

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LEXDEN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Colchester, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114707

Headteacher: Mrs Ellie L Hudson

Reporting inspector: Ms Ruth Frith  
OIN: 2490

Dates of inspection: 14 – 17 January 2002

Inspection number: 211546

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Trafalgar Road  
Colchester  
Essex

Postcode: CO3 5AS

Telephone number: 01206 573519

Fax number: 01206 763179

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr John Martin

Date of previous inspection: 15 – 18 March 1999

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2490	MS R E Frith	Registered inspector	Science Design and technology History Foundation Stage English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9958	Mr T Page	Lay inspector	How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?	
7593	Mr J Collier	Team inspector	English Geography Music Religious education Equal opportunities	
3838	Ms A Webber	Team inspector	Special educational needs The work of the hearing impaired unit	
1028	Mr D Page	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology	

1224	Mr G Todd	Team Inspector	Art and design Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Lexden Primary School is a community school for boys and girls of all abilities aged 3 to 11 years. There are 196 pupils on roll, including 34 children who attend the nursery part-time. The school is situated on the outskirts of the town of Colchester in an area where there is more social than private housing. The percentage of pupils receiving free school meals currently reflects the national average but until recently has been higher. A significant number of pupils do not spend all their primary education at the school either arriving after the time of usual admissions or leaving before Year 6. On entry to the nursery, a significant number of children use a limited range of vocabulary and attainment on entry is often well below average. Currently, the percentage of pupils with special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average and most of the pupils in the mainstream school with special educational needs who require regular additional support have moderate learning difficulties. In addition, there are 17 pupils with a statement for special educational needs in a designated unit for pupils with hearing impairment. A very small number of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has received recognition of its work through the award of Investors in People. At the time of the inspection three out of the eight class teachers were in their second week of teaching in the school.

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

Lexden Primary is an improving school. Over the last few years, staff have worked well as a team and created a good climate for learning and pupils' behaviour has improved. The 2001 national tests indicate an improvement from the previous year in English, mathematics and science for pupils age 7 and 11 but standards for the current Year 6 pupils are well below average in English and below average in mathematics and science. The quality of teaching shows a significant improvement since the last inspection and staff demonstrate a shared commitment to improving further the quality of education. Overall, management of the school is satisfactory. There have been significant changes in staffing but the headteacher has continued to develop a good team spirit amongst staff and maintained the confidence of parents. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Teaching and learning in the nursery and reception class are good.
- The inclusion of pupils with hearing impairment significantly enhances all pupils' personal and social development and encourages respect and tolerance.
- The good provision for pupils' moral and social development encourages them to behave well and develop good relationships.
- Most pupils have good attitudes to school and show interest in their learning.
- Support staff make a significant contribution to the pupils' learning and progress.
- The school provides a very good range of activities outside of formal lessons.
- The school has good links with the wider community and other schools in the area.
- Staff know the pupils well and make good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- The school promotes good links with parents and consequently their views of the school are very good.
- Financial control and management are good.

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

- Raise standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology.
- Improve the ways teachers assess pupils' attainment and progress and help them to use the information gained to set appropriate work for all pupils.
- Make time available for the co-ordination, management and monitoring of the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment and learning and behaviour difficulties.
- Raise levels of attendance.
- Ensure that the National Curriculum for information and communication technology is fully in place.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has successfully addressed most of the key issues identified in the report following the last inspection in March 1999. Staff have developed the teaching of literacy and numeracy in line with national guidance and have reviewed the curriculum and provision for children in the nursery and reception class. They are also currently undertaking training for information and communication technology. Staff have improved their systems for planning lessons and are continuing to develop target setting for pupils to encourage improvement. Assessment procedures have improved to some extent so, for example, the needs of more able pupils have been recognised and they are usually receiving appropriately challenging work, but more still needs to be done. The marking policy has been reviewed but there are still inconsistencies in practice and pupils are not always clear how they can improve their work. Training has been provided in relation to behaviour management and this has brought about an improvement in pupils' behaviour. The quality of teaching has improved through monitoring and professional development. Support for pupils with special educational needs has been reorganised so that they now receive experiences in all areas of the curriculum. Staff and governors demonstrate a clear commitment to further improvement.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

Children often make good progress with their learning in the nursery and reception year and most children in the current reception class are likely to reach the nationally expected standards in all areas of learning by the time they are ready to start Year 1. This indicates an improvement on previous years. Results of the 2001 standard assessment tests for seven-year-olds indicated a rise in standards from the previous year in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Evidence from this inspection indicate that pupils in Year 2 are reaching standards which are well below average in speaking, listening, reading and writing, below average in mathematics, science, history, information and communication technology and music, and average in art and design, design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education. There are few pupils in this year group and a significant number of these have special educational needs. This is affecting comparative standards overall. Results in the standard assessment tests for eleven-year-olds in 2001 also indicated a rise in standards from the previous year. Pupils in Year 6 are currently attaining standards which are well below average in English, below average in mathematics, science, design and technology, history and information and communication technology and average in art and design, geography, music, physical education and religious education. Over the last five years the school's trend of improvement in English, mathematics and science for pupils aged 8 to 11 was broadly in line with the national trend although the school did not reach the challenging targets it set last year. The high number of pupils with special educational needs and pupils who have moved schools during their primary education and thus disrupted their learning also affected these results. The standards reached by those pupils who have not experienced a disrupted education are generally in line with their abilities. The pupils with special educational needs and the higher-attainers are usually appropriately challenged and achieve in line with their capabilities. However, higher-attainers could achieve more in science. Although no significant difference was noted in the



progress and achievement of boys and girls during the inspection, girls have done better than boys in the national tests for eleven-year-olds in English, mathematics and science over the last three years.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	The attitudes of the large majority of pupils are good. They enjoy their work and demonstrate interest and enthusiasm towards their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most pupils behave well although there are a few who do not respond to the high expectations of staff and behave inappropriately in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between all members of the school community are good and most pupils develop as considerate individuals. However, some lack initiative and confidence in their learning. Overall, pupils' personal development is satisfactory.
Attendance	The level of attendance is unsatisfactory and below the national average.

The pupils' good attitudes, relationships and behaviour provide a good basis for their learning and make a positive contribution to the progress that they make in lessons. When pupils are frequently absent, this has a considerable effect on their learning.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils in:</b>	<b>Nursery and Reception</b>	<b>Years 1 – 2</b>	<b>Years 3 – 6</b>
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

Teaching is good in the nursery and reception class and particularly effective in developing the children's communication, personal and social skills and their attitudes to learning. During the inspection over half the lessons observed in Years 1 to 6 were judged to be good but a scrutiny of pupils' work indicated that teaching and learning over a period of time were only satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and reflects the school's focus on monitoring teaching so that teachers' strengths and areas for improvement are identified, and on supporting staff through providing professional development opportunities. Although teachers throughout the school have adopted the literacy and numeracy lessons satisfactorily, staff have been more successful in raising standards in mathematics than in English. As some children come into the school with well below average standards in communication, language and literacy they need consistently good teaching to raise their levels of attainment. Teachers have not yet clearly identified how the pupils' literacy skills are to be developed across the whole curriculum in a consistent and relevant way so that, for example, pupils gain sufficient opportunities to practise their writing skills. Also, teachers need to ensure that pupils do not read books that are too easy for them and that they are appropriately guided in lessons. The teaching of English is satisfactory and the teaching of mathematics is good. Teaching for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is good in information and communication technology and satisfactory in all other subjects except in art and design where no clear judgement could be made. The school allocates valuable additional support for pupils with special educational needs. Support staff make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers and receive appropriate support. Higher attaining pupils are appropriately challenged in most cases but not always sufficiently in science.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall although not all aspects of the National Curriculum for information and communication technology are planned for. It is significantly enriched by the very good provision of extra-curricular activities and good links with the community.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs receive a curriculum that is appropriate to their needs and overall provision is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils who speak English as an additional language are fully involved and make similar progress to their peers. Currently, their needs are well met within the mainstream classroom teaching.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory. By the time they leave school, most pupils have a sense of responsibility for themselves and others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Staff make good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. Although there have been some developments in the assessing of pupils' standards and progress, this needs further improvement.

The school's partnership with parents is good and the contribution that parents make to their children's learning is satisfactory.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is effective in motivating staff and building a team with a shared sense of values and priorities. She has been successful in creating an environment which is conducive to learning, and standards are beginning to rise.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors play an integral part in the leadership and management of the school. They are well informed and fully involved in any decisions. All statutory requirements are met apart from the provision of the full National Curriculum for information and communication technology.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Staff are improving the ways in which they evaluate their work and have established a system of monitoring and target setting that is guiding school improvement. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and control by the headteacher and governors are good and the school manages and uses its resources well. Correct financial procedures are followed and staff and governors seek to obtain the best value for their spending.

There is a good number of suitably qualified teachers to ensure that class sizes are not too large and that the wide range of needs in the school are met. Support staff are experienced and they make a significant contribution to the pupils' learning. The accommodation is satisfactory overall with good outdoor provision. The school has reserved sufficient funds to cover planned building developments. The

overall quality and level of resources are satisfactory and they are effectively used to support learning throughout the school.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children enjoy school and make good progress.</li> <li>• Teaching is good and staff expect children to work hard.</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about approaching staff with questions or a problem.</li> <li>• The school has gradually improved over the last three years and is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Staff develop a caring attitude in the children and help them to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• Staff value all children and the inclusion of hearing impaired pupils in the school community is very positive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small minority of parents would like more information about how their child is getting on.</li> <li>• A small minority of parents would like more additional activities outside of lessons.</li> </ul>

Inspectors endorse the positive views held by parents and the regard they have for the school. They looked closely at the issues raised by a minority of parents, and from the evidence gathered during the inspection judge the information given to parents to be satisfactory. Inspectors acknowledge the views of a minority of parents who would like more additional activities outside school but found that the school provides a very good range of activities throughout the school year.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Children are admitted to the nursery after the age of three. They have a wide range of abilities and experiences but most have low levels of skills in communication, language and literacy and a significant number have not had much experience in playing with children of a similar age in a pre-school setting. Children make good progress in the nursery and reception class due to good teaching. In the past, by the time they were ready to leave the reception class, a significant number of children did not reach the nationally expected standards in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. However, in the current reception class, the children are displaying standards above those seen in previous years and are reaching standards expected for their age. Children make good progress in developing their personal, social and emotional skills and this helps to support their learning in other areas.
2. Results of the 2001 standard assessment tests for seven-year-olds indicated that in comparison with all schools, pupils' attainment was well below average in reading, average in writing and below average in mathematics. When compared with pupils from similar schools they attained below average standards in reading, above average standards in writing and average mathematics. Results of the 2001 standards teacher assessments in science indicated that the number of pupils reaching the expected level for their age (Level 2) was above average but only one pupil attained a higher standard. These results show an improvement in standards from the previous year's results, particularly in writing.
3. At the age of eleven, pupils' attainment in the 2001 tests was well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. When these results are compared with those of pupils from similar schools, attainment in English was below average and in mathematics and science it was well below average. Although pupils made satisfactory progress overall, two key factors affected the standards that they achieved. Over 30 per cent of this class had special educational needs and only 75 per cent had attended the school since the age of 7 years. Overall, however, results in 2001 show an improvement in standards in all three subjects. Over the last five years the school's trend of improvement in English, mathematics and science for pupils aged 8 to 11 was broadly in line with the national trend. The school did not reach the challenging targets it set last year which were also affected by children moving in and out of that year group.
4. Several factors need to be taken into account when judging improvements in standards year-on-year. The current Year 2 is small and each child represents nearly 8% in calculating results. Also, one-third of the class is assessed as having special educational needs so consequently only two-thirds of the pupils are working at about the expected level. Similarly 28 per cent of the current Year 6 have special educational needs which affect their ability to reach nationally expected standards for pupils of this age. A significant number of pupils in this year group have either left the school or others have arrived since the age of 7 and this affects their continuity of learning. It also makes target setting more difficult as the pupils on which targets are set are often not the same as those taking the tests.
5. Evidence from this inspection indicates that the standards achieved by pupils in the current Year 2 and Year 6 are well below average in speaking, listening, reading and writing. The national strategy for literacy is well established but the school is not consistently meeting the requirement to have guided reading as a fundamental part of the literacy programme and this is affecting standards. Also, some pupils are reading books that are too easy for them. Some pupils lack confidence in speaking and have a restricted range of vocabulary. Consequently they find it difficult to clearly explain what they want to say. There are not many examples of pupils' extended writing, particularly in Years 3 to 6, because they do not have sufficient time to develop

their skills in literacy sessions and other subject lessons. This is also affecting their progress and overall attainment.

6. Although standards in mathematics are below average for the pupils in the current Year 2 and Year 6, this represents an improvement since the last inspection. Improvements in standards reflect the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and the overall increase in good teaching. The standard of numeracy in other subjects is satisfactory and is developing further as the impact of the National Numeracy Strategy in the school begins to influence the planning in other subjects. Pupils have more opportunities to develop the skills of applying mathematics and this develops their mathematical thinking. Also, pupils with special educational needs are no longer withdrawn from mathematics for additional English.
7. Although below average, standards of science in Years 2 and 6 have improved since the last inspection. This improvement reflects the better science curriculum, which is now in place, and the recent improvement in the quality of teaching. However, teachers are not sufficiently challenging the higher attaining pupils thus depressing standards. Also, pupils, particularly in Years 1 and 2, do not receive sufficient opportunities to develop their skills of scientific enquiry and investigation.
8. Pupils in Year 2 are currently reaching average levels of attainment in art and design, design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education. They are below average in history, information and communication technology and music. In Year 6, pupils are reaching average standards in art and design, geography, music, physical education and religious education. Standards are below average in design and technology, history and information and communication technology.
9. The few pupils learning English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers and have full access to a broad curriculum. No significant difference was noted in the progress of boys and girls during the inspection. More able pupils are generally appropriately challenged and reach standards in line with their abilities apart from in science. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The progress they make in classes is commensurate with that of the other children, due to the very good support they receive from learning support assistants. The good progress they make towards their targets on their individual education plans is well documented and shows that appropriate interventions and strategies ensure that steady progress is maintained.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. The majority of pupils display good attitudes to school; this represents a slight improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Children in the nursery and reception class quickly settle into routines, show interest in activities, work sensibly and help each other. They form good relationships with adults, and are continuing to make good progress in personal and social development.
11. There are a small minority of pupils in Years 1 to 6 who continue to present challenging behaviour that sometimes leads to lessons being disrupted. This has also led to a relatively high level of exclusions - 4 fixed period and 2 permanent exclusions during the previous year - but these are now falling. The overwhelming majority of pupils try hard in lessons and respond particularly well when lessons are stimulating. Pupils are courteous towards each other, and to adults, and there is very little oppressive behaviour.
12. Personal development is satisfactory, overall, but covers a wide spectrum both within and across age groups. The majority of pupils are loyal and dependable, have confidence to accept responsibility, and contribute to the smooth running of the school and the well being of their peers. The opportunities for taking responsibility increase as pupils get older. Pupils in Year 1 and above take up the opportunity to express their views in the school council and know that they can influence developments in the school. Pupils in Year 6 make a significant contribution by acting as librarians, tuck shop assistants, playground equipment monitors, and playground 'buddies'.

13. On the other hand, pupils are less sure when presented with unfamiliar and challenging situations. Inspectors found it unusual that such a large number of older pupils felt uncomfortable about reading to them and consequently declined. Reading books are often too easy, and there is very little indication in classroom activities or through work scrutiny that pupils act on their own initiative to move their learning forward. There is little evidence of the use of reference books, or Internet searches, to sustain individual research skills.
14. When pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn for extra lessons their attitudes are very positive and they listen and concentrate well. For example, they contribute to discussions and talk about ways of putting their ideas in writing. Pupils who are difficult to manage respond well to programmes provided to assist them and try hard to moderate their responses in class. The additional support given to pupils with special educational needs and the progress they see they are making increase their confidence and help to raise their self-esteem.
15. Relationships are good; awareness is enhanced by the presence of pupils with a hearing impairment, and others with educational needs. In lessons, pupils are very supportive, they readily and spontaneously pick up on signing in order to provide peer group support. They have a genuine desire to help. Pupils have a good rapport with their teachers and other adults; this is nurtured by the comfortable and gentle learning environment which reflects the school's ethos.
16. Attendance is unsatisfactory. Holiday absence, parentally condoned absence, and exclusions, contribute to an absence rate which is above the national average. There is no evidence of significant lateness in the registers, and little was witnessed during the inspection.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

17. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. There has been an increase in very good teaching and a decrease in unsatisfactory teaching. The good quality of teaching in the nursery and reception class is an important factor in the way children develop good personal, emotional and social skills, attitudes to learning and behaviour. Lesson planning is good and reflects the national guidance for teaching children of this age. Appropriate attention has been placed on settling children into school and a good range of activities is provided which maintains the children's interest and supports their learning. The children's knowledge, skills and understanding are successfully extended in the reception class where they continue to develop confidence and are well prepared to start the National Curriculum, when appropriate. The support staff give valuable help to the children and this is a key feature in making children feel secure in their learning.
18. Although teaching and learning were judged to be good or better in over half the lessons seen for pupils aged 5 to 11, a scrutiny of pupils' work indicated that teaching and learning overall for this age group were only satisfactory. Expectations over time varied both across the school and within classes and pupils' learning did not always move forward in a progressive and systematic way. In some instances pupils in different age groups, but studying a similar topic, were given similar activities and consequently the oldest pupils were not always fully challenged. In other subjects, such as design and technology, pupils' skills were not always developed systematically and their attainment recorded so that they were able to use and develop their skills.
19. Throughout the school, teachers' knowledge and understanding are satisfactory and they plan work which is generally appropriate. Teachers have used the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies to improve teaching and learning but they have been more effective in raising standards in mathematics than English. Teachers now need to take every opportunity to teach literacy skills in other subjects and give pupils sufficient opportunities to practise their writing. They also need to ensure that pupils read appropriately challenging books and provide clearer support through their teaching of guided reading.
20. The school has recognised the need to improve teachers' skills in information and communication

technology and they are currently receiving further training. This is helping to raise the standard of teaching but if pupils' standards of attainment are to improve, teachers need to ensure that they are teaching all aspects of the National Curriculum for information and communication technology.

21. Support staff work well and are instrumental in encouraging pupils' progress and the standards that they achieve. In some cases, as in the reception class, they are instrumental in keeping the continuity of teaching and learning when there has been a change in teachers and this helps to support the children's learning. Overall, teachers use time, resources and the expertise of support staff well.
22. In the best lessons, teachers have a clear idea of what they want pupils to learn and share that with them. They provide appropriate support and challenge which ensure that pupils of all abilities maintain a good pace in their learning and build systematically on their previous learning. A key feature of raising pupils' attainment is to highlight clearly the next stages in learning through effective assessment and to use this information to plan a series of lessons.
23. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is good and has a significant influence on how staff successfully manage the pupils in their care. Teachers are encouraging and supportive, which results in most pupils becoming confident. However, there are a significant minority of pupils who lack confidence in their abilities. Teachers use their knowledge of pupils appropriately in most lessons and encourage them to improve and work harder. In contrast, some do not comment enough on pupils' work through their marking. Consequently, pupils are not always clear about how they can improve. Provision of homework is satisfactory overall and supports the work done in school, particularly in English and mathematics.
24. Across the school, the quality of teaching and learning is good in mathematics and information and communication technology. Teaching in English, science, design and technology, geography, history, music, physical education and religious education is satisfactory. Insufficient evidence was available to make a firm judgement on the quality of teaching in art and design.
25. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs in classes by learning support assistants is very good. Teaching provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator and learning support assistants for pupils in small groups is good. It is well planned with a clear focus, which is shared with the pupils so that they are clear about the progress they are making. Pupils who are difficult to manage are well motivated and maintain their concentration throughout the lessons. The teaching and learning of pupils with a hearing impairment in classrooms and when they are withdrawn for additional help is good. Good support is given by specialist teachers of the deaf and learning support assistants who ensure that pupils are able to participate fully in the lessons and extend their learning.
26. The school has improved its work with higher attaining pupils who are in most cases being appropriately challenged. The teaching for these pupils is managed well and a variety of strategies adopted to ensure that they receive an appropriate curriculum and teaching. Some lessons are set so that groups of pupils with similar abilities can be taught together and some pupils attend lessons in a local secondary school for one session a week and this extends their learning. However, expectations of what higher-attainers can do in science should be raised. Pupils who speak English as an additional language progress in line with their peers and currently have their needs met within mainstream classes. Teachers satisfactorily address the needs of pupils from religious groups who need different experiences and activities from that of their peers. These examples reflect the school's commitment to inclusive education.

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

27. The school provides its pupils with a satisfactory range of learning opportunities; this is a similar judgement to the one made at the time of the last inspection. The curriculum is sound and meets the interest, aptitudes, special educational needs and additional language needs of all pupils and prepares them adequately for the next stage of education. The quality and range of learning opportunities for children in the nursery and reception class are satisfactory. Work is planned across all areas of learning and there is good provision for regular outdoor activity and the



development of independence and initiative. The school has made satisfactory provision for higher attaining pupils in English and mathematics; for example, pupils in Year 6 receive small group tuition several times a week. Apart from information and communication technology, statutory requirements are met in all subjects, including religious education, collective worship, sex education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The curriculum for information and communication technology is unsatisfactory because certain aspects of it are not taught; for example, control technology and the use of electronic mail. There is insufficient use of computers in most subjects of the curriculum.

28. The school allocates an appropriate amount of teaching time to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. They are being satisfactorily taught. The effect of the teaching can be seen in the national trend that shows the standards in both English and mathematics are rising. The school has received good support from the local education authority to implement these strategies. Long-term and medium-term planning is satisfactory in all subjects apart from information and communication technology. Teachers' short-term planning is satisfactory overall. However, the inspectors are concerned about subjects such as religious education, geography, history and design and technology. This is because in some classes, the curriculum is not always adapted and modified effectively enough to meet the needs of the pupils across two year groups. Schemes of work are in place and learning objectives clearly defined. The scheme for religious education accords with the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Essex and complies with national guidance. The school makes good provision for PSHE, sex and drugs education. These aspects are planned well through different areas of the curriculum and in science. For example, pupils learn about feelings, keeping healthy, the human body and growing up. 'Circle time', is an opportunity for pupils to sit and consider issues that are important to them. There is a teacher with responsibility for PSHE, but the school has yet to finalise its policy.
29. The school is fully committed to offering equal opportunities to all pupils and to providing access to all aspects of the curriculum. There is a clear policy about this and, in practice, it is well implemented. The previous inspection report noted that pupils identified as having special educational needs were withdrawn from lessons and not receiving the same curriculum as other pupils. This issue has now been successfully addressed; pupils are not now missing important parts of their lessons. There is a good balance between in-class support and withdrawal of pupils for extra help. "Booster" classes of small groups are taught within the literacy and numeracy hour. Small groups and individuals are taught by the special educational needs co-ordinator and learning support assistants. Work is carefully tailored to the individual learning and behaviour targets on pupils' individual education plans. The sharing of curriculum planning on a weekly basis with learning support assistants is very good and enhances the quality of the support that is given. The satisfactory provision for pupils with special educational needs has been maintained since the last inspection. The pupils with a hearing impairment continue to be successfully integrated and assistants provide continuous assistance through 'signing'. It is not always possible for these pupils to join the after-school clubs because of transport arrangements but the clubs are open to all pupils. The school aims to meet the learning needs of all pupils. Talented pupils, in mathematics for example, attend the local secondary school for more challenging work.
30. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. There are numerous activities that run at different times throughout the year. They include choir, recorders, science, library, computers, deaf awareness and sports clubs such as netball, football, hockey, rounders, athletics and basketball. There are residential visits for older pupils to Kingswood and Ardleigh Reservoir. Orienteering takes place in the summer term. The curriculum is enriched by educational visits. Examples of visitors to the school include the artist, Karen Atwill, who worked with pupils to make the fabric wall hangings displayed near the school entrance and football coaching from Colchester United Football Club. Such activities add interest and relevance to pupils' learning, contributing to their positive attitudes and personal development. There are good links with the Colchester English Studies Centre School. Other links with the community include visits to the local churches as part of pupils' religious education work, involvement with the cluster schools and local secondary school. The good links established with this secondary school lead to a smooth transition for pupils when they leave Lexden Primary.

31. The provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. This is a similar judgement to the last inspection. The assemblies observed during the inspection were spiritual occasions and of a sound quality. A book of prayers composed by the pupils is displayed in entrance to the school. The school has good links with two local churches and during the inspection an assembly was taken by a local vicar. The school meets statutory requirements for a daily collective act of worship and assemblies are well planned. Religious education, music and personal and social education lessons provide sound opportunities for moments of reflection.
32. Provision for moral development is good. Pupils are developing an understanding of the needs of others. They appreciate the work of charities and their own contribution to fund-raising for them. For example, the pupils have raised money for charities such as the Salvation Army, Royal National Lifeboat Institution and Cancer Relief. They learn what is acceptable behaviour as the school has developed clear expectations regarding this. The school rules are enforced through the behaviour code; for example, staff award tokens for positive behaviour and the 'Golden Rules' are clearly displayed in all classrooms. Assemblies are effectively used to teach pupils the difference between right and wrong; moral values are reinforced by staff who act as good role models for the pupils.
33. Provision for social development is good and is supported well through the good relationships between adults and pupils. Most pupils are helpful and supportive of each other for example, they share materials, help each other and work co-operatively. 'Circle time' is used effectively to discuss such things as health and safety. Senior pupils are given specific responsibilities such as helping in assemblies. A mentoring system encourages older pupils to support those younger than themselves. The 'buddy' system is effective in developing a sense of caring and responsibility amongst Year 6 pupils. The parents felt that the school had developed a caring and supportive environment and the inspectors support their views.
34. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils learn about their own culture through language, art, history, religious education, music and geography. Visits to local museums and churches support their understanding of different religions and cultures. Music is appropriately used in assemblies and pupils are becoming familiar with composers and their music. The music of Glen Miller was played at the beginning and end of assemblies during the inspection. Since the last inspection the good multicultural aspects of the school's curriculum have been maintained. Last term there was a whole school study of India; this was reflected particularly in the pupils' writing, religious education and art work. The headteacher has close links with a local English Study Centre and through this pupils from all over the world visit the school during the summer term.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

35. The school makes good provision for ensuring the well being of its pupils. This was identified as a strength of the school at the time of the last inspection and continues to be the case. Arrangements for health and safety are secure; regular safety checks and risk assessments are undertaken, and there is a policy that clearly sets out lines of responsibility. Most staff have been trained in first aid and there is a dedicated medical room. Appropriate records are kept. All staff are aware of the school's child protection policy and the correct procedures to follow. The personal, social, and health education curriculum provides extensive and effective support for personal safety, healthy lifestyle, citizenship, and personal development. Educational guidance, through assessment and feedback to pupils, is less robust.
36. Measures taken to promote good attendance are not rigorous enough. The school fails to emphasise the link between attainment and good attendance in communications with parents. Only unauthorised absence is recorded in pupils' annual reports. Class teachers are initially responsible for following up unexplained absence, and some are more diligent than others. The educational welfare officer makes appropriate enquiries when cases are referred, and pupils are encouraged to attend by the award of attendance certificates.

37. The management of behaviour is now good. The policy and the procedures are clear, and strategies are effective. Pupils are well aware of the 'Golden Rules', which are displayed prominently in classrooms, and younger pupils take particular pride in being awarded tokens, which foster team responsibility and interdependence. Unacceptable behaviour in lessons has been significantly reduced since the last inspection and there has been a corresponding fall in the number of fixed period exclusions. The caring ethos of the school, the buddy system which engages Year 6 pupils to befriend younger pupils, and positive messages about emotions and feelings contained in circle time discussions, all contribute to maintaining a school which is largely free of bullying and other forms of oppressive behaviour. This is confirmed by the relatively few entries in the school's behaviour log.
38. The school's arrangements for assessing pupils' academic performance remain a weakness. There is over-reliance on formal test results, no co-ordination of teacher assessments, and inconsistencies in marking. The recent introduction of a new tracking system, designed by the local education authority, has identified areas of subject weakness through the analysis of pupils' statutory assessment test papers and other formal tests. It is beginning to influence teaching and planning because it has enabled the school to develop provision where it is most needed. The school has identified mathematics as a priority and standards there are beginning to rise. This is a useful first step towards improving academic standards but it is not yet impacting on other subjects, or providing specific support for pupils. Whilst the school is providing adequate curriculum coverage for most subjects in its planning, there is insufficient appreciation of the link between teaching and learning through assessment. Consequently, for most pupils, skills are not being raised sufficiently to promote higher standards across the curriculum. The school has identified some higher attaining pupils and their needs are generally being met through extension opportunities.
39. The most immediately accessible measure of pupils' attainment is contained in teachers' assessments. This potentially rich source of data is not being used efficiently to plan for improvement at whole school level or for individual pupils. The arrangements for teachers to pass information to colleagues are informal and there is no central co-ordination. During the inspection it was obvious that class teachers who were new to the school had to discover the attainment of their pupils for themselves in order to guide their lesson planning, and this resulted in a slowing of the pace of learning.
40. Assessment for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. There is some diagnostic assessment to inform the setting of individual targets, which could be extended further. Individual education plans are used well to assess progress and set new targets. However there is no tracking of reading, spelling and handwriting of pupils with special educational needs or evaluation of this data to monitor progress trends.
41. The communication of teachers' assessments to pupils through marking is inconsistent. Inspection of exercise books reveals a wide variation both in the quantity and the quality of comments so that pupils are not always made aware of what they need to do to improve their work.
42. The monitoring of academic progress is therefore not largely effective. The monitoring of personal development for the majority of pupils is informal and relies on teachers knowing their pupils well, but it is good for pupils with a hearing impairment and those who are being formally monitored for behaviour reasons. Attendance monitoring lacks consistency and rigour, and attendance is below the national average. Educational guidance is not as effective as it should be in raising pupils' achievements, but personal and social guidance is good. The latter is reflected in the pupils' improved behaviour and their good attitudes.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

43. Parents' views are very positive. All parents who answered the pre-inspection questionnaire

agreed that they would feel comfortable approaching the school with a question or a problem, and that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. They also identified good teaching, and good progress, as very positive aspects together with the fact that their children like school. Less positive areas centred on how well parents are informed about their children's progress, and the range of activities provided outside lessons.

44. Inspectors agree that the staff at the school are welcoming, and that teachers expect their pupils to work hard. Pupils confirm their parents' opinions that they like school. Academic standards are improving but inspectors believe that most pupils could achieve more. Teaching and progress are judged to be satisfactory. Information about progress is satisfactory in the pupils' annual reports, and the open door policy of the school gives parents access to additional information at any convenient time. Compared with other primary schools the provision of activities outside school is very good, and inspectors do not agree with the small number of parents who express a contrary opinion.
45. Parents are supportive of the amount of work their children are expected to undertake at home. Regular liaison is maintained through reading record books. Links with parents of hearing impaired pupils are very good as they are supplied with a daily record of work covered. A more structured communication diary is used to support behaviour management. All of these links confirm the open nature of the school, and the good efforts made to involve parents in the education of their children. The partnership with the parents of pupils with special educational needs is good. For example they contribute to the planning and implementation of their child's individual education plans.
46. The quality of communications sent to parents is satisfactory. Regular newsletters, which are written in a friendly and easy to understand style, keep parents informed about what is happening in school. Pupils' annual reports contain a good account of curriculum coverage but, although targets for improvement are set, they tend to be general rather than specific to the child. Only unauthorised absence is recorded in the absence statistics. Results of statutory assessment tests are sent out separately with a covering letter.
47. A small number of parents regularly help in school but many more support the 'Friends of Lexden' parents' group. They raise significant amounts of money for the benefit of the pupils and recently funded the purchase of new furniture for the library. The vast majority of parents sign the home/school agreements, and are supportive of the aims of the school.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

48. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school with a focus on maintaining good quality teaching and improving standards. She is particularly effective at team building and motivating staff and has developed a group of people who work hard and share a clear commitment to improvement. This was particularly noticeable during the inspection when three out of the eight class teachers had taught their classes for only one full week. The working atmosphere in the school is purposeful and results in a learning environment where pupils feel safe and most are keen to come to school. Staff has a good understanding of the pupils' needs and how they learn, and create an ethos of care and concern together with appropriate expectations in most lessons. By the time pupils leave school they show a more mature attitude and are sensitive to the needs of others. There is a good degree of mutual tolerance and respect. The school has a firm commitment to inclusive education and manages this well.
49. At the time of the inspection, an acting deputy headteacher had recently been appointed but insufficient time had passed for her to develop her role fully. The skills and expertise of the headteacher and previous deputy headteacher were obviously well complemented and they had worked well together on issues of school improvement. The senior managers have a clear view of the school's strengths and priorities for development and ably assist the headteacher. The role of subject co-ordinator is developing and although a number of the current co-ordinators are recent or temporary appointments, they share a clear understanding of what should be achieved.

Established co-ordinators have a clear understanding of how to improve practice.

50. The school's aims of raising standards and improving the quality of education are increasingly reflected in its work. Systems have recently been introduced to monitor pupils' progress and systems are established to evaluate the quality of teaching. Records indicate that the school has been successful in improving its results in line with the national trend and the tracking system, which indicates that pupils achieve the nationally expected two levels of attainment from the ages of 8 to 11.

51. The school has successfully addressed most of the key issues arising from the last inspection. Governors give full support to the school and are now more involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and the progress and attainment of pupils. They have good levels of knowledge and are well informed, which helps them to be fully involved in discussions and developments. Governors, headteacher and staff continue to show a clear commitment to maintaining the pace of improvement. The school has established a cycle of monitoring and target setting that keeps the school moving forward towards achieving its aims. The school improvement plan sets a clear agenda for improvement and is the result of a sound consultation process. All statutory requirements are met apart from teaching the full National Curriculum for information and communication technology.
52. The leadership and management of the special educational needs provision are satisfactory overall. The special educational needs co-ordinator manages the role very efficiently and effectively in a minimum of time, by appropriate prioritising and taking much of the work home. The legal requirements of the new Code of Practice are met and the paperwork is well organised. An experienced learning support assistant delivers small groups and one to one support daily, ensuring that pupils work regularly towards the achievement of individual education plan targets. She carries out the role exceptionally well. However, insufficient time is available for the special educational needs co-ordinator to monitor and develop the inclusion of pupils with learning and behaviour needs in the classroom and linking this with the inclusion of pupils with a hearing impairment. The department is unable to run suitable software programs that have been purchased, as the computer does not have a CD-ROM.
53. Over the last few years, the school has benefited from a stable staff and this has helped to bring about improvement. However, a few weeks before the inspection, three members of staff left, including a senior manager and the school is currently in the process of deciding on future appointments. Satisfactory arrangements are in place for the induction of staff new to the school. This includes appropriate mentoring. Professional development arrangements are good, balancing the priorities of the school with the career development of staff. The school's work in this area has been recognised by the award of Investors in People.
54. Staffing levels are good. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teaching staff with a wide range of experience. Staff deployment is effective and efficient. Staffing for hearing impaired pupils is good with two specialist teachers of the deaf, and six learning support assistants who all have qualifications in British Sign Language support them. Overall, the staffing of the special educational needs provision is satisfactory. The qualifications and the use of the learning support assistants are very good with one very experienced member of staff taking on extra responsibilities, including a management role. However, there are no support teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator is employed for only half the week.
55. There are sufficient learning resources for all subjects except information and communication technology. Resources for physical education are very good and include good quality gymnastics equipment and a very well appointed sports field. Resources for English, music, and special needs are good.
56. The accommodation is satisfactory. The school is well kept and teachers provide a welcoming learning environment in their classrooms with good quality displays of pupils' work. Although the main toilet block is clean and adequately furnished, it is old and set apart from the main building.
57. Financial control is good. The recommendations of the most recent audit from two years ago have been implemented. The finance manager has an excellent understanding of the school's financial systems and provides very good information for the governing body so that expenditure can be monitored. Spending decisions are carefully considered with the priority being given to maintaining staffing levels whenever possible. Specific grants, mainly to support the pupils with hearing impairment, are used prudently and for their intended purpose. Financial print-outs clearly identify how the money has been spent. The apparent under-spend in the current year is explained because money is needed to finance improvements to the fabric of the building. This work is due to begin shortly. Tenders are sought for large items of expenditure, for example insurance and the

purchase of computers. The governors consider carefully the principles of best value. New technologies are being used well in the office. Financial information and assessment data are on computerised systems and a good internal telephone system speeds up communication throughout the school. Internet and e-mail facilities are available but these are not yet being fully exploited by teachers to promote pupils' learning. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

Staff and governors should work together on the following areas to improve the quality of provision further and raise standards.

Raise standards in English throughout the school by:

- analysing assessment data to determine areas of weakness and develop suitable strategies to address the weaknesses, (paragraph 73)
- ensuring that guided reading sessions are planned and delivered regularly in all classes, (paragraphs 5, 74)
- monitoring the books that pupils read to check that they are sufficiently challenging so that they make progress, (paragraphs 5, 19, 76)
- providing opportunities for pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, to practise their writing skills in extended periods of time, (paragraphs 5, 19, 81)
- taking every opportunity to promote literacy skills in other subjects of the curriculum and through the use of information and communication technology. (paragraphs 5, 81)

Raise standards in mathematics throughout the school by:

- continuing to develop the points in the subject's action plan, (paragraph 96)
- increasing opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology to support their learning, (paragraph 97)
- raising the quality of marking to ensure that pupils are given guidance on how they can improve their work. (paragraphs 20, 41, 94)

Raise standards in science throughout the school by:

- developing formal assessment procedures across the school which clearly identify pupils' attainment and progress and use the information gained from these to set appropriately challenging work, (paragraph 104)
- ensuring appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to develop their skills of scientific investigation and enquiry, (paragraph 100)
- raising expectations for higher-attainers. (paragraphs 26, 98, 101)

Raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school by:

- increasing the level of resources in order to ensure that they are sufficient to allow pupils to have good quality experiences in all aspects of the subject, (paragraphs 132, 135, 136)
- reviewing the scheme of work to ensure that all parts of the National Curriculum programme for ICT are addressed effectively, (paragraph 20)
- planning opportunities for ICT to be used appropriately in all subject schemes of work, (paragraphs 20, 81, 97, 116, 127, 137, 149)
- ensuring that teachers' marking gives pupils a clear indication of how they can improve their work. (paragraphs 20, 41, 133)

Improve the assessment and tracking of pupils' attainment and progress and use the information gained from this to set appropriate targets for improvement. (paragraphs 38, 39, 49, 73, 104, 109, 116, 120, 127, 142, 149, 153)

Make time available for the co-ordination, management and monitoring of the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment and learning and behaviour problems. (paragraphs 52, 61)

Improve levels of attendance by continuing to inform parents of the importance of getting their children to school regularly. (paragraphs 16, 36)

Ensure the curriculum for information and communication technology meets statutory requirements.  
(Paragraph 20)

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **THE PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH A HEARING IMPAIRMENT**

58. The good provision for pupils with a hearing impairment has been maintained since the last inspection and the inclusion of pupils within classes has improved. The school has an inclusive approach and many of the pupils are learning to sign. The children in the school have a good understanding and friendly attitude towards those with a hearing impairment. Pupils with hearing impairment are included in the nursery and all classes in the school. They make satisfactory progress overall. The very good support they receive in classrooms ensures that the progress they make is equal to that of their peers. They make good progress when working in small groups with additional teaching provided by specialist teachers of the deaf.
59. The teaching and learning in classrooms and when pupils are withdrawn for additional help are good. Specialist teachers of the deaf and learning support assistants who sign, individualise the work and questioning to support the pupils in learning new vocabulary and this extends their learning. Humour is used well and the Total Communication approach with dramatic facial expression ensures that all pupils concentrate well and eagerly answer questions. Pupils whose behaviour is difficult to manage are well channelled into the work and the addition of role-play and active learning helps all pupils to become fully involved and to understand the concepts being explained. The attitudes of the pupils are very good. They work hard and are very enthusiastic in the classroom and within the unit. The good, consistent, strategies provided by all staff helps those who find the frustrations of their hearing impairment and problems with learning difficult to manage.
60. The curriculum is satisfactory. There is a good balance between the withdrawal of pupils for extra help and support in the classroom. This is flexible and organised around the individual needs of the pupils. Planning is carried out with class teachers for literacy and numeracy and adapted for the particular needs of hearing impaired pupils in the classroom or groups being taught within the unit. A special assembly for hearing impaired pupils in Years 3 to 6 helps them to learn about feelings and the nuances of expression using role-play. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Records have recently been organised for individual pupils. However, it is not always possible to track the progress that pupils are making across the curriculum subjects or in their language skills.
61. Staffing overall is satisfactory. Learning support assistants are very well qualified and experienced. The two managers both have a teaching of the deaf qualification. The leadership and management of the provision are satisfactory overall but there is insufficient time for the teachers to carry out the management aspect of their roles. There is no time dedicated to the management of the provision, to the monitoring and development of the inclusion of the pupils into classes, or liaison with the special educational needs co-ordinator. The positive move towards the greater



inclusion of hearing impaired pupils into the school is time-consuming and time needed for liaising with the school staff and outside agencies is affected. The resources and accommodation are good and the budget for the provision is kept separate from the school budget.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	64
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	33

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	6	35	22	1	0	0
Percentage	0	9	55	34	2	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 one percentage point.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	17	151
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		28

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	13
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	42

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	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

### Attendance

**Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.6

**Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	1.0
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	14	7	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	12	13
	Girls			
	Total	16	19	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (59)	90 (63)	95 (74)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	13
	Girls			
	Total	19	20	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (63)	95 (67)	95 (70)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year. Results of less than 10 pupils (in this case girls) are only included in the overall figures and not reported separately.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	12	20	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	7	8
	Girls	13	9	13
	Total	20	16	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	63 (48)	50 (48)	66 (44)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	8	6
	Girls	13	9	12
	Total	21	17	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	66 (48)	53 (52)	56 (76)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	145
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17
Average class size	21.6

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	4.8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	271.5

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	42.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.8
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

### **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	6	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	638,439
Total expenditure	633,346
Expenditure per pupil	3,424
Balance brought forward from previous year	38,817
Balance carried forward to next year	43,910

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	170
Number of questionnaires returned	36

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	22	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	50	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	61	8	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	56	8	0	3
The teaching is good.	64	33	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	42	17	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	39	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	39	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	47	39	8	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	50	39	6	3	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	36	0	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	36	19	3	8

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents at the meeting stated that there had been a gradual improvement in the school over the last three years and they were pleased with recent developments such as the library. Parents were very positive about the integration of hearing impaired pupils in the school and were pleased that all children were encouraged to learn how to sign.

## **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**

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

62. Teaching and learning in this area are good in the nursery and reception class and a significant number of children are likely to reach standards above those expected for children of that age nationally by the end of the reception year. The school is successful in creating positive relationships with parents before their children start school and has developed a good induction programme. Staff use a range of strategies to encourage children to play together in the nursery and they develop relationships quickly. Also, staff are effective in creating a caring and stimulating learning environment in which children quickly understand the routines and structure of the day, and develop good attitudes to learning. Children were observed playing well together and sharing resources, for example, when acting out roles in the nursery library and when playing games in a reception mathematics lesson. They learn how to share resources and take turns, as a result of the expectations of the teachers and support staff, who make appropriate comments to encourage co-operation, for example when the children are playing outside or working together. Children recognise the importance of keeping healthy and are aware of personal hygiene. They understand the need to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. Their independent skills are developed when they are encouraged to help clear away after activities both in the nursery and reception class.
63. A good balance is created between teacher-directed activities and those when children are able to play without direct adult supervision. This develops the children's confidence and a growing independence and initiative when presented with choices. They are encouraged to be polite and sensible and move easily from work undertaken as a whole class to group and individual activities. Staff act as good role models and the children's skills are continually developed through the positive interactions between staff and children. Consequently, children are well behaved and form good relationships with each other and with adults. Pupils with a hearing impairment are encouraged to make friends and play with other children and support staff successfully help them to communicate. The good gains made in pupils' personal, social and emotional development are a key feature in children feeling secure and learning well in other areas of the curriculum.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

64. Teaching and learning in this area of the curriculum are good. Children, including those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress through experiencing a range of activities that stimulate their learning and maintain their interests. However, because a significant number enter the nursery with low communication skills, some are unlikely to reach the standards expected nationally by the end of the reception year. Information provided by the school indicates that children in the current reception class are attaining higher standards than similar aged children in previous years. Children's speaking and listening skills are developed well across all areas of the curriculum, for example when taking part in a creative activity in the nursery, the skills of the teacher are used well to encourage children to talk about the chocolates they are making with playdough. A significant minority of children enter the nursery with poor ability to imagine and this activity developed their skills well. Children's speaking skills are also systematically developed through the provision of specific activities such as in the imaginative play areas when children pretend to be librarians and speak on the telephone.
65. Children are keen to choose books in the nursery library and sometimes settle down to 'read' alone or with a friend. Children handle books carefully and know that print carries meaning. Most follow and recall a story by looking at the pictures and some higher attaining children enjoyed talking about the books with the inspector. They gave reasons for their favourite story or book, which indicated a sound understanding of character and story line. In the reception class, a good reading session encouraged the children's response to the story whilst they were also beginning

to learn to sign specific words. The children were intrigued by the pictures in the book and the signing and found some signs such as that for 'mouse' amusing. The teacher successfully encouraged this element of fun and controlled their excitement well. This is a practical example showing how the school encourages the inclusion of pupils with hearing impairment through giving other children the skills to communicate from an early age. Regular sessions on phonics support children well in their recognition of letters and the sounds that they make. All children are encouraged to read regularly with their parents at home, which has a significant impact on the progress that they make and the standards that they achieve.

66. Children in the nursery develop their writing skills by learning how to hold the pencil correctly and writing letter patterns. They quickly become aware of writing for different purposes, for example by drawing pictures and writing about their feelings, such as, 'I am happy when....' and 'I am sad when...'. These skills are developed further in the reception class when children write a letter to Father Christmas. Children receive good support from staff which encourages the development of their handwriting and use of vocabulary. Overall, a good range of resources to encourage writing and communication is available, and results in the youngest children making marks on paper and the oldest drawing a picture and writing a sentence about it.

### **Mathematical development**

67. Teaching and learning in mathematics are good and children make good progress in both the nursery and reception class. Children in the current reception class are expected to reach the standards expected nationally by the time they start in Year 1, which indicates an improvement on previous years. The children's skills and understanding are regularly developed and consolidated in the nursery through daily play activities and through specific sessions. In one session observed, children quickly got involved through saying number rhymes. This was followed by the higher-attainers counting up to three objects. The teaching was well paced and children were then offered the opportunity to use a range of resources such as number jigsaws and pegboards. The children's skills are developed further in the reception class by the provision of a variety of activities which develop their skills in number, shape and space. The teacher in one lesson observed had a very clear understanding of what she wanted the children to learn and offered a range of appropriate activities to develop their mathematical skills. Most children could count forward to 30 with an adult and count backwards from 20 when looking at a number line. They could complete a number line from 0 to 10 and the teacher successfully developed their mathematical thinking by encouraging them to explain how they had arrived at the correct answer, for example by stating that 4 comes after 3 and before 5. The pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language participated well and made good progress as a result of effective teaching and good support. The teachers' good subject knowledge is used well and their careful use of mathematical language and questioning encourages the children's mathematical thinking and understanding.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

68. Teaching to promote children's knowledge and understanding of the world is good and pupils progress well in both the nursery and reception class. Most children are expected to reach the standard expected nationally for children at the end of the reception year. Children in the nursery develop an understanding of time passing and how people get older by looking at photographs on the 'Guess Who?' display of photographs. Children in reception extend this by studying their families. The youngest children learn to name parts of their body correctly and then go on to develop an awareness of how they can use their bodies. Reception age children create a 'My 5 Senses Book' and write about their favourite tastes and smells. Visitors, such as fire fighters, help children to understand their different roles, and visits to places like the Railway Museum enrich their learning experiences. Children have a satisfactory understanding of the uses of everyday technology. Opportunities are provided for children to assemble and disassemble simple models, using a variety of construction kits. In both the nursery and reception class, the children's skills in using the computer are satisfactorily developed and they confidently use the mouse to work through a program.





## **Physical development**

69. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and the children are on course to reach standards appropriate for their age by the time they leave the reception class. In the nursery, children get regular opportunities to develop their physical education through playing outside where they learn to balance, climb and run. They also develop their skills through playing with a ball and basketball hoop and by riding bikes. Good intervention by staff develops the children's imaginative skills as they ride to the shops and buy petrol on the way. They understand road safety issues such as not walking on the road and using a crossing. In a good physical education lesson for the reception children, they responded to the teacher's high expectations well. Most were able to change independently but a small number still needed support. They moved sensibly to the hall and used the space appropriately. The teacher reminded them of the effect of exercise on the body during the warm-up exercise and children talked about their heartbeat. All children followed her instructions well and developed skills of balancing a beanbag on different parts of their bodies. Close attention was given to developing the children's skills systematically thereby encouraging confidence and the children's willingness to 'have a go' at the activities. The pace of learning was good and no opportunities were missed to build on the children's prior learning and challenge them further. By the end of the lesson, the children had also developed their throwing skills and their excitement in taking part in the activities was well managed by the teacher and teaching assistant. The teacher's good use of praise and high expectations raised the children's self-confidence and improved their physical skills. The children's use of small objects, such as pencils, construction equipment and paintbrushes, is satisfactory, and they handle them safely and appropriately. Children in the nursery thoroughly enjoy the sports day which helps to develop their physical and social skills.

## **Creative development**

70. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are effective in getting good responses from children in relation to what they see, hear, feel and imagine and most children are likely to reach the standard expected for their age by the end of their time in the reception class. Their creative development is successfully fostered through a range of activities. In the nursery, children are encouraged to paint and careful questioning by the staff develops their understanding of colour and shape. In the reception class, some good quality paintings were produced after children had talked about helping others and being kind. One child had painted Snow White as a kind person and another had painted brothers playing football together. Children have opportunities to cut, stick and decorate materials, for example when wrapping presents for Bob the Teddy. The children's responses are developed through specific music sessions and through singing rhymes and songs. Children in the nursery enjoy playing musical instruments such as triangles, bells and drums to see what sounds they can make. The role-play areas in both the nursery and reception class provide opportunities for children to play co-operatively and develop their imagination. They extend their language skills by re-enacting familiar situations or making up their own.
71. The good quality of teaching in both the nursery and reception class is characterised by a good understanding of how young children learn, high expectations, and the systematic development of children's good attitudes to learning and good behaviour. This results in children being confident in what they do and willing to 'have a go'. All staff work well together and work hard to provide a consistent approach to teaching and learning. The new teacher in the reception class had very quickly developed good relationships with the children and their learning was not disrupted through a change of teacher as the teaching assistant continued to provide continuity. Support staff play an important role in developing the children's learning and supporting their achievements. The curriculum takes into consideration the national guidance for the Foundation Stage and staff adapt this to meet the needs of the children. They plan the work appropriately and use assessments of the children to inform their planning. Records are kept to monitor the progress that children make. Staff provide a calm, secure learning environment which encourages children to develop good attitudes to school.

## ENGLISH

72. The standards of reading and writing in the current Year 2 are well below average, as they were at the last inspection. Since then, however, there has been a marked improvement in the number of pupils achieving the expected levels in national tests, particularly between 2000 and 2001. Last year's pupils achieved levels in writing that matched the national average although reading results were still well below the national figures. This year's cohort is small and each child represents nearly 8 per cent in calculating results and one-third of the class is assessed as having special educational needs. Therefore, though two-thirds of the pupils are working at about the expected level, the school is not anticipating that this class will record the good results in writing achieved last year. Pupils in Year 6 are working at well below average levels. This reflects the findings of the last inspection and of the national test results of 2001. Again though, this stark statement masks the improved results in 2001 when 15 per cent more pupils achieved the expected levels compared with 2000.
73. Progress across the school is satisfactory. Pupils enter full-time education with language skills that are well below average and they leave at eleven with similar standards. The school has statistics that track the pupils who remain at the school from Year 2 until Year 6. Of the current 11-year-olds, this constitutes 75% of the class. The statistics show that the vast majority make the expected progress. Standardised tests are taken at the end of every year in the juniors as well as the national tests at seven and the school is able to use the results to track improvement. A new assessment system is being set up on the computer that will enable results to be analysed in many other ways, to determine differences in the results of boys and girls for example. Strategies to improve standards can therefore be drawn up. Close analysis of specific weaknesses in English is not yet carried out although overall results in writing prompted the school to concentrate on this issue leading to better standards in 2001 for seven-year-olds.
74. The national strategy for literacy is well established in the school and teachers plan appropriately using the recommendations. However, the requirement to have guided reading as 'a fundamental part of the literacy programme'<sup>1</sup> is not being consistently met. The school has decided to deliver this outside the literacy hour but it is not happening regularly in some classes. Within literacy lessons, teachers are providing good opportunities for pupils to make progress and they have a clear idea of what pupils are to learn. Some share these intentions with the class and this focuses the pupils on their learning. However, the short plenary session at the end of the lesson is sometimes not used productively to take learning forward. It is often just a reporting back time when pupils say what they have been doing in their group work. An example of good practice was seen in Year 3 when the teacher used the last few minutes to reinforce the idea of powerful adjectives by writing sentences on the board and asking for evocative words to describe horses.
75. Standards of speaking are well below those found amongst most seven and eleven-year-olds. Listening skills are better developed but are still below average. Most pupils listen reasonably well during lessons. Since the last inspection, the school has developed good strategies for addressing the issue. Lesson plans all contain activities that focus on the development of speaking skills and there are rôle-play areas in both infant classes. However, pupils in Year 2 lack confidence in speaking. When two are chosen to take on specific rôles of characters from the book 'Gregory Cool' they speak so softly that it is difficult to hear them and there is no animation as they speak. When answering questions in class discussions, only a few answer at length. However in one-to-one discussions, pupils are more communicative and convey their opinions clearly, for example their likes and dislikes in school. Some Year 6 pupils also lack confidence and find it difficult to choose the right word to express themselves. Many have a limited bank of words at their disposal and teachers are well aware that vocabulary often needs to be explained, the word 'quarrelling' in a Year 3 lesson, for example.
76. Standards of reading in Years 2 and 6 are well below average overall. In Year 2, the range is not as apparent because pupils of different abilities are reading similar material. All the pupils who

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<sup>1</sup> 'The National Literacy Strategy' DfES p.12

read to the inspector had books that were too easy for them and the above average pupils in particular were not being sufficiently challenged. Because the books were within their capabilities, all pupils read fluently and accurately though only the above average were expressive. All showed good understanding of letter-sounds and of blending them together to decipher unknown words. Reading books are not changed often enough and reading diaries are not properly maintained. There were no entries for last term in one diary and, in another, the parent complains that her child has been on the same book for three weeks. The new teacher in this class is aware of these issues.

77. The range of reading ability within Year 6 is extremely wide. The above average pupils read fluently, accurately and expressively with secure understanding of the text. Sensible predictions about the story-line are made and favourite books are quoted with reasons for the choice. Average pupils also read accurately but fluency is affected by the need to look closely at the words. Strategies for reading unknown words are known but, in practice, they are not always successfully employed; 'ruefully' cannot be deciphered by breaking it up and the meaning cannot be inferred from the text, for example. Understanding vocabulary is a problem for many. Some pupils have negative attitudes to reading. Below average readers were reluctant to read to the inspector who had to observe them reading to the teaching assistant instead. Nearly a quarter of the class read regularly to her because of their low level of reading competence and, though progress has been marked, they still have difficulty reading anything other than fairly simple texts.
78. Reading progress is being satisfactorily monitored through the use of twice-yearly standardised tests. The school has good book resources, including dictionaries. Reading books are classified by colours to indicate difficulty. They are easily accessible. The extent to which parents support the school by hearing their children read at home varies across the school. A significant number are not setting time aside to do this important job. The newly opened library is a bright and inviting place. Not all books are yet classified using the Dewey system<sup>2</sup> but the school has plans to do this with the help of a willing parent. Pupils in Year 6 do not know about this method for finding a particular book but recognise that there are different sections in the library. They know the purpose of an index and contents page. Year 3 pupils are knowledgeable about this too because an informative display in their room shows the work that they have done about using the library for research.
79. Standards of writing in Years 2 and 6 are well below average. Most seven-year-olds form their letters correctly but not many have writing that is consistent in size or orientation. Below average pupils still find it difficult to space words out and to remember not to use upper-case letters in the middle of words. Most pupils know how to demarcate a sentence and the above average use other punctuation correctly such as the apostrophe to indicate a missing letter. Vocabulary is usually appropriate but is rarely imaginative although there are occasional examples: *the leaves go crunch when people step on them*. Like the average pupils, spelling of basic words is sometimes incorrect - for example 'thay' - but many words are comprehensible because of correct phonics - 'bac' and 'hav'. These average pupils write simple sentences but do not often extend them by using *and* or *but*. Nevertheless they usually convey the intended meaning. Below average pupils sometimes need the teacher to help them with writing that they copy underneath but there is noticeable progress since September and independent writing is being attempted.
80. As with reading, there is a wide variety of competence in Year 6. The above average pupils write lengthy stories, properly punctuated and logically developed. Spelling is usually accurate though vocabulary is unadventurous except for occasional exceptions: *the wind howled like a sick wolf*. Complex sentences using clauses to extend descriptions or explanations are rare. Average pupils too find it difficult to conjure up exciting words to engage the reader, though again writing is punctuated reasonably well. One of the difficulties that teachers have is that pupils do not carry over what they are taught into their writing. The Year 6 teacher correctly introduces 'powerful' adjectives at the start of a lesson and commends them to pupils for their subsequent work. She also points out how complex sentences are constructed in a text written by a girl to develop an argument. Despite this, when the pupils write their own letters using a word-processing program,

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<sup>2</sup> A system of classifying non-fiction books according to subject matter using a numerical system

they construct simple sentences with commonplace words that would not impress King Lear and persuade him to leave his land to one or other of his daughters. The added difficulty that below average pupils have is with spelling. They too write short but properly constructed stories with basic punctuation in place but even common words like 'sed', 'rae' (are) and 'lad' (land) cause difficulty for the reader.

81. Unlike many schools that now provide an extended time for pupils to write, Lexden Primary does not do this. There are not many examples in pupils' books of 'free' writing although the infants regularly write their news and this is good practice. Similarly, because their training is not yet complete, the teachers are only just coming to terms with the advantages of using other computer programs besides the word-processor to support work in literacy. Work in other subjects occasionally supports literacy but examples in history and religious education, for example, are not consciously or regularly planned. Nevertheless, writing about the Jarrow Crusade in a history topic satisfactorily supports the development of Year 6's literacy skills.
82. Teaching was satisfactory in half the lessons seen and good in the other half. Taking into consideration the work in books, teaching is deemed to be satisfactory overall in the school. This was also the judgement at the last inspection. The books reveal that not all teachers are setting high expectations for the presentation of work. Untidy work sometimes goes unchecked. Similarly the standard of marking is not consistently helpful. Work *is* marked but not all teachers provide remarks that guide pupils on how they can improve. Pupils in the juniors now have literacy targets to work towards but, again, marking does not often refer to these targets and the progress that pupils are making towards achieving them. In lessons, teachers have very good support from their assistants and use them effectively to ensure that all pupils are included and involved in activities. They particularly focus their help on pupils with special educational needs so that they make the same satisfactory progress as everyone else. Pupils with a hearing impairment are well supported, usually make good progress and attain levels in line with their abilities. All adults have good relationships with pupils and there are few problems with controlling classes. The pupils however do not always have positive attitudes towards their work. This is particularly noticeable in Year 6 and is more obvious amongst the boys. Girls have outperformed boys in national tests over the last three years and the school has not yet developed any strategies for addressing this.
83. Basic skills are well taught, particularly in the infants where there is a correct focus on developing pupils' understanding of letter sounds. Teachers have secure knowledge of the subject and use resources well. Overhead projectors display text for everyone to see and this was particularly effective in Year 5 when the teacher wanted pupils to insert the correct punctuation into a piece of writing. In the better lessons, activities are properly planned to meet the different needs of the pupils rather than all ability groups having the same work. In a Year 6 lesson therefore, the teaching assistant took a group for concentrated work on word endings while the higher ability pupils worked independently on arguments for and against watching television and the average pupils worked with the teacher looking at the pros and cons for evacuating children during World War II. The better lessons also move along at a brisk pace and pupils are kept busy. Homework is set and satisfactorily supports work in school. The oldest pupils, for example, have to prepare arguments for and against the testing of cosmetics on animals ready for a debate at the end of the week.
84. A long-serving co-ordinator has just left the school and another member of staff is overseeing the subject on a temporary basis. There is a real desire amongst the staff to improve standards and, with improved analysis of assessment data to determine exactly where the weaknesses are, strategies can be planned to address them. A method which is not being used at present is to regularly assess and grade unaided pieces of writing from each pupil to monitor progress and determine whether there are common gaps in understanding.

## **MATHEMATICS**

85. In the 2001 national tests, pupils' standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2 were below the national average, and broadly in line with the average for similar schools. This represents a significant improvement on performance in the previous year. Over the last five years, there has been no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, or in the comparative performance of lower and higher attaining pupils. The trend in the school's results over the last 5 years has been erratic, but overall better than the national trend. Generally, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.
86. In the 2001 national tests, the standards of Year 6 pupils in mathematics were well below the national average, and well below the average for similar schools. Over the last five years, there has been no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, or in the comparative performance of lower and higher attaining pupils. The trend in the school's results over the last 4 years has been slightly better than the national trend.
87. In lessons, pupils throughout the school are generally working at levels just below to around national expectation. There is however, a particularly wide range of attainment in many classes. In one Year 2 lesson, pupils were able to use recalled addition and subtraction facts to 10, some with a little difficulty. Some of the higher-attainers were beginning to understand place value and starting to choose appropriate methods for mental calculations.
88. In one Year 3 lesson, pupils were able to choose an appropriate method for addition and subtraction. Most pupils could explain their method very well to the class. They could add and subtract 2 digit numbers and some worked out multiplication and division, though not yet involving remainders. In one Year 4 lesson, pupils were able to choose appropriate methods for addition and subtraction and explain why. Higher-attainers could add and subtract two digit numbers mentally and some were confident with decimals to one place. Pupils' standards were generally around national expectation. In a Year 6 lesson for higher-attainers, which focused on multiplying 3 digit numbers, pupils understood and used appropriate non-calculator methods of problem solving by multiplying 3 digit numbers and some used inverse operations to check their answers. These pupils were working at a level well above national expectations. Other pupils in the class were able to employ effective written methods of multiplication and were working at a level above national expectations.
89. Since the last inspection, mathematics provision has been improved by increasing the number of opportunities pupils have to develop the skills of applying mathematics, and pupils are no longer withdrawn from mathematics for additional English. The standard of numeracy in other subjects is satisfactory and is developing further as the impact of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) in the school begins to influence the planning in other subjects.
90. Teaching in mathematics is generally good throughout the school and beginning to bring about improvements in attainment. The lesson structure from the NNS is well embedded in the practice across the school and is making a significant and positive impact on the quality of teaching. Lessons are clearly structured and learning objectives for each part of the lesson are shared with pupils and follow a clear theme drawn from the National Curriculum. As a consequence, pupils understand what they have to do and why they are doing it. Introductions stimulate pupils to think by using quick mental arithmetic exercises. The main activities are well chosen to deepen understanding through first hand experience and the last part of lessons allow pupils to review their learning. Teachers provide good positive feedback to pupils which ensures that they feel confident to participate fully in class discussion, knowing that their answers will be treated with respect. Occasionally wrong answers could be used more constructively.
91. Work is well matched to the needs of pupils. Higher attaining pupils are given extension work and those who find the work more challenging are given additional support. In the best cases, teachers produce different worksheets for different pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for. Those with hearing impairment have the benefit of a teacher who can use sign language, and others are well supported by the main teacher or effective use is made of support teachers.

92. Strategies for mental maths are taught directly and as a consequence pupils make good progress in understanding the range of different ways that a problem may be tackled. In the best lessons, class management is very skilful and a delight to watch. In one Year 2 lesson pupils were managed in such a way that they contributed willingly to class discussion, made very good progress in understanding the mathematics and at the same time were taught appropriate ways to get on with their peers.
93. In one lesson for higher attaining pupils in Year 6, the pupils were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by a mature discussion at the outset of the lesson concerning the best way to proceed with some homework. The needs of these pupils were well met by the provision of appropriately challenging work and a swift pace to the lesson. As a consequence, they took the lesson very seriously and respected the ways in which the teacher was helping them. In this group, boys significantly outnumbered girls and many of the boys were more assertive. The teacher dealt effectively with this by ensuring that the girls had appropriate opportunities to answer questions.
94. In the same lesson, detailed assessment of the pupils' prior attainment at the start of the lesson led to the teacher adjusting her lesson to take effective account of this. Not all assessment is as well focused. Pupils' work is frequently marked and generally the comments are encouraging and positive. However, they seldom give pupils a clear indication of how they might improve their work.
95. Teachers' behaviour management is generally positive and proactive and ensures that pupils are helped to develop an appropriate moral code and appropriate ways to relate to each other. Where teaching is less strong, class management is insufficiently well focused to ensure that pupils remain on task throughout the different parts of the lesson. In such lessons, wrong answers are not always used constructively and the divergent solutions offered by higher-attainers are not always encouraged. In these lessons, pupils' progress is not as pronounced as in other lessons, and they are less keen to be involved in whole class discussion.
96. The mathematics co-ordinator provides very strong, clear leadership for the subject. Policies and schemes of work are kept up-to-date by frequent revision, and both take account of national priorities. Very good use is made of the analysis of examination results. The pupils' performance in national tests is analysed in detail and areas of weakness identified. These are then used to inform the teachers' planning for the forthcoming year, and also form the priorities for the mathematics action plan.
97. While resources for mathematics are generally good, those to support the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the subject need to be further developed. More opportunities for ICT to be used to support pupils' learning in mathematics need to be incorporated into the scheme of work.

## **SCIENCE**

98. Standards in science have improved since the last inspection but in the current Year 2 and Year 6 are still below average. In the 2001 national assessments, the proportion of pupils attaining a level appropriate for their age was slightly above average for seven-year-olds but few pupils achieved a higher level. More eleven-year-olds reached the level appropriate for their age than in 2000 but standards were well below average. Over the last three years, girls of this age did better than boys in the National Curriculum science tests. Teaching and learning in the lessons observed were generally good and reflect the improved science curriculum now in place.
99. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. In Year 1, they develop a sound understanding of the five senses. They study light by identifying the uses of electricity and understand how to complete a circuit to light a bulb. They know that healthy eating and exercise are important and 'good for you' and use their sense of taste for identifying a range of foods. In Year 2, pupils understand the basic needs of animals, including humans. In

one good lesson observed, the careful matching of tasks to pupils' different abilities ensured that all made good progress. For example, higher attaining pupils used their research skills to identify habitats for a range of animals whilst lower-attainers worked well with support staff to identify the needs of their pets.

100. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make predictions and most understand the need for fair testing. Staff have recently agreed a format for writing up investigations and this has helped pupils to record their work. Investigations are mostly written up satisfactorily although there was little evidence of past work in Years 1 and 2. Through practical investigations they find out for themselves, for example in Year 3, about the absorbency of a range of different types of papers and also test for acid and alkali. In Year 5, pupils investigate how sound travels through different materials and whether organic food tastes better. Although it is not clear how teachers consistently plan to use information and communication technology in science, pupils created a bar chart to highlight differences in organic and non-organic food. Pupils in Year 6 have a sound understanding of living things and life processes. They identify the parts of a plant and their functions and have a sound understanding of pollination and fertilisation. They also understand the importance of a healthy diet and exercise for well-being.
101. Teaching and learning in the lessons observed were good overall. Teachers displayed good subject knowledge and were clear about what they wanted the children to learn. They usually shared this with the pupils so all knew the purpose of the lessons. In better lessons, teachers provided challenging activities which were well matched to pupils' abilities but a scrutiny of pupils' work indicated that sometimes pupils were given the same work to do regardless of their differing abilities. Higher-attainers particularly were not sufficiently challenged. Differences in the expectations of teachers were also evident in the pupils' work. For example, pupils in Year 3 produced some pleasing work on environments and were clear about the habitats of animals and how they adapt. A visit to a local coastal town stimulated their learning well and was effectively used to develop their skills of classification. Work also linked well to their study of geography as they used a map to detail their journey from the school and identified aspects of settlement. Pupils were clear about the value placed on their work and were keen to talk about the display in class. Pupils used the computer to record some of their findings but generally teachers do not consistently plan to use information and communication technology in the science lessons. Over the academic year, the quality of teaching and learning across the school has been satisfactory.
102. Good curriculum links have been made with a local secondary school. During the inspection, an assembly taken by a teacher from this school stimulated the interests of the pupils well and encouraged their scientific thinking. Pupils in Year 6 were also well motivated when two visiting teachers developed the pupils' understanding of electrical conduction. The enthusiasm of all the teachers and support staff in this lesson acted as a motivating force for learning and all pupils were involved throughout. Adults all worked well together to ensure a good pace of learning and provided a range of activities which challenged pupils and developed their scientific thinking. Pupils particularly enjoyed experimenting with static electricity and by the end of the session displayed a clear understanding of what was happening. They used appropriate terminology to describe what they were observing. Also, pupils had a clear understanding of parallel and series circuits and were able to relate these to their own experiences, for example, by talking about Christmas tree lights. This lesson was very good as all pupils, regardless of their abilities, were able to achieve due to the good level of support.
103. Pupils with special educational needs, including hearing impaired pupils, are well supported in lessons. In Year 6, pupils with a hearing impairment were very involved in the activities and excited by their observations. This was enhanced by the good support provided which clarified specific subject language through the use of signing. In Year 3 where support again was good, pupils were keen to answer questions and were fully involved. There were no differences noted between the progress and attainment of girls and boys in the lessons involved. All these examples reflect the school's commitment to inclusive education.
104. Co-ordination of science is good and a clear action plan is in place. National guidelines and a scheme of work have been introduced to help ensure continuity and progression in learning.



These are applied in two-year cycles to take account of mixed-age classes should they occur. Lessons have been observed and written feedback given. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to improve standards. Samples of pupils' work are reviewed and from this the co-ordinator has recognised that there should be more opportunities to measure, record and compare data carefully. This is a focus for the current year. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to improve whole school practice in relation to assessing pupils' attainment, setting targets and monitoring progress which currently is unsatisfactory. Visits to museums enrich the curriculum.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

105. Standards for seven and eleven-year-olds are at the expected level for pupils of this age. They are similar to those achieved at the time of the last inspection. This judgement is based mainly on the scrutiny of pupils' work and conversations with teachers and the subject co-ordinator. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection; it is therefore not possible to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching. There are a few instances where pupils attain standards above the national expectation; for example, the work in Year 3 on designing wallpapers.
106. The pupils' work covers all the attainment targets in the National Curriculum and a satisfactory range of media is used. However, there is a noticeable lack of three-dimensional work to be seen. Teachers plan satisfactorily and often link their work to other subjects; for example, the work on symmetry supported that done in mathematics. The displays of work around the school are sound; the theme in the hall was related to Noah's ark and all classes displayed work about the recent study of India. Pupils learn to appreciate the work of great artists and more contemporary ones. Some sketchbooks showed good quality drawings in the style of Monet. The use of sketchbooks has improved since the last inspection.
107. In a satisfactory Year 1 lesson observed, pupils were working in pairs, drawing each other's faces. Using pastels, they produced round and oval-shaped faces but rarely positioned features such as the eyes, nose and mouth accurately. The pupils were encouraged by the teacher to look at their pictures and think more about the colours they had selected. However, there was no help given to develop close observational work and improve the quality of their initial drawings.
108. The pupils in Year 3, were studying repeating patterns and designing a template to make a wallpaper. The teacher showed them different types of commercial wallpapers. This was very helpful to the pupils; it enabled them to realise how different types of wallpapers had been designed by using repeating patterns. Good teaching helped the pupils to consider things such as size, orientation and colour when designing their templates. The pupils used their sketchbooks well to develop their ideas. Pupils with special educational needs were well supported and participated fully in the lesson.
109. The management of art is satisfactory. However, the co-ordinator also has responsibilities in the Hearing Impaired Unit; this is rather a heavy workload and her main priority is clearly the organisation and management of the Unit. Areas identified by the school for improvement are staff training in three-dimensional work, updating of the policy and assessment. Assessment is currently unsatisfactory. There is also a need to use a wider range of media and materials and to extend the use of information and communication technology. The potential of using computers in art has not been fully explored.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

110. Since the last inspection, improvement has been made in the teaching and learning of design and technology for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and pupils aged 7 now reach standards that are broadly in line with those expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Standards for eleven-year-olds are below average and this reflects the findings of the last inspection. Overall, pupils are currently making satisfactory progress although older pupils have not benefited from a consistent approach to the teaching of design and technology throughout their time in school. For example, planning to ensure the systematic development of designing and making skills has been unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment receive good support and consequently make similar progress to that of their peers. No significant difference was noted in the attainment and progress of girls and boys.
111. A scrutiny of pupils' work, discussion with pupils and observations of lessons show that designing and making activities have taken place but it is only since the school has begun to adopt a nationally recommended scheme of work that a full curriculum has been guaranteed.

Consequently, although most pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress in the lessons observed, they are often working at a lower level than that expected for children of their age nationally.

112. The teacher's good knowledge and understanding was used well to develop Year 2 pupils' understanding of winding mechanisms in everyday life. She maintained the pupils' interest well through using a range of resources with which pupils were familiar. By the end of the lesson, pupils were aware of how a range of mechanisms worked but several lacked a sufficient range of vocabulary to describe what they wanted to say. Pupils in Year 2 were particularly keen to talk about their work with textiles when after studying Indian artefacts they had designed and made their own birds. Clear plans indicated that they understood the process well and the finished products were of a good quality. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 1 and 2.
113. Teaching in the junior part of the school was of a good quality in the lessons observed but discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of work indicate that this has not always been the case. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning is judged to be satisfactory overall. Lessons were well planned and teachers were clear about what they wanted the pupils to learn. In Year 3, good questioning by the teacher encouraged pupils to think about the use and purpose of packaging. The range of activities sustained the pupils' interests. By the end of the session, pupils had a clearer understanding about the information given on packaging and higher-attainers understood how information and design encouraged people to buy the product. A well-planned lesson in Year 5 encouraged pupils to develop their skills of designing a moving vehicle and by the end of the lesson they had a clear knowledge of vehicle parts. However, the designs of a significant number of average and below average-attainers were quite basic and indicated below average skills. Pupils in this lesson made good progress from a lower than average base. In Year 6, pupils enjoyed the topic of designing and making slippers and the activities presented by the teacher kept them well focused. The careful questioning by the teacher encouraged pupils to evaluate a range of slippers and consider the factors to make note of when developing their own designs. By the end of the lesson, each pupil identified five features and made satisfactory sketches. This was a good start to the topic. The teacher's clear directions, good pupil management and high expectations resulted in pupils developing their thinking and wanting to know more. Discussions with pupils in Years 2 and 6 indicate that they have a clear understanding of the designing and making process and are learning to evaluate their work and the work of others, although standards in evaluation are lower than in designing and making.
114. Although individual teachers use design and technology to further the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, this is not always planned in a systematic way across the school. Also, it is not clear how computers are systematically used to support pupils' learning in this subject.
115. Teachers and support staff have good relationships with the pupils and manage them well. They encourage pupils to work together and this results in pupils sharing resources. Behaviour is usually good because pupils are interested in their tasks and want to complete the work. Support for pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment is good, as for example in a Year 5 lesson. Here, the three pupils working with a learning support assistant learnt new terminology through drawing, signing and using models. This led them to using terms like chassis and axle confidently.
116. A new co-ordinator has recently been appointed who has a clear view of how to develop the subject further. She is aware of the need to produce a better scheme of work which ensures appropriate progression of pupils' skills, and a more consistent whole school approach to assessing pupils' attainment and progress. She is also aware of the need to develop the use of information communication technology in the subject.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

117. Geography was not a particular focus in the majority of classes during the inspection. Only two lessons could be observed and judgements are based on a scrutiny of pupils' work and planning

documents. It is clear that the standards in Years 2 and 6 are similar to those found in the majority of schools. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged to be below average. Year 6 pupils have considered various features of the British landscape such as the mountains in Scotland. They know the characteristics of a city and have downloaded information from an electronic encyclopaedia about climate and natural resources. They locate Europe and Asia on a world map, identify the United Kingdom and India and proceed to compare life as they know it in England with a village in India. This builds on work covered earlier in the juniors. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 compare Colchester with a contrasting local area, Mersea, and explore the reasons for people settling there. These pupils have also used computers to help them in their work, putting in data about a traffic survey so that pie-charts can be created. They have carried out a project to consider the damage that can be caused to the environment. Progress from Year 3 to Year 6 is satisfactory but pupils in Years 3 and 4 cover the same work with very little development for the older pupils.

118. The main focus of geographical work in Years 1 and 2 is still to come this year. A satisfactory start has been made however. Year 2 pupils have made simple plans of the items on their classroom tables. In both year groups, pupils have learned about India from a visitor last year and the youngest are aware of some of the animals that live in that country. They are aware of their surroundings and teachers use the local area well to encourage pupils to observe different buildings and geographical features. Progress is satisfactory.
119. The scrutiny of work taken together with the two lessons suggests that teaching overall is satisfactory. However the lessons contained good features, one of which was the introduction of geographical vocabulary. In work, for example, about the rivers in Great Britain, the word *estuary* is introduced and explained and pupils start to use it themselves. In another lesson with the oldest pupils about the water cycle, *evaporation* and *precipitation* are introduced and links with science made so that pupils become more confident in using the words and knowing their meaning. Another good feature is that work is planned to meet the different needs of the pupils and teaching assistants are assigned to help the below average pupils, enabling them to make the same progress as everyone else. Pupils are involved fully in the lessons and they usually respond positively. In one instance, two of them exercise their own initiative sensibly. Realising that two rivers on their map are not named, they use an atlas to find them so that they do not have to worry the teacher.
120. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator. She liaises closely with colleagues so that she knows what is happening in the school. The programme of work is drawn from the national recommendations but she has adapted it to meet the particular needs of the school. Packs of resources for each topic of work are being assembled and these are helpful when teachers plan lessons. Resources are satisfactory and accessible. However there is no system for assessing the standards that pupils attain or the progress they make.

## HISTORY

121. By the age of seven and eleven pupils reach standards of attainment that are below the national average. This reflects the findings of the last inspection. In some cases, pupils' knowledge and understanding are at a higher level than their written work indicates. Most pupils talk enthusiastically about their work but the vocabulary used in their writing and the unsatisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the overall quality of their work. Also, some pupils find it difficult to remember specific details of what they have learnt previously. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress overall.
122. The teaching and learning of history are satisfactory. In Year 1, pupils develop a sense of chronology by talking about toys and deciding which would be suitable for children of different ages. This work is closely linked to that in design and technology where pupils are encouraged to make a toy for a baby. Although overall, their learning is satisfactory in both subjects, many need significant encouragement to understand the historical aspect of this activity. In Year 2, pupils

study the lives of famous people and historical events. They gain information from a visual account of the life of Florence Nightingale and from this develop a satisfactory understanding of her life. The good range of activities which follow the whole class work, results in the teacher maintaining the pupils' interest well. Higher-attainers identify a range of appropriate words to describe Florence Nightingale whilst average and below average-attainers make artefacts for the role-play area of 'the hospital'. Through imaginative play, pupils indicate that they have understood the conditions of the time and changes in technology and hygiene. Average and above average-attainers reach standards appropriate for their age nationally but no pupils reach the higher levels.

123. In Year 3, pupils further develop their sense of chronology through the use of a timeline. Despite the good teaching in one lesson observed, pupils' standards were well below average as they struggled to understand the passing of time other than the 'past' and 'present'. However, by the end of the lesson, pupils had made good progress due to effective teaching and support. Pupils in Year 4 display a sound understanding of the term settlement but many pupils are confused about migration and emigration. No pupils reach the higher levels of attainment and some waste time colouring when they could have extended their historical understanding. Pupils in Year 6 focus well on the study of the effect of the Blitz on people's lives and reach sound standards in this aspect of their work. The teacher was particularly effective in motivating a group of boys who completed their work well and could identify what people did to protect their lives and property. Although pupils in this class displayed satisfactory standards in the current topic being studied, a significant number could not remember clearly some other aspects of history which they had studied and no pupils were attaining standards higher than those expected for their age. There is some evidence to indicate that the teaching of history in the past through a topic-based approach was not so effective in covering all aspects in sufficient depth. Recent changes have improved teachers' planning and work is now better focused. However, in some cases when pupils in different year groups are studying the same topic, it is difficult to clearly see through the planning how the older children are to be fully challenged.
124. The types of activities described above indicate that pupils are aware that the past is divided into historical periods and they understand how historical evidence can be gained from a variety of sources. They realise, for example, that historical artefacts are important for finding out about the past but only the older higher-attainers clearly understand that historical events can be interpreted in different ways. Visits to local places of historical interest motivate pupils well and extend their learning.
125. Although in the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in history, this is not identified in a planned way across the school. Also, teachers' plans do not clearly indicate how information and communication technology is used to support the teaching of history.
126. The school's commitment to inclusive education is reflected in its teaching of history where all are encouraged to take part and achieve. No differences were noted between the attainment and progress of boys and girls. Overall, relationships are good and this helps teachers to manage the pupils well. Most pupils have good attitudes to their learning. Pupils with special educational needs are appropriately supported and pupils with hearing impairment are able to access the curriculum well due to the good support they receive in lessons.
127. The history co-ordinator has undertaken appropriate activities to ensure that the curriculum reflects the national guidance. She is aware of the need to develop a more consistent approach to assessing pupils' attainment and progress and ensuring a better use of information and communication technology in history. She has worked well with people in the community to develop additional resources for pupils, particularly those with hearing impairment.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

128. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory.

Pupils' standards in lessons are generally just below average throughout the school. In one Year 2 lesson, pupils were able to input text confidently, though some were less confident when they needed to amend it. Pupils are able to use ICT to research real life situations. Display in the Year 3 class relates to pupils' work with a CD-ROM where they were carrying out research on the sort of living things found on a beach. The work is just below national expectation. Other work on display shows that pupils are able to enter and amend text. In one Year 4 lesson, pupils were able to produce, organise and amend their ideas by producing a repeating pattern with a drawing program. Pupils are proud to show their work from previous lessons. They have used graph drawing software; clip art and have examples of simple word-processing. In one Year 6 lesson, pupils entered, organised and amended text using word-processing software but standards were below national expectation.

129. Pupils at the school are generally highly motivated by this subject and are keen to use the computers. Where equipment shortages mean that 2 pupils work at one computer, they generally do so well. Younger pupils sometimes begin to lose their concentration while they are waiting for their turn at the keyboard. Older pupils are patient and wait their turn. They also work well together in pairs.
130. Since the last inspection the school has made some improvements: the range of software has been extended; CD-ROMs, data handling and spreadsheets are now used, and there is greater conformity of hardware.
131. Teaching has improved and during the inspection was generally good. Introductions are effective at allowing pupils to demonstrate what they already know and understand from previous lessons. However, opportunities are missed to capitalise on the rich experience some pupils gain at home by using their own computers, sometimes including supervised Internet access. The teachers often model the tasks that they want the pupils to do and, as a consequence, pupils are clear as to what the lesson is about. Where teaching is less strong, introductions lack a sharp focus and pupils are less clear about what they have to do.
132. Teachers circulate amongst pupils while they are working on the computers and this ensures that they keep on task. The teachers' selection of activities is sometimes constrained by the lack of resources. In one Year 4 lesson, pupils had to write a record of their activity as there were insufficient computers to allow them to word-process it.
133. Pupils make good progress when the task is well focused and teachers support them to develop skills and knowledge. Pupils of all abilities are helped to make progress. Both boys and girls make good progress from a lower than average base and higher-attainers are generally given opportunities to pursue work at a higher level. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, especially those with hearing impairment who have the benefit of dedicated signing teachers. Work is occasionally marked and generally the comments are encouraging and positive, though they seldom give pupils a clear indication of how they might improve.
134. The ICT co-ordinator has only just taken on this responsibility. She has already identified some appropriate priorities for development and has a very clear view of the way in which standards can be raised. She is very confident in the subject and this contributes to her enthusiasm to develop it further in the school. The school has clear plans for improving the subject and has identified substantial funds over the next four years to upgrade the resources. These two factors taken together suggest that the school is in a position to remedy the current weaknesses in ICT. Staff confidence in using control technology will need to be addressed as part of the national training which the school is currently undertaking.
135. The level and quality of resourcing are currently inadequate for the curriculum. Only some classes have a computer in their room and the computer suite is without a basic whiteboard or large screen monitor, both of which frustrate the teachers' ability to make teaching points clear to pupils. At present, few computers have Internet access and many are not networked. The limited number of machines constrains the work that teachers can plan for the pupils and also limits the time that individuals can spend on the keyboard. There is little technical support and this leads to

inappropriate use of the co-ordinator's time in trying to coax the ageing machines into reliable operation.

136. Although the school has software to allow pupils to control movement on the screen, the one programmable robot which could be made to move around the floor, remains largely unused. The school has no technical construction kits with which pupils could make programmable machines. The control aspects of the ICT curriculum are largely unresourced.
137. The planning of the discrete lessons of ICT is thorough and effective at covering most of the ICT programme of study. The planning for the use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum does not identify enough opportunities and needs to be improved.

## **MUSIC**

138. The satisfactory standards seen at the last inspection in Key Stage 1 have not been maintained. Standards are now below those found in most schools. Year 2 pupils have little experience of playing instruments and are uncertain of their names. They are only just beginning to identify high and low sounds and have to be told that a *beater*, not a *stick* is used to play a xylophone. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 in their assembly sing enthusiastically, particularly when the song is familiar, but singing is not particularly tuneful or controlled. Progress has been unsatisfactory, though the newly appointed teacher in Year 2, who is the music co-ordinator, has quickly assessed the weaknesses in pupils' learning and is already addressing the issues. The current Year 1 pupils are beginning to recognise the sounds that different percussion instruments make and they know the names of several, such as tambourine and triangle. The work is correctly matched to their experiences since nearly half the pupils have just moved from the reception class but most pupils of this age in other schools are achieving higher standards than these.
139. It was not possible to see a lesson in Year 6 because of timetabling arrangements. Secure judgements about standards are therefore difficult. The pupils talk about last term's work: singing a round and composing music based on a 'Sea' theme but no recordings of their work were available for judgements about standards to be made. Work in their books shows that they have responded to music appropriately, creating pictures and written work after listening to the music for 'Inspector Morse' and to Debussy's 'Jeux de Vagues'. They have also acquired a satisfactory understanding of rhythms and notation and correctly identify the rhythm pattern for the name of each member of the class. They explain the meaning of *pitch* and *tempo* but do not understand *timbre*. In these elements of music, therefore, standards have been maintained since the last inspection and are similar to those of most 11-year-olds.
140. Standards of singing in Key Stage 2 however are unsatisfactory when all the pupils gather together. In one assembly, singing was particularly weak with insufficient volume of sound or attention to diction and rhythm. In class singing, however, Year 3 pupils show more competence so that, by the end of the lesson, they sing 'Working on the Railway' as well as most eight-year-olds. Year 5 pupils too sing 'We'll meet again' competently after learning it in their lesson. Progress generally in Key Stage 2 in the acquisition of musical knowledge and skills is satisfactory. All pupils are fully included in the activities and most positively enjoy the work and respond with enthusiasm. Those with a hearing impairment particularly enjoy identifying high and low sounds in a Year 2 lesson and the teaching assistant is skilled at maintaining their concentration, enabling them to make satisfactory progress.
141. Teaching is satisfactory overall but in one good lesson the teacher displayed particularly good knowledge of the subject and an awareness of pupils' previous learning so that she could precisely match the activities to the needs of the pupils so that they could make good progress in their learning. She prepared a number of interesting activities and all pupils had a chance to experience each one, thus reinforcing their understanding of high and low sounds. All teachers use resources well and manage their classes competently. In the two lessons seen in the juniors, taped broadcasts were used but teachers correctly stopped the recording at regular intervals to reinforce and practise particular parts of the work. Teachers are just beginning to use computer programs to enhance work in music. Year 3 pupils, for example, have tried out a program that

enables them to compose a tune and then listen to the results.

142. The co-ordinator has joined the staff this term but, with only a week's experience, she is already aware of the main weaknesses. The school is looking at its programme of work with the idea of adopting a commercial package that would support teachers and boost their confidence in delivering music lessons. There is no system for assessing the standards that pupils achieve or the progress they make. Resources are good in terms of variety, quality and sufficiency. They are well stored and carefully maintained. As at the last inspection, there are good opportunities for pupils to play a variety of instruments such as guitar, keyboard and flute. There are recorder groups and a school choir but these after-school clubs were not operating during the inspection and it was not possible to judge the quality of their performance.



## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

143. Standards in physical education have been maintained since the last inspection. In Years 2 and 6, attainment is at the expected level for pupils of this age. The pupils make sound progress with their learning as they move through the school. A few pupils are achieving standards that are high for their age, but in some classes higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated. Most make sound progress and they are satisfactorily supported.
144. Pupils in Year 1 were developing their co-ordination. They listened and followed the adults' lead, stretching whilst warming-up to the taped dance programme. The pupils enjoyed the activities and participated satisfactorily as they went shopping with 'Granny's string bag'. The higher attaining pupils varied their movements well according to the situation and mood of the music. After visiting several imaginary shops they showed by stooping movements and plodding steps how the heavy bags were beginning to weigh them down. Some of the youngest pupils, who had just moved up from the reception class, did not listen or concentrate as well. They have yet to develop the necessary social skills to work co-operatively in a group. The teacher and support staff modelled the actions effectively; this helped the lower attaining pupils to understand what was required of them. In a Year 2 class, pupils were developing their gymnastic skills and developing two and three-point balances. Good teaching, using pupils to evaluate the balance of a higher attaining pupil, helped others in the group to think more carefully about how they could improve their performance.
145. In Year 6, the teacher chose a pupil to lead the warm-up. This was very successful and the pupils enjoyed following his movements such as stretching, jogging and running on the spot. Good questioning by the teacher showed that pupils are very aware of the effect of exercise on their bodies and the importance of keeping fit. The lesson was well organised; for example, each group leader was given a card showing how the apparatus was to be set out. Pupils went about the task purposefully but some were rather noisy and found working as a member of a team difficult. The teacher gave clear instructions about using the apparatus and stressed the need for safety and sensible behaviour. She was able to give good demonstrations and instructions about improving performance and developing a sequence of movement. A strong feature of the lesson was the use of pupils for demonstration purposes; for example, the teacher selected a higher attaining pupil to demonstrate a sequence of movement on the horizontal bar showing poise, balance, shape and a good dismount. This helped to challenge other pupils to think more carefully about evaluating and improving their own performance.
146. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and are included well in lessons. The hearing impaired pupils are well supported through signing by the learning support assistants. There are no apparent differences in the performances of boys and girls. Pupils dress appropriately and most change quickly for their lessons. They enjoy physical education and most are keen and eager to participate in lessons. However, in some classes pupils do not listen carefully enough and chatter far too much; this wastes time by having to stop lessons and remind pupils of how to behave.
147. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Of the four lessons observed, two were good, one satisfactory and one unsatisfactory. The features of the best teaching were the warm-ups at the beginning of lessons, the use of pupils for demonstration purposes and good subject knowledge enabling skills to be well taught. In the unsatisfactory lesson the main weakness was a lack of control which led to unsatisfactory pupil behaviour.
148. The management of physical education is good. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and she is working hard to give the pupils the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities. The scheme of work has recently been improved to reflect this. There are after-school clubs that run throughout the year; these include netball, football, hockey, basketball, rounders, tennis, cricket, and athletics. The curriculum is enhanced considerably by the links with Colchester United Football Club, Essex County Cricket Club, the residential visit to Kingswood and a water sports

day at Ardleigh Reservoir. Orienteering and swimming also take place in the summer term. Staff report that approximately 80 per cent of pupils can swim 25 metres by the time they leave school. The school has good links with Philip Morant School and a cluster sports day is held there. Resources have improved since the last inspection and are now very good.

149. The school now needs to ensure that the new assessment procedures are put into practice and adequate training is provided for staff. Insufficient thought has been given to the use of information and communication technology, for example, the use of a camcorder and digital camera to improve and record pupils' performance.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

150. As at the last inspection, standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with those required by the agreed programme of work for Essex schools. The oldest pupils have a secure understanding of Christianity. They know the principal events of Jesus' life, give 'The Good Samaritan' as an example of a parable and know that the changing of water into wine is regarded as a miracle. In their books, they list the main religions in this country and are beginning to understand that behaviour is often determined by the beliefs that people hold. In a piece of written work that supports the development of their literacy skills, they consider the question, "Would you be prepared to die for your religious beliefs?" This is a particularly relevant following events in New York and Washington in 2001. Knowledge of religions other than Christianity is not as secure. However, the mosque is quoted as the place of worship for Muslims and the synagogue for Jews. Stories from the Old Testament are recalled such as 'David and Goliath' and fresh in their minds is an understanding of Abraham's covenant with God and an understanding of what a covenant involves.
151. Pupils in Year 2 know that Jesus is a special person and react enthusiastically as they act out the parable of 'The Lost Sheep'. Like pupils throughout the school, they have benefited from a recent visitor who has introduced them to the customs of India. They therefore recognise a sari and have created Rangoli patterns as part of their study of the Hindu festival of Diwali. Pupils in Year 1 also enjoy Bible stories and know about Noah's Ark and the story of the foolish man who built his house on sand. Infant pupils therefore make satisfactory progress in their learning although very little is recorded in books and most lessons are conducted orally. Progress in the juniors is also satisfactory although pupils in Years 3 and 4 follow the same programme of work with very little development for the older pupils. Computers are rarely used to support work and not every opportunity is taken to promote literacy skills through religious education. However, a useful exercise is conducted in Year 5 to discover the differences in the account of Jesus' birth in the gospels of St. Luke and St. Matthew.
152. Pupils are fully included in lessons, including those with special educational needs and those with hearing impairment and they make satisfactory progress. Pupils are supported well in lessons and there is always at least one other adult in the room besides the teacher. In one lesson, a particularly effective teaching assistant explored with her group the spiritual dimension of people being exiled from their own country and the feelings that the Jewish people must have experienced during the Babylonian exile. This spiritual element is missing in most of the lessons seen. However, teaching in the school overall is satisfactory and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers are well prepared and have a warm relationship with the pupils so that, for example, stories are avidly followed in Years 1 and 2 with good understanding. Resources are used well to focus pupils on their learning. In a Year 4 lesson about the features of a church, the teacher effectively relates the work to the direct experiences of the pupils and develops their geographic skills as they locate churches on a local map.
153. The co-ordinator is a competent leader. The programme of work is well established and is helpful to teachers when they plan lessons. Lessons have been observed by the co-ordinator, something that was not happening at the last inspection. Another improvement is that there is now a whole school focus on multicultural topics each term. Chinese New Year is about to be celebrated, for

example. The subject continues to make a significant contribution to the pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Resources are adequate for delivering the curriculum and the library contains a good number of religious books. There is no system for assessing the standards that individual pupils achieve and the progress they make.