviour to which pupils adhere willingly. The school recently held a Friendship Week which made a positive contribution to pupils' understanding of personal relationships, including issues such as bullying.

40. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. There are clear records which show pupils' development and experiences. These help teachers to understand their pupils and give them effective support. Achievements by individuals, both in and out of school, are acknowledged and celebrated. The procedures for supporting personal development are embedded in the life of the school and are based on encouraging pupils to become responsible individuals. For

example, pupils help design and care for the environmental area and organise fund-raising.

41. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection and they are now good overall. The school assesses pupils regularly by using a range of tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The information is used to help identify strengths and weaknesses in learning and to take any necessary action. The recent use of ICT to record assessment data has improved the school's tracking of pupils' progress. The information has identified those pupils who would benefit from extra support, including the higher-attaining and gifted pupils. As a result, these pupils often work in small groups and are set tasks to extend their thinking. This data is used well to set targets in national tests.

42. The assessment of children in the Foundation Stage is very good. It builds up an accurate picture of children's progress and is used very well to plan their next stage of learning. As they progress through the school, pupils have individual assessment books regularly updated with statements of their achievements and samples of work. These give a clear indication of each pupil's progress in various subjects. Although assessment information is used well to help adapt learning in English, mathematics and science, it is not used as effectively to guide curricular planning in other subjects. Group and individual targets are set using this information but there is variation in their usefulness. This aspect of target setting is a relatively new practice, and some teachers are learning how to make the targets more specific and easily measurable.

43. The provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is good. Great care is taken to include and support these pupils. For example, facilities are adapted for those with physical difficulties, and careful arrangements made for those with behavioural difficulties to ensure they take a full part in activities. Assessment and record keeping for all pupils on the special needs register are of good quality. Reviews take place at the proper times and parents are informed and consulted. Pupils are now involved in agreeing and writing their targets. This is good practice as pupils have a clearer understanding of what is being asked of them and how they can achieve success in meeting their targets. The school is beginning to identify talented pupils. The enrichment afternoon, where specialist teachers and instructors note pupils who are performing exceptionally well, is helping in this process.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. Through their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and at the meeting held with the registered inspector, parents expressed predominantly positive views of the school. However, several parents feel that the school does not work closely with them and do not feel well informed about how their child is getting on. Several felt that the homework arrangements, particularly for the oldest pupils, should be more specific and formalised. The inspection findings broadly support parents' positive views. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the school does not work closely with parents nor keep them well informed about their child's work. Parents receive a satisfactory annual report about their child's progress and one evening a term is set aside for parents to discuss this. The school makes it clear to parents that it has an 'open door' policy where they are welcome to come in anytime to talk with the class teacher or headteacher about their child's progress. However, homework, particularly for the older pupils, is inconsistent. Several pupils stated that it depended on which group they were in and that at times they received very little. In addition, there is no clear communication about what has been set and when it is due to be returned.

45. The school maintains good links with parents, a considerable number of whom help in various ways within the school, or with visits and extra-curricular activities. There is strong parental support through the Parent Teacher Association, and parent-governors are active. The high level of attendance at parental consultation evenings is an indication of the importance parents attach to their child's

education. The school consults parents over relevant school issues and sends out questionnaires to obtain their views.

46. The quality of written information provided for parents is good overall. There are many good documents such as the prospectus, governors' annual report to parents, a regular newsletter and letters about what classes will be studying. These all inform and assist parents in understanding what goes on in school, and how they can continue children's learning at home. Class teachers send out curriculum information each term, giving parents a good picture of what will be covered in each subject. Annual reports on pupils' progress provide helpful information on their achievements and how they might improve. Parents are able to discuss them with teachers, should they wish. Consultation evenings are held each term, and the school holds information evenings to help familiarise parents with aspects of the curriculum.

47. The school works well with parents to help them prepare their children for entry to school. The headteacher meets children and staff at their nursery schools and playgroups. Invitations are extended to parents and children to attend a coffee morning in the spring term, and then a follow-up visit in the summer term before they start school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The leadership of the school is very good. The headteacher has achieved a great deal since her appointment by improving many aspects of school life and ensuring that standards in the core subjects have risen. She has a very clear vision for the school based on improving the quality of education and raising standards. This is communicated very well to all members of the school community and is reflected very well in the school development plan. Consequently, staff, governors and parents share her vision for further improvement of the school. The headteacher has been particularly effective in establishing confidence in the school after a difficult period in its history. Staff morale is high, the numbers on roll are increasing and there is a positive profile of the school in the community. The involvement of the headteacher on the parochial church council, good publicity, for example in the parish magazine and press, and participation in local activities, are ways in which this is being achieved.

49. The governing body is very effective. Governors are fully involved in the school. They keep themselves well informed through training and careful reading of documentation. Governors evaluate the work of the school through effective monitoring and consequently have a very good understanding of its strengths and weakness. The chair of governors provides a strong lead and is frequently in school, meeting with the headteacher, staff and children. A schedule of visits, which involves all committees, focuses on different aspects of school life. For example, in the month of the inspection, the curriculum and standards committee was looking at the provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented. Findings are reported to the whole governing body to ensure there is a shared understanding. Governors are fully aware of their role as 'critical friends'. In their discussions with inspectors, governors had their own annotated copies of the school development plan and explained how they were fully involved in its formulation and asked questions about the progress of various targets. All of these factors contribute to the governors' strong partnership with the headteacher in shaping the direction of the school.

50. The management of the school is very good. The headteacher has clear systems and procedures which ensure the smooth running of the school. The deputy headteacher and senior teacher provide effective support in decision-making and in the day-to-day running of the school. Roles and responsibilities are sensibly delegated and most subjects are well co-ordinated. Where they are not so

effective, action plans show how the roles are to be developed, for example, in ICT where time for increased monitoring and support is being reserved until staff start their government funded training. The co-ordinator for special needs is very effective. She is well informed and gives useful support and guidance to staff. The budget is very well managed and is clearly linked to the school's priorities. For example, the money spent on support staff has had a significant impact on pupils' progress. Although it has yet to be fully utilised, the provision of a well-equipped ICT suite provides a good basis for pupils' learning. The office staff are efficient and have evolved a very sensible team approach to tasks and to finance. Good use is made of new technology for finance and record keeping.

51. The headteacher and governors are very well informed about obtaining best value, and these principles are obvious in the work of the school. Care is taken to ensure that purchases and tenders provide the best value. Several types of data are compared and governors visit other schools to compare provision. Several viewpoints are considered when the school development plan (SDP) is written. Parents are consulted through questionnaires and comments are invited on school policies, for example on the recent one regarding homework. A summary of the SDP is sent to parents so they can see what decisions have been made. Pupils' views are taken into account through the school and class councils. The school challenges its own practice and makes changes where it feels it can offer a better service. This was evident in the introduction of the enrichment afternoon, which ensured the inclusion of all pupils in a range of activities, previously only available to those who could stay for after-school clubs.

52. The quality of teaching is monitored and supported well by the headteacher and senior staff. Although it is effective, and was reflected in the overall good quality of lessons seen, there are still issues to address in some aspects of teaching. The performance management cycle has been introduced for all staff and is well implemented by senior managers. Teachers have all been observed during lessons and have been set sensible, measurable targets. The headteacher is very good at ensuring the professional development of staff and this is clearly reflected in the targets in teachers' personal development plans. Good induction procedures are helping the newly qualified teacher to develop her expertise.

53. The school has sufficient teachers and all staff work very well as a team. Knowledgeable and capable classroom assistants give very good support to teachers. One is a trained counsellor, for example, able to lead excellent PSHE sessions. The school's accommodation is good and includes a small computer suite, a separate resources room, that can be used for craft or small groups, playing fields and an environmental area. The premises' officer takes good care of the school and lively displays of work and information enhance the internal appearance of the building. Parents commented on the significant improvement in the learning environment in the past two years. The school has a good range of resources for learning.

54. The school has the right priorities for development. There has been a systematic approach to addressing issues from the last inspection and to improving teaching, academic standards, pupils' personal development and the curriculum. Consequently, standards are rising and there is a wide-ranging agenda for improvement over the next few years. Overall, the school aims and values are reflected well in its work. There has been good improvement in leadership and management since the time of the last inspection.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. The school should now:

A. Raise attainment in information and communication technology by:

- ◆ Allocating more time and opportunities for teaching and learning in the subject.
- ◆ Improving teachers' expertise so that the subject is taught at the levels expected nationally.
- ◆ Improving the leadership of the subject by providing more opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor pupils' learning and to support teachers.
- ◆ Refining assessment procedures to provide more precise information to help teachers build on each pupil's knowledge and understanding.

(See paragraphs 7,21,23,26,50,91,99-102)

B. Raise standards in writing in Years 1 and 2 by:

- ◆ Raising expectations of the depth and quality of pupils' writing.
- ◆ Improving pupils' use of punctuation and their skills in structuring sentences and longer pieces of writing.
- ◆ Providing more opportunities for pupils to write in different subjects, especially science, history and geography.

(See paragraphs 3,22,26,52,64,67,70,71,83,93,96)

Governors should also consider the following smaller issues for inclusion in their action plan:

- ◆ Improve the provision of homework, especially for the oldest pupils. (paragraphs 24,44)
- ◆ Achieve more consistency in the quality of marking and the setting and use of ongoing targets for pupils. (paragraphs 29,42,79,85)
- ◆ Ensure that more able Year 2 pupils are consistently well challenged in mathematics. (paragraphs 22,77)
- ◆ Teach pupils a wider range of ways to record their findings in science. (paragraphs 83,84)
- ◆ Develop the use of assessment in art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education, so that it is used more to plan and adapt the curriculum. (paragraph 42)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	24

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	8	12	8	0	0	0
Percentage	3	28	41	28	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR- Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	138
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	7
Special educational needs	YR - Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	27
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	17	8	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	16
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	22	22	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (89)	88 (72)	96 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	15	16
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	22	23	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (89)	92 (94)	96 (94)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Data regarding the school's performance in the 2001 National Tests for Year 6 is not meaningful because only nine pupils took the tests and each pupil represents eleven per cent of the total figure. This table, which normally appear in reports, has therefore been omitted.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	124
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)	6.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.9
Average class size	27.2

Education support staff: YR-Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	201

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	328646
Total expenditure	326802
Expenditure per pupil	2842
Balance brought forward from previous year	16223
Balance carried forward to next year	18067

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	136
Number of questionnaires returned	57

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	25	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	33	7	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	38	2	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	38	16	0	2
The teaching is good.	54	46	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	35	23	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	12	9	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	36	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	40	25	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	84	14	2	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	30	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	60	22	12	0	6

Other issues raised by parents

The many ways in which the school has improved over the past few years.

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

56. Children enter school in September or January according to their birthday. Of the ten children who have attended since September, two are children with special educational needs from an older age group. Eighteen children started in January, fourteen of whom will not be five until after Easter. Most of them have attended one of several playgroups and, though they come with different pre-school experience, they settle down and quickly become familiar with routines. Provision is firmly based on the recommended curriculum for the Foundation Stage and all children are gaining from imaginative activities closely matched to their needs and abilities. All children, except those who have been identified as having special educational needs, are likely to achieve and some exceed all the expected goals for learning. Children are achieving well overall and very well in some aspects of their learning, including numeracy, personal development and creativity. This stage of learning was not reported on in the last inspection so no judgements about improvement are possible.

57. Teaching for this first stage of children's learning is very good overall. In the lessons observed, it was very good in mathematical, physical, creative and personal and social development. In literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world it was good; there were no major weaknesses in the teaching of these aspects but learning was not as rapid as in the other lessons. Whole-class sessions are lively and interesting and basic skills in language and mathematics are taught systematically. Each session is very carefully planned and well organised. The teacher and the teacher's assistants plan together very effectively and share expertise well. All staff are very skilful in providing very good support and guidance to groups of children. The good balance of direct teaching, adult supported learning and opportunities for children to select activities independently ensure that they become happy and confident learners. Children's achievements and progress in all areas of learning are assessed accurately and the results are used well to plan work. The home-school reading diary shows the good involvement of parents in their children's learning.

Personal, social and emotional development

58. Children make very good progress in this aspect of learning. They develop self-confidence and quickly learn the routines of the class. The very good work on 'Friendship' helps them to understand the importance of making relationships. Children sit quietly when required, wait their turn and put up their hands to answer questions. Most children answer confidently and are happy to share ideas with the class. They work and play together very well, share equipment and help each other. This was particularly noticeable when children worked together on the computer or when they took part in role-play in the 'make believe' restaurant. Children begin to show initiative and to accept responsibility for organising or tidying resources. Behaviour is very good. Children have a keen awareness of what is expected of them and most respond well to these expectations.

Communication, language and literacy

59. A significant minority of children in the class entered the school with levels of literacy, especially in their early writing skills, below those usually seen nationally. The basic skills of literacy are taught well and during their time in the reception class, children make good progress. The staff use every opportunity to extend the children's use and understanding of language in speaking and listening. In one lesson, children were asked to think of an alternative ending to the story of 'The Gingerbread Man'. They had many very imaginative ideas and, with a little encouragement, they told their stories to the

class. Children are not so confident in writing, although the majority write their names and the most able write simple sentences independently. Nevertheless, most children are likely to meet the standards expected in writing by Year 1. Provision for the teaching of reading is very good. Sounds are repeated daily, and as the children progress, they build up a wide recognition of whole words. Even after a short time in school, the youngest children use their knowledge of initial sounds and picture clues to read new words. This very good progress in learning to read is well supported by parents who regularly encourage their children to read at home. All these strategies help most children to exceed the early learning goals for reading by the time they are five.

Mathematical development

60. Most children are achieving above the expected standards for their age. This indicates very good progress from their entry to school. The good attention given to developing mathematical vocabulary makes a significant contribution to their progress. For example, they use accurate mathematical terms such as cuboid and cylinder. They accurately count the faces and edges of 3D shapes. Nearly all children order numbers to ten and count forwards and backwards. They understand how to add and subtract one from ten and show different ways to make up the number five by holding up their fingers. Higher-attaining pupils count to fifty. Children know number rhymes such as 'Five Big Balloons' and this helps consolidate their understanding of numbers. Children make very good gains in learning because they work in small groups helped by effective teaching assistants.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

61. A good range of interesting and practical activities is provided to develop this area of learning. Children make good progress. A weekly walk is a particularly good feature of this and introduces children to their local environment. They observe how plants and flowers change and find out about the area in which they live. During the inspection, children learned how to program a floor robot to go forwards and backwards and were beginning to estimate the distance it would travel. All children are confident using the computer and use the mouse well to control a range of simple programs. Children chose appropriate materials and tools when they made dragons inspired by their work on Chinese culture.

Physical development

62. The provision for the development of children's physical skills is good. The children have a range of opportunities for outdoor and indoor practical activities and make good progress towards meeting this learning goal. They develop skills in running, jumping, balancing and riding wheeled toys. In a dance lesson in the hall, the children used space well, moving in a variety of ways and responding to the music. They showed very good control as they mirrored each other's movements in their Chinese dance. Children take great care when using resources and, through well-planned activities, they are developing skills in manipulating a range of tools.

Creative development

63. A range of activities enables children to make very good progress in developing their creative skills. The children experience many forms of media including three-dimensional work. During the inspection week, children were painting Mothers Day cards with inks in the style of Chinese artists. Children use simple percussion instruments and play them correctly. They make loud and soft sounds and repeat short rhythm patterns. These they build up into a piece of music for their Chinese dance. Children learn new songs quickly and sing tunefully with obvious enjoyment. Role-play areas provide children with good opportunities to play creatively and imaginatively.

ENGLISH

64. In the current Year 6, attainment is above average in all aspects of English and pupils' achievements are good. In Year 2, standards are above national expectations in reading, speaking and listening, but below average in writing. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. Although higher-attaining pupils in Year 2 have achieved good standards in reading, they have not been given enough opportunities to develop their writing in the same way. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress throughout the school.

65. Pupils leave the reception class able to speak confidently and clearly and to listen reasonably well. They continue to reach good standards throughout the school and are confident in dialogue with adults and with each other. This results in satisfactory achievement overall. By the time they leave the school, Year 6 pupils have a very mature attitude to class discussion and a PSHE lesson exemplified the high level of their listening skills and sensitivity in speaking to and with their peers.

66. Pupils read well when they join Year 1. Achievement is satisfactory in the infants overall as they maintain these good standards. Some pupils learn to read very well indeed. Currently, some Year 1 pupils are close to achieving Level 3, which is well above expectations. The profile in the present Year 2 is not as good as this, but is above average overall. Year 2 pupils are very enthusiastic about reading, discuss favourite authors and compare, for example, the works of Roald Dahl. These pupils read poetry with good expression and with an understanding of rhythm and structure. They show good understanding of the text and give sensible reasons for their choices of books. Pupils make good progress as they get older and by Year 6 are reading very well and demonstrate good achievement across their time in the juniors. For example, many of these pupils commented on the works of authors such as Phillip Pullman and J R R Tolkien and read with a good level of comprehension. They explained how they use non-fiction books for research and locate them in libraries using the Dewey system. Higher-attaining pupils read with very good expression reflecting their understanding of more advanced texts. Pupils concentrate on their books and enjoy reading.

67. Pupils' attainment in writing is below average at the end of Year 2. Pupils are often given the opportunity to write in English lessons, but there is insufficient challenge. Writing lessons do not focus sufficiently on the structure of writing at any length. Punctuation is not well taught. Most pupils in Year 2 are still struggling to form correct sentences and the quality of handwriting is inconsistent. Spelling is stronger and is average overall. As a result, progress in writing overall does not match that made in reading. Higher-attainers in both Years 1 and 2 should be doing better than they are.

68. Pupils make good progress in writing in Years 3 to 6 and their overall achievement is good. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils have written in a number of styles. Their handwriting is of a very good standard. Pupils in Year 6 have analysed different types of texts thoroughly to guide their own writing. These include very well written poems written in the character of an evacuee and detailed pieces of 'persuasive' writing expressing individual viewpoints. Pupils have had good practice in story writing and understand plot structure. Punctuation and spelling are above average for the pupils' age.

69. Pupils generally have good attitudes to English and this aids their learning. They show very good perseverance when confronted with challenging work. The workbooks are neat and well presented, especially in Year 6, where the teacher's own good handwriting is a very successful model for the pupils.

70. The teaching of English is good overall. Teachers throughout the school make good use of the structure of the National Literacy Strategy. Planning is thorough and takes account of pupils of all

abilities, including those with special educational needs. Whole-class teaching is generally good. This is because teachers explain very clearly what is to be done. Reading and spelling are taught effectively in all classes and writing is well taught in Years 3 to 6. Expectations of pupils are high for these older pupils. Two lessons observed in the juniors were very good because of the exceptional pace and the supportive dialogue used by the teachers. Expectations of writing are not consistently high enough in Years 1 and 2. As a result higher-attaining pupils are not being encouraged or supported to produce prose writing of any length or quality. Whole-class lessons are used to teach a good style of writing in these years, but the pupils are not always reminded to use what they have learned.

71. Writing and reading skills are reinforced well in other subjects in Years 3 to 6. For example, Year 6 pupils have done a lot of research as part of topics on World War 2 and on mountains. Much of this is word processed, so ICT skills are used as well. However, in Years 1 and 2, there are not enough opportunities to write in different subjects. For example, there is very little writing completed in history, geography and science.

72. Useful assessment records are kept on all the pupils with checklists of what they have understood. A computer program is used to predict pupils' performance and set individual targets. The procedures are helpful for grouping pupils and analysing strengths and weaknesses in learning. However, reading records do not always contain enough specific information to be useful in planning work.

73. The subject is led and managed very well. Much has been done to raise standards in the short time the co-ordinator has had the responsibility. She monitors English and keeps up-to-date records, which she shares with the senior management team. The resulting action has been significant in the good improvement in standards achieved since the last inspection. Although there is still work to do in Years 1 and 2, the co-ordinator is very clear about the way forward to sustain improvement. An important undertaking has been the designing and installing of a new school library. The provision of books and other teaching resources is now good and have contributed to pupils' improved learning.

MATHEMATICS

74. In the work seen in Year 6, standards are above national expectations and pupils show good understanding of the work covered. Taking into account their previous learning, overall, pupils are achieving well by the time they leave the school. In Years 3 to 6, higher-attaining pupils are consistently set challenging work. For example, they solve problems that involve converting a variety of imperial measures to metric equivalents before calculating the answers. Different abilities are well planned for and supported, either in class or through the additional support lessons for Years 5 and 6.

75. Pupils in the current Year 2 are working in line with national expectations. Pupils make steady progress in Years 1 and 2 and their achievement over time is satisfactory.

76. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress because the staff know their needs well. The skilled support they receive from teachers' assistants makes a significant contribution to their successful learning.

77. By the end of Year 2, pupils count in twos and tens and higher-attainers record numbers up to 100. They know the names of simple shapes and sort them according to their properties. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of place value, odd and even numbers and simple fractions. Higher-attaining pupils know their 2, 3, 5 and 10 times tables and use what they have learned to solve word problems. Although the higher-attaining Year 2 pupils' make satisfactory progress overall, they are not always achieving as highly as they could because there is variation in the degree of challenge. Past work shows that they are often set tasks which move their learning on well. However, on some

occasions, the work is similar to that given to other members of the class and lacks extra challenge.

78. In Year 3, pupils work confidently and make sound progress, for example by adding three digit numbers accurately. In Years 4, 5 and 6, pupils make very good progress. They show good understanding of the relationship between multiplication and division and use one to check the other. They work out the multiplication tables they do not know by heart by doubling smaller numbers. Pupils understand place value, including to two places of decimals, which they use to solve problems involving measures. By Year 6, pupils work confidently with numbers. They have made good progress in using strategies for calculating, such as rounding, approximating, doubling, and halving and know the relationship between fractions, percentages and decimals. Pupils have a good understanding of other mathematical concepts such as plotting co-ordinates, measuring angles and interpreting data in graphs.

79. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good. It was satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and very good in two of the six lessons seen for older pupils. Lessons are usually well planned and pupils of different abilities are suitably catered for in both the questioning and the written activities. Lessons successfully follow the recommendations of the National Numeracy Strategy. The pupils are keen to answer the brisk and challenging mental questions at the beginning of each lesson. The oldest pupils enjoy the challenge of timed written mental questions. Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils. In most lessons, explanations are clear and relate well to what the pupils have learned in previous lessons. In lessons where pupils make the most progress, activities are clearly explained and pupils are encouraged to be responsible for their own learning. For example, in Year 6, pupils were asked to work in pairs to investigate the relationship between the area and perimeter of rectangles. They were motivated, co-operated well and worked hard on their chosen tasks to arrive at a joint solution. In a lesson where teaching and learning were less successful, some pupils were rather noisy, which slowed the pace of learning. However, in most lessons, good class management and clear expectations led to the majority of pupils concentrating well and making good progress.

80. Marking varies in quality amongst classes. It does not consistently show pupils how they can improve and develop their work. Numeracy is promoted satisfactorily in other subjects. For example, pupils accurately measure quantities of liquids or distances and construct graphs and charts in science and geography.

81. Leadership and management of mathematics are very good and have contributed to the good improvements since the previous inspection. The knowledgeable co-ordinator has considerable expertise and monitors and supports provision well. One area identified for improvement was to use assessment to inform teachers' planning and raise expectations further for all pupils. The school has developed assessment procedures that identify gifted and talented pupils and those who would benefit from extra support. The help they are receiving has been effective in raising standards.

SCIENCE

82. Attainment is in line with national expectations at the end of Year 6 and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. The last inspection found that attainment at the age of eleven was below average and pupils were under-achieving, especially in their experimental and investigative work. On the whole, this has been successfully addressed and standards have risen.

83. During Year 2, pupils learn the basic elements of a fair test. For example, when testing how far their buggies travel when blown by a fan, they know that the surface must be the same and that the fan should always be the same distance away. Pupils accurately measure and carefully record the distance travelled in centimetres. They have investigated pushes and pulls and compared how varying force strengths cause objects to move differently. Pupils have visited a local wooded area, and learnt that creatures live in different places and some of the reasons for this. Pupils are acquiring a sound

knowledge of science in Years 1 and 2 and their attainment is broadly average. However, the amount and quality of written work are much below those usually seen for the higher-attaining pupils. These pupils are not achieving the standards of which they are capable in recording and communicating their observations.

84. By Year 6, pupils know how to approach a scientific investigation and carry out a fair test. For example, in their work on shadows, most pupils confidently demonstrated the need to keep all factors the same, apart from the movement of the torch. Higher-attaining pupils made precise measurements as they moved the torch back and discovered a direct relationship between the distance from the light source and the size of the shadow. They also used their previous scientific knowledge of light to explain why the shadow stopped getting bigger at a certain point. Work in books shows that a sound range of scientific knowledge has been learnt. This includes an understanding of different electrical circuits, how simple food chains work and the correct prediction of changes caused by heat in such substances as wax or paper. The amount of written work is appropriate for this age and there is a good focus on scientific vocabulary. Pupils are encouraged to write and refer to glossaries in their work. However, the range of recording methods used by pupils is rather narrow; during practical activities some record results slowly, for instance in sentences, rather than using quicker scientific methods, such as tables of results. ICT is not used enough for this purpose or for analysing results.

85. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have resources well prepared and this helps pupils to move quickly to their practical tasks. This was a positive feature of a good lesson on sound where the teacher had organised a range of objects and question sheets to help pupils investigate pitch. As a consequence, pupils acquired a good understanding of the reasons for differences in pitch, for example, when blowing across bottles containing water or tapping a 'nail xylophone'. Classroom assistants are always effectively deployed to enhance learning and ensure pupils, especially those with special educational needs, play a full part in lessons. Using careful questioning and clear explanations they reinforce the work of the teacher. These pupils make good progress as a result of the effective support they receive. In one lesson, the classroom assistant took a group of Year 1 pupils around the school to identify sources of light. She was particularly effective in encouraging pupils to observe carefully and ask questions. Teachers make sure that pupils are clear about the objectives of the lessons and this helped them to understand what they are learning and why. Questioning is usually well focused with teachers often using 'Why?' and 'Can you explain?' This helps to deepen pupils' understanding. Pupils regularly work in groups and this makes a good contribution to their social development. In a few lessons observed, the introductions went on a little too long and pupils became restless. On occasions, pupils finished their tasks and the lack of extension work meant that they wasted a few minutes waiting for the next activity. The quality of teachers' marking varies and does not always give pupils enough information on what they have done well and where they could improve their science.

86. The good leadership of science has ensured that the issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed. Although there is scope for further improvement, as outlined above, the rise in standards, including the upward trend of test results, represents good progress in the subject since the last inspection. A scheme of work, and supplementary materials, have been introduced and this has helped to guide teachers' lesson planning. Over the past year, pupils have helped to design and develop an environmental area and pond in the school grounds. This has helped to extend pupils' knowledge of the natural world and, through consideration of how wildlife can best be conserved and cared for, has contributed well to their moral development.

The following subjects were not specifically reported on in the inspection of 2000. Consequently, there are no judgements about improvements since that time in these sections.

ART AND DESIGN

87. No art lessons were observed, but pupils' completed work, including that on display around the school was scrutinised. The available evidence indicates that standards in Years 2 and 6 are above expectations and that pupils' achievements are good. The work seen showed a good coverage of the curriculum and included a range of media for two-dimensional art, studies of other artists and their cultures. Planning shows that all other aspects of art are taught during the remainder of the year with some useful links with other subjects. These help to develop pupils' interest and understanding of various topics. Some examples are given beneath.

88. Year 2 pupils had combined good quality observational work with a look at some French and 'jungle-style' painting. During the inspection they completed some Mothers Day cards of a very high standard. These involved observational drawing techniques, tile printing and colour blending using oil pastels. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have worked with a range of materials and developed their skills and techniques well. For example, Year 4 pupils have used a picture of a wave as a model for their own very effective compositions in ink, paint and pastel. They have made very attractive papier-mâché pots in connection with their topic on the Ancient Greeks. Year 6 pupils cut careful designs in tiles for printing and produced some lively work as part of their study of Buddhism. Pupils used various techniques and materials including tissue paper, observational drawing and watercolour to produce a range of good quality mountain studies. The weekly Enrichment Afternoon is used very well to support the art curriculum. Various collage works, including The Harvest of the Sea, are currently in progress. The subject has been well led to ensure there is a good focus on quality art and display around the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

89. No design and technology lessons were seen during the three days of the inspection and the range of pupils' work available was not wide enough to make a valid judgement about standards or teaching.

90. Samples of models and designs, evidence from photographs of past classroom displays, discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of curriculum planning show that coverage of the subject is satisfactory. In Year 2, pupils have made land yachts using various materials including wood, fabric and polystyrene. They used annotated drawings to describe their designs and tested how well the models worked as part of a science investigation. Basic construction techniques have been appropriately taught, for example, the use of plastic tubing on the axles to ensure that the wheels are clear of the body and stay on. In the lower juniors, pupils have looked at various types of packaging and considered how manufacturers use different colours, shapes and wording to attract buyers. Using this information they are producing labelled sketches to help them design their own food packages. Photographs of Year 6 work show that, last term, pupils used different arrangements of levers for operating model heads of animals. The models were finished attractively and accompanied by plans and evaluations of their success. A study of food using Second World War recipes enhanced pupils' understanding of that period.

91. Not enough use is made of ICT to support learning. Appropriate plans for the subject's development include improved facilities for food technology, and a closer focus on how the subject is to be taught when the DT policy is reviewed later this year.

GEOGRAPHY

92. By the end of Year 6, pupils' reach levels of attainment expected for their age and their achievements are satisfactory. They have a sound knowledge of a range of places and localities, and

record this using appropriate geographical vocabulary. Recent, well-presented work on volcanoes and mountains is detailed and includes individual research from books and ICT sources. Good links are made with other areas of the curriculum, for example in religious education where a speaker on Buddhism enhanced pupils' knowledge of life in the regions being studied. Pupils study physical features of the local area, for example when undertaking fieldwork at the nearby River Chelmer.

93. By Year 2, standards in geography are in line with those expected nationally. There was very little recorded work, but speaking to pupils showed that they had acquired satisfactory geographical knowledge and understanding of the local area. They have studied the buildings in the village and drawn maps to show their routes to school. Pupils have compared life on an imaginary Scottish island with their own. However, pupils are not producing enough written work to extend and support the skills learnt in literacy lessons.

94. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection so it is not possible to make an overall judgement on teaching. However, in a lesson seen, older pupils made good progress because of the teacher's high expectations of accuracy and careful presentation in mapping skills. In another, progress was not as rapid because resources were not well organised and some learning time was wasted. The school uses a nationally recommended scheme of work which helps guide teachers' lesson planning. Geography and history, which are managed by the same co-ordinator, have not been high priorities in the school's recent development. Currently, not enough is done to monitor standards or provision. Strategies to improve the effectiveness of leadership in the subjects, such as more monitoring of teaching and learning, are identified in the school's development plan.

HISTORY

95. As no lessons were observed, it is not possible to make a reliable judgement about teaching. Evidence for standards is based on pupils' work, discussions with pupils and staff, and a scrutiny of planning. These indicate that standards are similar to those expected nationally by the end of Year 6 and that pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

96. There is not enough written work in Year 2 to make a secure judgement about pupils' attainment. Work about Guy Fawkes and about toys in the past and the present help pupils to gain a sense of change in history and to use vocabulary associated with time, such as past, present and Victorian. Although a more detailed study is planned for next term, the subject is not currently used well enough in Years 1 and 2 to extend and develop pupils' writing skills.

97. Year 6 pupils know a great deal about the Second World War and have completed very well presented books containing their research. They use a good range of sources to help them question and interpret evidence. For example, when they study old newspapers they identify biased accounts of events in the form of propaganda. The work on Ancient Egyptians, Celts and Romans, and the Ancient Greeks shows how pupils' knowledge and understanding progress in Years 3 to 5. Pupils gain a sound knowledge of changes in these historical periods and have used timelines to reinforce their understanding. Good links with art enhance pupils' understanding of history. Year 3 pupils, for example, have researched colours used in Egyptian tomb paintings to create their own tomb pictures. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are given good opportunities for independent writing in history. For instance, they have written imaginatively about wartime evacuees. This is contributing to the rising standards of writing in this part of the school.

98. The subject is jointly managed with geography and further information is in that section of the report. Visits to places of historical interest, including Colchester Castle and the Duxford War Museum, artefacts borrowed from a history resource centre, and talks by visitors such as former

evacuees, all enrich learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

99. Attainment in information and communication technology is below that expected nationally at the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils have made insufficient gains in their learning over time and are under-achieving. Pupils are not using computers frequently enough to support their learning. Variations in teachers' expertise have resulted in some aspects of the subject not being taught to a high enough level. Nevertheless, the school has been following a clear plan for improvement aimed at raising standards. Government funded training to improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject was due to begin soon after the inspection. Significant improvements in resources over the past two years include a well-equipped ICT suite and a computer in each classroom. This up-to-date equipment provides a good basis for setting challenging work.

100. All the required aspects of the subject are taught. By the end of Year 2, pupils explore a science information program and practise basic skills in mathematics. They write poems using different styles of print and know how to save their work. Pupils explained how they used an art program and gave instructions to a programmable 'roamer' to move across the floor. There are plans for pupils to enter some information into the computer and produce pictograms. However, the range and quantity of work seen were less than expected for this age group, especially in the ways pupils present and handle information. Pupils were seen working on the class computer but little direct teaching was seen. The use of the computer suite for one lesson every second week is insufficient to promote the required range of skills and knowledge.

101. By the end of Year 6, pupils use Internet sites to find information about the Second World War and to learn more about mountains. Some pupils have created multi-media presentations combining sound with pictures. They have produced their own quizzes and topics and made good use of 'hyperlinks' to connect with the next slide in their presentation. This meets the expectations for Year 6 although several other pupils have not worked at this level. Pupils enter data into computers and produce graphs from various surveys but their work on databases is below the standard expected. For example, they have not searched a database and framed questions to gain information. Similarly, in using computers to control events, pupils explained how, in the past, they have given instructions for a shape to be drawn on the screen. However, they have not worked at higher levels where they can create and save a set of instructions to be run at another time. Pupils have not used more advanced applications such as spreadsheets to support their work, for example to investigate mathematical relationships. During the inspection computers were used appropriately in a few lessons, for example to support literacy. However, in other classes they were used infrequently. The ICT suite was used for teaching classes but was rarely used as a resource for pupils to work independently. Computers are used to help learning in other subjects but weaknesses in the areas of ICT outlined above mean that they are not used to their full potential, for example in history and science.

102. The enthusiastic co-ordinator has had the responsibility for a relatively short time but clearly understands what needs to be done to raise standards. Currently, her leadership and management are under-developed, as she has had little opportunity to check pupils' learning or to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. However, once teachers have started their ICT training, time will be allowed for her to carry out this role and have a greater impact on raising standards. Teachers keep ongoing records of pupils' progress but assessment procedures lack the precision to help teachers plan for different levels of attainment. An ICT technician makes a valuable contribution to the subject. He advises on technical matters and has helped the school set up its own web site. He has run ICT sessions for Years 5 and 6 which have been helpful in extending the most able pupils and those with a high interest in the subject.

MUSIC

103. Too little evidence was available to make secure judgements about pupils' achievements or the quality of teaching and learning. No lessons were observed during the inspection as all music lessons are timetabled for the end of the week. Pupils sang enthusiastically and tunefully, even though they were unaccompanied, and a Year 4/5 class played a variety of percussion instruments to demonstrate various rhythm patterns. Pupils attainment was that expected for their ages in both these activities.

104. Learning is enriched by opportunities to perform and to learn from professional musicians. Pupils have worked with members of a London orchestra and are going to attend a concert in connection with this work. All pupils take part in school productions and a concert is performed at a home for senior citizens. There is good provision for pupils to learn to play musical instruments. Seven pupils are taught woodwind, three the piano and fourteen the guitar. The music co-ordinator develops these pupils' talents in a school orchestra. During the enrichment afternoon, pupils have the option of learning to play handbells. This is very popular and pupils make good progress in reading musical notation. Pupils listen to a range of music from different parts of the world which enhances their knowledge of other cultures.

105. The co-ordinator gives good support to her colleagues and has introduced a scheme of work that gives clear guidance to teachers when planning lessons.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

106. Too few lessons were observed to make valid judgements about overall standards and the quality of teaching in the subject.

107. In a Year 1/2 lesson, pupils' skills in gymnastics were similar to those expected for their ages. They explored various body shapes when jumping and moving at different heights. The teacher kept pupils active and interested by providing a range of tasks including co-operative work. Pupils worked well in pairs to mirror each other's movements. Although pupils were asked to demonstrate their actions, not enough emphasis was placed on explaining the features of individual movement so that pupils could learn from each other. The other lessons seen were part of the school's enrichment afternoon. All pupils take part in a PE activity which supplements lessons at other times during the week. This is a good arrangement because adults with expertise, including specialist instructors, enables the school to broaden the curriculum and to teach pupils in small groups. Those pupils with talents for particular aspects of PE benefit from the extra expertise. For example, in a gymnastics lesson, two adults, working with seventeen pupils, taught individual pupils how to refine their movements so that they produced good quality work. Pupils smoothly linked a range of straddled rolls, jumps and balances. In a Year 1/2 lesson on netball skills, a specialist instructor successfully developed throwing and bouncing skills and taught pupils to compete in small group games. The good teaching enabled pupils to achieve well and develop their skills to a higher standard than expected for their ages. Other helpful specialist lessons include football tuition provided by members of Cambridge United FC.

108. In addition, the curriculum is extended and enriched by competitive sport and a residential visit for Years 5 and 6. Teams take part in various competitions, including football, netball, athletics and rounders. A number of outdoor pursuits, including canoeing and abseiling, are taught on the residential visit. These activities, together with co-operative and competitive group-work in lessons, make a valuable contribution to pupils' social development. Support staff are very effectively deployed, working with pupils who have special educational needs. The school makes sure that activities, including those on residential visits, are adapted to ensure the full participation of pupils with physical difficulties.