

INSPECTION REPORT

GHYLLGROVE COMMUNITY JUNIOR SCHOOL

Basildon, Essex

LEA area: Essex LEA

Unique reference number: 114914

Headteacher: Mrs Catherine Power

Reporting inspector: Tom Canham
7523

Dates of inspection: 25/09/00 – 29/09/00

Inspection number: 224329

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Gore Ghyllgrove Basildon Essex
Postcode:	SS14 2BG
Telephone number:	01268 450067
Fax number:	01268 523175
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Roy Weekley
Date of previous inspection:	26/01/1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Tom Canham 7523	Registered inspector	English, IT and Music	What sort of school is it? How high are standards. How well the school is led and managed.
Rosalind Hall 9502	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents.
Lynn Lowery 13805	Team inspector	Science, Art, Geography and History	Pupil's attitudes, values and personal development. How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
Paul Story 30618	Team inspector	Mathematics, DT, PE and RE	Equal Opportunities. How well are pupils taught? How well does the school care for its pupils.
Aileen Webber 3838	Team Inspector	Hearing Impaired Unit.	

The inspection contractor was:

Essex County Council

Advisory and Inspection Service
PO Box 47
Chelmsford
CM2 6WN

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The Registrar
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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ghyllgrove Junior School is close to Basildon town centre, but has a quiet position with fine views of a nearby park. The school has 217 pupils & is similar in size to other junior schools.

The school primarily serves the surrounding area, but around 30% of its pupils come from the East Basildon area. The last census indicated that homes in these areas had considerable educational disadvantage. Pupils' attainment on entry is below national averages. 22.5% of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is broadly in line with the national average. No pupils are from ethnic minority groups or speak English as an additional language. 25% of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, and 5% have statements, both well above the national average. There is a Unit for Hearing Impaired Children which has eight pupils integrated into the main school for much of their education.

The school is within the Basildon Education Action Zone, and benefits from a number of initiatives and funding from this source, which help to raise pupils' standards of attainment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ghyllgrove Junior School is a good school, achieving good standards overall. Although pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science are below average in the national tests, they match national levels in class work, as they do in foundation subjects. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Teachers teach well, and plan and manage pupils effectively. Leadership and management are very good. The school is continuing to improve and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- There is a very strong ethos permeating the whole school, that is caring, fosters acceptance of responsibility and the creation of very positive relationships
- Procedures for child protection and welfare are very good
- Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are excellent and are applied by all
- Provision for hearing-impaired pupils is outstanding
- Teaching is good, particularly in getting pupils to understand what they need to learn, support for pupils with special educational needs and the use of support staff.
- The headteacher and senior staff are very clear about what needs doing and do it effectively.
- The school's links with parents are very good
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good
- Attainment in art is well above average, and pupils' work is often exciting.
- The school has improved considerably, and is continuing to do so.

What could be improved

- Arrangements to track progress do not always contribute to learning
- Not enough opportunities are provided for using and applying mathematics, and data handling
- Not enough opportunities are provided for work on scientific enquiry
- Literacy skills are not consistently developed across the subjects of the curriculum
- Higher attaining pupils are not always well identified or sufficiently challenged

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION⁶

The school was last inspected in January 1998. It had serious weaknesses.

- *low attainment and uneven progress in English, mathematics and science*
Standards have risen in all three due to the effective introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, new staff, rigorous analysis of weaknesses & better teaching.
- *a slow rate of progress in most other subjects*

Attainment now matches national expectations in all subjects, and in art is well above.

- *poor use of assessment to inform curriculum planning to ensure pupils make progress in knowledge, understanding and skills at an appropriate rate*

The school now uses good assessment procedures for English, mathematics and science, and plans to extend this. There is a good range of tests carried out and results are well used.

- *teachers' insecure subject knowledge, particularly in the foundation subjects*

Teachers' subject knowledge is now satisfactory in most subjects.

- *staffing issues at senior management level*

Long term sickness problems have been resolved, and key senior staff have been appointed.

The quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to good, and standards that were below average at the time of the last inspection are now broadly average. The school's leadership has shown vision, very good teamwork and tenacity in achieving a very good level of improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	E*	E	D	B
mathematics	E	E	E	D
science	E*	D	D	B

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Although national test results for English and science are below national averages for all schools, they are above average for similar schools. Results in mathematics are well below national averages for all schools, and below average for similar schools. Provisional test figures for 2000 show improvements in mathematics and science, above targets, but a slight fall in English below target. The school's results have been improving overall faster than schools nationally, but few pupils achieve more than the standard expected nationally.

Pupils do not always present work well. Speaking skills are below national standards overall. Writing in English lessons is appropriate to the purpose, and accurate. Number skills in mathematics develop satisfactorily, but standards in exploring mathematics & handling data are unsatisfactory. Pupils' standards in science are satisfactory except for written work, and more investigative work is needed. Standards in ICT are satisfactory, but there is little use of it in other subjects. Standards in art are well above national levels, and in other subjects are

satisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are enthusiastic. They enjoy school, join in activities, and take pride in their environment.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the building. They are polite, considerate and helpful.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' relationships with others are very good. Pupils show respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs, & accept responsibility readily.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Very few pupils are late.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory or good in 85% of lessons seen and very good in 15%. In English, teaching is good overall. Lessons are well planned and prepared, and tasks well judged. Teachers create a good working atmosphere through a positive relationship with pupils, good use of praise and very careful adherence to the school's behaviour policy. Most teachers use questions effectively, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop speaking skills. In mathematics teaching is also good. Teachers use the introductions well, question effectively and in the best lessons get pupils to explain their calculations. Lessons are brisk and good use is made of resources and the final plenary session. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported, but higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. The school ensures equal access to provision for all pupils regardless of gender, background and ability. A significant strength is the very good teamwork and the willingness to learn and improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad, balanced and relevant. All legal requirements are met, and the school monitors the curriculum well. There are very good opportunities for learning outside the classroom.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There is very good support for pupils with special educational needs, and they make very good progress as a direct result. Individual education plans are effective and are updated regularly.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Provision for Personal, Social and Health Education is very good. Pupils learn the dangers of drugs and there is appropriate sex education. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, and very good in the case of moral and social.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school tracks progress well in English, mathematics and science, and uses the results of this assessment to give good guidance to pupils. Assessment in most other subjects is not fully effective. The care and welfare of pupils is a priority for all staff, who use very effective systems and know pupils well. There are good procedures for health and safety.

The school works very effectively with parents. The positive behaviour management systems are excellent. The art curriculum is particularly rich and stimulating for pupils, and personal and social education is a strength of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has raised standards, improved staffing and established an ethos of care and learning. Team building is very effective. The senior management team and co-ordinators contribute effectively to management of standards by rigorous monitoring and well-judged responses to perceived needs.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is well informed and carries out its work satisfactorily. Governors support the school and meet their statutory responsibilities, but some do not play a fully active role.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is most effective in collecting data, monitoring teachers' and pupils' work, and making informed decisions on what to do next.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses resources very well, including additional grants and funds from the Education Action Zone. Resources are effectively applied to educational priorities.

The provision of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is generally good, and supports learning. The principles of best value are properly applied. The leadership of the headteacher is a major strength.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem, and staff are quick to respond • the school is well led and managed, with good behaviour and standards • the school promotes positive attitudes and values, and expects children to do their best • pupils with special educational needs are very well supported • the school has improved tremendously in the last few years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the amount of homework • the range of activities outside lessons

The inspection team endorsed most of the comments made by parents, but judged the provision for homework to be good and the range of extra-curricular activities to be very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards of literacy and numeracy are below national average levels on entry to the school. In 1999, at the end of Key Stage 2, percentages of pupils achieving level 4 and above were below national averages in English and science, and well below in mathematics. Very few pupils reach the higher levels expected in national tests in English and mathematics, and few pupils achieve this in science. This year's provisional results indicate that mathematics and science have risen, and English has fallen to a small extent. More pupils have achieved higher than expected levels in English and mathematics. Over the last four years, the trend of improvement for all three subjects together is slightly faster than schools nationally. Once more pupils achieve level 5s, standards will reach national levels overall.
2. Compared with schools from similar socio-economic backgrounds, the school achieved above average results in English and science in 1999, but below average in mathematics. These are good results overall.
3. Statutory targets set for 2000 were 67% for English (57% achieved), and 55% for mathematics (65% achieved). The number of pupils by which these targets were undershot, or overshot, was four in each case. This indicates that target setting is not yet fully secure.
4. Pupils' work and lessons seen show overall standards broadly at national levels, apart from art where standards are well above nationally expected levels :
5. In **English**, most pupils attain nationally expected levels in listening, reading and writing, but not in speaking. In some lessons, higher attaining pupils could achieve more with greater challenge. Eleven year olds can express ideas and views, and describe experiences, with some confidence to their peers, but with limited vocabulary and range of expression, and in some cases incorrect grammar. Standards in listening are good. Most write with a well-formed, joined script, spelling most words accurately, and use imaginative and interesting words and phrases, with the full range of punctuation. Presentation is sometimes unsatisfactory, with insufficient care taken, and work is not always completed. Pupils develop their reading satisfactorily, and by the end of the Key Stage most pupils read with some appreciation of characters and themes.
6. In **mathematics**, pupils build steadily on their number skills. Pupils in Year 3 count in fives to 50 and back and can double numbers up to 30. They understand halves and quarters. They are beginning to measure lengths in centimetres. Year 4 pupils show fast recall of number bonds to 20, and estimate and measure effectively. Older pupils show good recall of basic number facts and understand the significance of numerators and denominators in fractions. By Year 6 pupils can convert fractions such as $\frac{1}{10}$ and $\frac{1}{100}$ into decimals and vice versa, and can count forwards and back in 2's, 25's, 0.2's and 0.25's.
7. In **science**, pupils' attainment is weaker in investigations than it is in other areas of the subject and this is adversely affecting their overall results. The school has recognised this and has recently introduced a new approach to teaching investigative science. The system is working well and was raising standards in lessons during the inspection. The pupils' relatively low attainment in writing in science also has a negative impact on the quality of their work. Pupils demonstrate orally that they know far more than their written work suggests. By the end of the key stage, pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of

electricity, conduction and insulation. They develop a sound understanding of the need to plan fair tests and record their results in appropriate ways. They are generally able to write sensible conclusions, but the higher attainers have yet to develop the ability to give reasons for their observations and explain unexpected results. Pupils have a good understanding of the effect of diet and exercise on the body, and of the functions of the main organs. Most understand why we have night and day and know how various forces work.

8. In **information and communications technology (ICT)**, pupils attain nationally expected levels in the work they currently are doing, but do not have enough experience of using ICT in their learning in other subjects. The school has suitable arrangements for the development of ICT in its current School Development Plan. In **religious education**, pupils' attainment at the end of the Key Stage is broadly in line with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils' make satisfactory gains in their knowledge of the main characteristics of world faiths and in the skills needed to understand the significance of different religious ideas and form their own view of them. In **art**, pupils achieve standards that are well above those of pupils of the same age nationally. Some of the work produced by pupils of all ages is of an outstanding standard. Pupils do particularly well in the investigating and making side of the subject. They have particularly well-developed close observational skills and they pay closer attention to fine detail as they move through the school.

9. In **design and technology**, whilst standards are broadly in line with those expected nationally pupils have not developed skills and knowledge in the range and depth specified in the national curriculum. Examples of work from last year show the limited experiences pupils have had in developing their skills of working with a range of techniques and materials. In **history and geography**, pupils reach broadly average standards for their age. Their breadth of their knowledge is more limited however as the school took up the option of not teaching the full programme of study last year in order to concentrate on raising standards in literacy and numeracy. In **music**, standards during the inspection were broadly in line with those expected nationally, although their content was almost entirely whole class singing; only one brief example of instrumental work was seen, and none of composition. In **physical education**, pupils make good progress in most lessons and attain standards that are broadly in line with those expected nationally.

10. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress over time. This is due to the school's good assessment procedures and the effectiveness of teachers and teaching assistants.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are generally enthusiastic. They enjoy coming to school and are usually happy and quick to settle into classroom routines. They join in a wide range of activities, including well-organised lunchtime games and clubs, which include sports, music, gardening and textiles. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to develop their independence and to help others, both in and out of school. They take a pride in the environment and look after the exceptionally interesting and attractive displays around the school, as well as helping to improve the grounds through their work with the gardening club.

12. Overall, pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the building. This is the result

of a lot of hard work on the part of teachers and a successful behaviour policy, which is consistently used by all staff. Teachers handle challenging behaviour well and are generally successful in ensuring that unacceptable behaviour and attitudes in a minority are not allowed to adversely influence the work or social life of the others. Through personal and social education, the school is successful in contributing to the development of good behaviour in pupils.

13. There are very good relationships between staff and pupils, and pupils are helpful, friendly and courteous to visitors. Pupils show respect for others feelings, values and beliefs, for example in successful personal and social development lessons. All pupils learn some signing, so that hearing impaired pupils feel fully involved in the school. A good number of pupils attend a signing club, so that they are able to communicate more easily with pupils from the hearing-impaired unit, who are in their classes for some lessons. Pupils respond very well when given the opportunity to take responsibility, and almost all pupils are responsible for something. Friendship Week is valued by pupils. It gives them the chance to work with pupils of different ages across the school and to make friendships with pupils they would otherwise not meet. Activities such as these have a very strong impact on the positive and caring ethos, which pervades the school.

14. The school has average levels of attendance with low figures for unauthorised absence. Very few pupils are late.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching is good. This is a considerable improvement on the previous report when the quality of teaching was sound overall, and one lesson in eight was less than satisfactory. During the current inspection, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons seen and good or very good in three-fifths.

16. These improvements can be traced to the benefits of the national literacy and numeracy schemes, and a deliberate focus on teaching by management which led to recent staff training in the use of questioning and quick-fire mental activities at the beginning of numeracy session. The need for the latter was identified as part of the peer (collaborative) monitoring developed through the EAZ partnership. In addition, a number of long term staffing issues that had affected continuity of pupils' learning have been resolved.

17. A significant strength of the teaching is the very good teamwork. Teachers and support staff from the hearing impaired unit and the main school work well together. By sharing planning and keeping good records they provide very effective help for individuals and groups of pupils. This is particularly good in the numeracy and literacy sessions, when additional help from teachers and learning support assistants enables pupils to achieve well in small groups.

18. There are good relationships between staff and pupils based on mutual respect and trust. Consequently, pupils feel secure enough to share personal thoughts and feelings during circle time or in religious education lessons. Pupils with special needs or hearing impairment are also very well supported by other pupils and staff in accessing tasks or contributing to discussions.

19. The newly established teaching team works very well together. They plan collaboratively for younger and older pupils drawing on their particular subject expertise and ensuring that pupils in parallel classes follow a similar curriculum. Tasks are well matched to the needs of the majority of pupils and in particular those with learning difficulties.

20. In all lessons good use of questioning encourages and challenges pupils thinking,

focuses their attention and checks their understanding. During a Year 4 design and technology lesson, pupils were guided by well structured questioning to find and identify the circuit in a torch. Generally, teachers' subject knowledge is secure. Where it is more developed staff feel confident and are able to better match the activities and the level of challenge to pupils' abilities. A very good example of this was a Year 5 outdoor games session. The teacher varied the task of ball passing to match pupils' ability. This ensured that their interest and enthusiasm were maintained as well as rapidly improving their skills.

21. Teachers' expectations of their pupils vary. Tasks for pupils with learning difficulties and those in the middle range are well matched to pupils' ability. However, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science there is often insufficient challenge in the task for higher attaining pupils. They frequently undertake the same work as other pupils merely completing it at a faster rate or in greater quantity. There is insufficient use of investigative tasks or opportunities for independent learning. This problem occurs less in other subjects where the nature of the activities frequently allows pupils to work at their own level. The high percentage of work that is marked correct, particularly in mathematics, indicates that tasks do not always contain sufficient challenge.

22. The quality of teaching was generally good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in the hearing impaired unit, the lower school, one Year 5 class and in mathematics in year 5 and 6. It was very good in art, and good in design technology, music, physical education and religious education.

23. Strengths noted in best practice in the last inspection now thread through all the teaching. Staff manage pupils well and make good use of behaviour strategies to create a fruitful working environment and maintain a brisk pace to the learning. For example, during a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher used a quick-fire opening session on decimal fractions to gain pupils' attention, capture their interest and check their understanding. The format and structure of the literacy hour and numeracy strategy support this well. However, during some other Year 6 lessons the constant need for teachers to check the inappropriate behaviour of a small group of pupils in each class adversely affected the concentration of others and the pace of learning.

24. Teachers plan interesting tasks that capture pupils' imagination and interest. When teachers draw pupils' attention to the planned learning objectives of the lesson and make suitable reference to previous work, pupils understand the purpose of their learning and the context in which it is set. The final part of the lesson is well used to consolidate and reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding, although teachers do not often refer back to the stated learning intentions and show pupils how their learning has progressed and what the next steps will be. Sometimes, as was seen in both a Year 4 mathematics lesson and a Year 6 gymnastics lesson, activities overrun and there is insufficient time available to use the plenary as planned.

25. Literacy is taught well overall. Sessions are well planned and teachers select good texts as the basis for their work in the literacy hours. Book provision has been effectively improved by funding from the EAZ. Pupils are helped to appreciate literature as well as to develop appropriate phonic and grammar skills. Good strategies are used in some lessons where subject specific vocabulary and key words are repetitively reinforced. In lessons where there is good participation in discussions, pupils develop their oral skills well, but there are not sufficient opportunities for the development of speaking skills. The quality of pupils' written work is not constant and in the subjects of history, geography and religious education it is evident that opportunities are not taken to reinforce writing skills and improve presentation.

26. The teaching of numeracy is good overall. Lessons follow the structure of the numeracy strategy, which has been successfully implemented. Pupils make use of

measuring skills in other subjects such as science where they note readings and record data or in design technology to ensure materials are the same size. However, the use of numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum is not yet systematically planned or developed.

27. Teachers make good use of high quality displays throughout the school to brighten and lift the quality of the learning environment. These celebrate pupils' achievements and stimulate their interest. They are also used to reinforce values and develop pupils' self esteem through the display of rules and written work from 'friendship week' in which pupils describe their personal qualities.

28. Teachers make good use of information about pupils' prior ability from regular and ongoing assessments to group pupils appropriately for activities such as literacy and numeracy. However, the lack of formal assessment arrangements for subjects other than English, mathematics and science means that teachers have a less clear view of pupils' progress and understanding and therefore what the next steps in their learning should be. Marking is also variable. Teachers clearly take note of pupils' progress in planning work, but do not often indicate to pupils what they can do to improve.

29. Pupils with special educational needs are very well taught. They achieve well because teachers carefully match work and expectations to the targets in their individual educational plans and to their attainment levels. Teachers are very well supported in diagnosis and planning for pupils with learning difficulties by the school's knowledgeable and committed special needs co-ordinator. Support assistants work very closely with class teachers to help achieve set targets and are well informed about pupils' special needs. A significant contribution to the high quality of learning by pupils with special educational needs is made by their effective, regular support of individual pupils.

30. Throughout the school, teachers set suitable homework tasks designed to support the development of reading and basic numeracy skills. In addition older pupils are undertake research projects and are currently working well on 'the Olympics'.

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

31. Pupils are provided with a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which reflects the aims of the school. The recently introduced schemes of work ensure that the requirements of Curriculum 2000 are fully met. Religious Education is appropriately based on the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The school places appropriate emphasis upon the teaching of English and mathematics. It sensibly opted to reduce the time allocated to history, geography and design technology last year, so that more time could be spent on English and mathematics in order to raise standards in those subjects. The schools' planning for the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies is sound and is having a direct impact on the raising of standards. Teachers have put a lot of time and effort into planning a curriculum which takes into account the needs of pupils of different abilities, and sometimes ages, in the same class. Consequently, pupils are generally working at levels appropriate to their ability in literacy and numeracy lessons, although the small number of higher attaining pupils is not always suitably challenged in all classes.

32. The school has worked hard, since the last inspection, to ensure that there are appropriate policies and schemes of work in place for all subjects. The introduction of the

Literacy and Numeracy strategies reduced the amount of time spent on design technology, history and geography in the last school year. As a result, some of the depth and extent of knowledge acquired by the pupils has been sacrificed. Pupils have an adequate understanding of the areas covered, but they have not studied all the aspects specified in the national curriculum. However, despite this, the work done in these subjects is interesting and the pupils' enthusiasm has been stimulated, so that they are ready to study more with the introduction of Curriculum 2000.

33. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced effective and systematic procedures for monitoring the curriculum. The Headteacher monitors teachers' planning and provides them with feedback, which helps them to improve. All staff have received training which enables them to monitor curriculum provision in their subjects effectively. This allows them to identify any areas of weakness so they can implement strategies to improve them. Peer monitoring funded by the EAZ has contributed to their ability to monitor and evaluate. Teachers plan in upper and lower school groups. This helps them to make best use of each other's strengths and weaknesses and ensures that there is consistency of experience for pupils in parallel classes. In order to improve the curriculum, the school makes good use of the specialist skills of some staff, for example in art, in order to develop the skills and confidence of other staff and thereby improve the learning experience for the pupils. This strategy is having a positive impact on the standards achieved.

34. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities. They cover a wide range of interests and consequently appeal to a large number of pupils in the school. There is a school choir and pupils have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. Sports are available and change depending on the time of year. The school buys in skilled sports people to lead some of these activities, and this ensures a valuable learning experience for the pupils. Work of an exceptionally high standard has been produced by pupils of all ages who attend the textiles and cross-stitch clubs. Other pupils have joined the gardening club and, as well as providing the school with a very attractively planted quiet area, they learn about propagation, which allows them to produce large numbers of plants to raise money for the school. As with the other clubs, pupils are developing interests and hobbies which they can take with them into adult life. In addition to all the clubs, the oldest pupils have the chance to take part in a residential visit to France. Pupils visit museums and other places of historical and geographical interest. They visit places of religious significance and take part in music festivals and community activities. The school arranges for a large number of visitors to come into school. They include the police, musicians and a pantomime, amongst numerous others. Another source of enrichment is the family learning funded by the EAZ, which benefits both pupils and parents.

35. The school has constructive links with its feeder infant schools. It has strong and developing links with its secondary schools. Pupils make a series of visits to the secondary school during year 6. There are sound links with the local community, for example, the gardening club has been supported by Homebase and pupils visit a local home for the elderly to sing Christmas carols.

36. Provision for Personal, Social and Health Education is very good. The subject is taught in its own right. It is well planned and pupils value it. Pupils are made aware of the dangers of drugs and appropriate arrangements are in place for the teaching of sex education. Circle Time is used very well to support pupils' personal development.

37. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Collective worship is well planned and raises pupils' awareness of a greater being. An

atmosphere of calm is set and pupils have the chance to join in with an appropriate prayer, or, simply to reflect as a candle burns. Pupils respond well to this. Religious Education makes a useful contribution to pupils' spiritual development as it enables them to gain an insight into the beliefs of the major world religions. Pupils are encouraged to wonder at the achievements of others, for example, at the Olympic competitors during inspection week and each other during their 'Rewards' assemblies. Through the quality of pupils' art work, displays around the school and music, the school also contributes to spiritual development.

38. The school makes very good provision for the moral development of its pupils. It has a clear and successful behaviour policy. There is an effective rewards system and pupils are very keen to achieve their rewards. Pupils respond positively to praise and accept sanctions, knowing why they have been used, and having been given the chance to improve before the sanction has been used. Teachers explain clearly why something is unacceptable when correcting pupils. The school ensures that pupils are aware of the impact of their actions on others. Teachers set a good example, valuing pupils as individuals and ensuring that they reward good behaviour and attitudes appropriately. Pupils learn about environmental issues in science and geography and have the chance to discuss the rights and wrongs of issues such as world water supply and pollution. They are made aware of those who are less fortunate than themselves. The very mature attitude that pupils develop allows hearing impaired pupils to be integrated into mainstream classes and to enjoy mutual respect with others in the school, particularly in terms of the outstanding quality of art work many of them are able to achieve.

39. Very good opportunities are provided to enable pupils to develop socially. The ethos of the school enables pupils to work together well. Older pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for younger pupils, particularly at entry to the school. Year 6 pupils were quick to volunteer to become games leaders and involve pupils of all ages in a good range activities at lunchtimes. The gardening club gets pupils of all ages to work together to improve the school environment. There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities that provide opportunities for everybody. Pupils have the chance to take part in competitive sports and music competitions, and learn to accept defeat with good grace and to celebrate the success of others. Older pupils can take part in a residential visit, learning independence and how to cope with life away from home. All teachers ensure that all pupils can responsibility for something. The school council representatives are well respected and have a genuine opportunity to represent the views of their classmates and bring about improvements in the school.

40. Sound provision is made for pupils' cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate their own cultural heritage through their study of the development of Basildon in history. In art, they learn about the work of a range of artists, both western and non-western. In music, pupils listen to and sing songs from their own and other cultures. Through religious education, pupils learn about the life and beliefs of people with different faiths. There are lots of opportunities for pupils to visit museums and places of historical interest. They are also visited by musicians, for example, an African drum group and theatre groups. The school also provides pupils with the opportunity to visit France.

41. The school's commitment to equal opportunities is illustrated well by the very good quality of its support for pupils with special educational needs. All pupils on the school's special needs register, including those with statements of special educational need, have individual education plans (IEPs) that match their identified needs. These are regularly reviewed and the detailed IEPs form the basis of the very careful planning and support in lessons by class teachers and learning support staff. This ensures that these pupils enjoy access to a broadly based curriculum that matches their identified needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. The school has good assessment procedures for English, mathematics and science and staff use these well. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection, which found assessment procedures unsatisfactory and inconsistent. Assessment is a feature of the school's current development plan. Manageable procedures are planned for physical education and information technology but they are as yet undeveloped in art, design technology, history, geography, music and religious education.

43. As pupils enter the school, baseline assessment is carried out and diagnostic assessments made where pupils need them. The good range of testing carried out by the school includes nationally standardised tests for reading and mathematics, optional national tests in English, mathematics and science and the end of Key Stage national assessments. Throughout the school half-termly assessments are made in mathematics and English, and end of unit tests are carried out in science. Each term a piece of work from one of the core subjects is retained and its National Curriculum level identified for inclusion in the child's record of achievement. The results of these assessments and observations inform the records and half-termly pupil profiles that are carefully compiled and maintained by teachers. Assessment in other subjects is based on marking which is not consistently effective, and gives pupils too little guidance on how to improve their work.

44. The school makes good use of data from the assessment team to review its practice and identify trends and cause for concern. For example, it uses the results of reading tests to identify pupils with possible difficulties. It also checks possible differences in the learning and standards of boys and girls, and different groups of pupils. A recent example of this was the identified dip in Year 4 attainment that was reported to the Governing Body. Annual targets are set for English and mathematics, and progress monitored against them. This also informs the setting of the school's literacy and numeracy targets in consultation with the Governing Body and Local authority.

45. Recent improvements in assessment are partially due to staff development exercises. These have arisen from the collaborative monitoring arrangements set in place with Educational Action Zone funding and supported by the consortium. Representatives of the examining body took in-service sessions to explain content and questioning in the Year 6 national tests. Teachers from secondary and other primary schools have met to moderate English work across the transition providing valuable experience for staff of identifying the levels of pupils' work. This exercise has continued in school with a portfolio of English work containing samples of pupils' work with National Curriculum levels. This enables teachers to reach common understanding about expectations and is being extended to mathematics, science and information technology.

46. Pupils' are given good guidance on how well they are doing and how they might improve. Annual reports to parents are comprehensive documents that contain good detail particularly on pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science, and on personal development. Targets for improvement are set and discussed with parents. Parents find the reports, results from the annual optional national tests, and comparative information very helpful. Class teachers also set and review academic and personal development targets with pupils on a weekly basis. These arrangements actively support the school's approach to personal development through the positive reinforcement of behaviour. They are also closely linked to issues raised in circle time or through the school council.

47. The school uses a good range of diagnostic tests to identify the particular problems of pupils with learning difficulties. Information from these tests and other assessments is well

used to prepare or modify the individual educational plans (IEPs) of pupils with special educational needs. These plans are regularly reviewed and a good check is kept on pupils' progress. An informative file is available to learning assistants working with these pupils, containing details of current work, a diary and copy of the pupil's IEP. The school provides very good support for pupils to meet the objectives of their statements of special educational need and very good procedures are in place for monitoring their daily progress and any concerns. Effective outside support is mobilised by the special needs co-ordinator as needed.

48. The care and welfare of pupils is a priority for all who work at the school. Each child is known well by the staff and the very good relationships between all staff and pupils and the very effective systems that are firmly in place ensure that pupils are very well supported throughout their time at the school.

49. There are good procedures for health and safety. The school has adopted the local education authority policy and carries out risk assessments and half-termly inspections. There are an appropriate number of qualified first aiders and the school keeps detailed records of any incidents. Staff are briefed regularly about child protection procedures and the headteacher is well informed in her role as the designated person with responsibility for this area.

50. Since the last inspection, the positive behaviour management systems that have been introduced have become deeply embedded and are an essential part of the ethos of the school; they are a major strength. All staff implement the policy consistently and their positive approach was seen to work effectively with some challenging pupils. Pupils are involved in deciding the school rules. They understand the range of sanctions, and the personal choice they have in following certain behaviour patterns is emphasised, thus encouraging them to take responsibility for their own actions. The 'no blame' approach allows pupils to discuss and achieve a resolution in any conflicts. Pupils feel they are treated fairly and they appreciate and work hard to gain one of the many rewards available. The Roll of Honour weekly presentation includes examples of positive attitudes, caring acts, good behaviour at lunchtime and good work completed in school or at home. Last term the school held a very successful Friendship Week, promoting confidence and the development of relationships across age groups.

51. Lunchtime is well organised and pupils are able to chat as they eat their lunch in an unhurried manner. They are well supervised by well-trained midday assistants who are integrated fully into the staff team. Year 6 pupils act as playleaders, a role they take seriously. The wide range of equipment, for both physical and quiet games and the provision of clubs, such as the gardening club, make this a meaningful time of the day.

52. Attendance is recorded accurately and is monitored carefully. Absence is followed up; a system of first day calling has been introduced and is now funded through the EAZ; this has had a positive effect on attendance and punctuality. Few pupils are late, and are dealt with appropriately.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. The views expressed by parents through both the questionnaire and at the meeting were very supportive. In the questionnaire the majority of parents strongly agreed that they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. They agreed that the school is well led and managed, that behaviour is good, that their child likes school and that the school expects their child to do their best. At the meeting, parents said that they were pleased with the standards achieved, and felt the school promoted positive attitudes and values and that staff were quick to respond to concerns. All present at the meeting felt the school had improved tremendously in the last few years and that it was now more approachable and had a more positive ethos.

54. Concerns were raised at the meeting and in the questionnaires about the amount of homework set and the range of activities that took place outside lessons. The inspection team judged the provision for homework to be good and the range of extra-curricular activities to be very good.

55. Parents receive good information about the school. They receive newsletters each half term that include the names of pupils on the Roll of Honour so enabling them to support the positive approach to behaviour taken by the school. The good reports they receive on progress are particularly useful; these report on English, mathematics and science very well and emphasise targets for improvement. Targets are also discussed at Open Evenings, which are very well attended by parents. Parents also attend workshops on areas of the curriculum such as literacy, numeracy and drugs education.

56. A homework policy is in place and is monitored by the school. Although in the past changes in teaching staff have led to inconsistent implementation of the policy, it is now satisfactorily applied. Parents support reading well; a system of certificates for children being heard to read at home does much to encourage this.

57. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good. Parents support the school through the parents association and through helping in the classroom, with swimming and on trips. Productions and assemblies are well attended. Through EAZ funding, the school has started to provide tutored ICT sessions for parents, which provide valuable opportunities for pupils and parents to share in the development of these skills.

58. The school informs parents appropriately when their children are placed on the school's special educational needs register and keeps them closely informed of their progress. Parents are invited to the termly reviews and are fully involved in the process of agreeing new targets for learning or behaviour. Parents feel that pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because of the perceptive and careful work of the school.

59. Since the last inspection the school has continued to become more accessible and welcoming to parents, reports and the overall quality of information have improved and the effectiveness of the school's links with parents is now very good.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. The headteacher has worked relentlessly to raise standards of attainment, achieve stability of staffing and a learning and caring ethos where everyone is valued and treated with respect. She has led the school through a very difficult period when serious weaknesses were identified by the previous inspection and major problems concerning senior staff performance and long term absence had to be overcome. Through her clear vision, strong team-building and determination she has helped her colleagues to improve the school substantially. A good instance is the application for, and achievement of, Investors in People status, which she chose to pursue in order to create a teaching culture whereby teachers shared good practice and welcomed constructive advice from their colleagues.

61. The senior management team and co-ordinators manage the school well and ensure the raising of attainment. Subject and other co-ordinators have had training to develop their roles. As well as developing schemes of work and supporting colleagues, they play an important part in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance. They observe lessons, examine pupils' work and teachers' planning and collect data from tests and other sources. The senior management team analyses this information carefully to guide the choice and amendment of priorities on a regular basis. This process is thorough, rigorous and makes a major contribution to the effectiveness of the school. The team has benefited from management training funded by the EAZ, and the opportunities for comparing notes with colleagues in other schools.

62. There is a detailed but well-explained School Development and Improvement Plan, which includes all relevant factors to support its successful implementation. Priorities are appropriate, and objectives and strategies for their achievement are clear and realistic. The plan is regularly reviewed and amended, and the governing body has opportunities to contribute to it.

63. The governing body is well informed about the work of the school through reports from the headteacher, a range of formal and informal meetings, and structured visits to the school by some governors. Four committees cover the key aspects of the school. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are supportive to the school, some particularly so. To contribute more effectively to shaping the direction of the school and to supporting the staff as a "critical friend", however, a greater commitment of time is needed by some governors to school and governor development activities. Statutory responsibilities are met.

64. Resources are used strategically, with clear links between spending and priorities identified in the School Development Plan, through monitoring, appraisal and senior management team assessments. This applies equally to spending of Standards Funds on teacher and management training and on funds from the Education Action Zone (EAZ), which have enabled developments such as teacher to teacher monitoring, the purchase of literacy materials, computers and software, and the first day calling system for non-attenders.

65. Best value principles are applied well, both in an efficient and effective financial management system and more broadly in school management. The annual budget is built up from identified priorities and unavoidable expenditure, and is fully debated with staff and governors before it is finalised. The school checks on comparative school performance through contacts with other local schools, and makes appropriate adjustments to its provision. The staff regularly challenge each other to find ways of raising standards. Multiple tenders for purchases are used wherever possible, and the new local cheque facility is exploited to achieve the biggest possible discounts. Parents and pupils, through the School Council, are consulted about features of the school's service in order to seek continuous improvement.

66. The number, qualifications and experience of teacher staffing are appropriate, and provision of non-teaching staff is good. There are plenty of learning assistants who are well-briefed and trained, and fulfil a very valuable role, particularly with pupils with special educational needs. New staff undergo a careful induction process with mentoring by appropriate colleagues.

67. The special needs team manages the deployment of staff and the use of funds very well. During the past two years, its policies and monitoring have resulted in a reduction in the proportion of pupils on the special needs register from over one third of the school to just over a quarter. The part time special educational needs co-ordinator maintains very comprehensive and detailed pupil records and provides good quality guidance to staff on the support of pupils. The school's policy is firmly centred on supporting pupils within classes through accurate identification and support. The governor recently appointed to maintain an overview of the special educational needs provision has already spent time in the school and reported to the Governing Body.

68. The accommodation is spacious and has most of the facilities the school requires, although there is no music room. The school library is attractive and well laid out. It is not, however, easily accessible, because of its distance from the main building and the need to keep it locked. There is adequate playground and playing field space, and the school surroundings are pleasing. Display in the school is of a very good quality; it stimulates interest and effectively demonstrates to pupils that their work is valued highly.

69. Learning resources are generally adequate and of good quality. The library has a good stock of up-to-date books that are well catalogued, and the school has generous provision of up-to-date computers and software, funded in part by the EAZ and Essex LEA; however, classroom computers need to be used more often to support subjects across the curriculum. Literacy resources are adequate, but have to be shared between classes, which constrains timetabling to some extent. The EAZ has also provided funds for literacy support, which have been effectively used.

70. The school's aims and values are well defined, and are reflected very clearly in all of its work.

PROVISION FOR HEARING IMPAIRED PUPILS

71. Provision for the inclusion of pupils with hearing impairment is excellent. This shows further improvement on the very good provision reported at the last inspection. The pupils attend main school lessons or the Unit for different subjects according to their needs. There are two attractive and spacious rooms and the excellent displays demonstrate some of the outstanding work completed by the pupils in the Unit.

72. Pupils register with their main school classes and attend main school lessons such as design technology (including food technology), ICT, PE and swimming. They are all fully integrated at all social times, such as break, lunch, assembly and they have the option to attend lunch-time clubs. Pupils are included, and supported, in main school subject lessons to suit their developing skills and needs. The balance between lessons attended in the main school with support and in the Unit is carefully planned and frequently reviewed.

73. Most pupils attend the Unit for their Literacy lessons; the remainder are integrated into the mainstream lessons. Achievements in understanding and communicating are very good. Very soon after arriving at the school, pupils show they understand classroom routines. Their attitudes to learning and their behaviour are excellent, they gain in confidence and answer

questions supporting their speech with signs. By the time they are nine they make very good progress. For example they speak in complete sentences when answering questions and speak up in main school classes. By the end of the key stage they communicate well, supporting their speech with excellent signing skills, and continue to make very good progress.

74. Pupils' achievements in written skills are also very good. They work on sentence formation and grammar, handwriting and imaginative writing. They show improvement in all these areas soon after they arrive at the school. Their work is planned around stimulating themes and they produce excellent imaginative writing and poems, supported by outstanding art. Pupils show good progress in their spelling despite difficulties presented when they are learning the phonetic code. They show very good progress in their handwriting, producing well-formed letters of a consistent size, and their writing is very well presented. Many pupils make good progress in reading, despite the difficulties this presents for many of them. Some pupils achieve Level 4 in the English Standard Attainment Tests (SAT s) at the end of Key Stage 2.

75. Pupils' achievements in numeracy are also very good. When they start at the school for example they have had little experience of using a ruler for measuring or to draw accurate lines. Within a few weeks they draw lines of a given length and measure the lines of the drawing of a house and record their answers accurately. They also show progress in working independently and multiply numbers by two in their heads. By the time they are 9 they have made very good progress. For example they estimate and then measure furniture in the class using a metre ruler to see if they are accurate. They continue to make very good progress and by the end of the key stage show a good understanding of mathematical concepts, supported by being able to use a practical approach to everything they do.

76. Pupils' achievements in science and other subjects are also very good. In science pupils use practical materials to understand scientific concepts. For example they stick bits of "material", such as buttons and a paper clip, onto a table to show that they do or do not conduct electricity, and they correctly identify whether the materials are metal, plastic or glass. Pupils integrated into mainstream lessons take part in science lessons and keep up well with others in the class. Most pupils attend information communication technology, design technology (including food technology) and physical education lessons with their main school class groups and they are included into the class in a "seamless" way so that they do not stand out. Other lessons are also taught in the Unit. The art produced by the pupils attending Unit lessons is excellent. For example the pupils produce a wall sized, group weaving picture, that is inspired by the work of the artist Monet. The work in other subjects is also very good.

77. The pupils' attitudes to their learning and their behaviour are excellent. They consistently try hard and respond to the varied ways that work is presented to them to help their learning. They are highly motivated and sustain their concentration throughout all lessons, despite the extreme effort involved in understanding and participating fully. All work involves language and this presents problems for them at every point of the day and yet they show a cheerful and quite exceptional determination to overcome their difficulties. They have excellent relationships with all teachers in the Unit and respect each other's difficulties and differences in a mature way. Pupils who are new to the school settle quickly to the routines and show an increase in confidence.

78. Teaching of lessons in the Unit is consistently very good. Teachers and educational communicators have very good subject knowledge and understanding of each individual pupil's needs. They have excellent signing skills, and use them selectively, depending on the child's particular needs at the time. They use good, dramatic, expressive delivery with distinct

speech formation and humour. The methods and resources used are excellent, involving themes and practical elements to ensure the pupils can fully understand. For example in a Literacy Hour lesson around the book "Handa's Surprise", the teacher produced her own "surprise" of a bowl of fruit, which was cut up and tasted by the pupils. At each stage of the experience the pupils' vocabulary was skilfully extended. As they were eating different fruits words such as "crunchy", "pip", and "suck" were established and pupils were helped to say and remember the names of the fruit, such as pineapple, by clapping the syllables "pine-apple". Throughout the lesson signing was used to support speech. Questioning is excellent and ensures that each pupil is at the very edge of their new learning in terms of subject concepts, language and physical skills at all times.

79. Unit teachers attend main school planning meetings, and the curriculum for all subjects, apart from literacy and numeracy, is an adapted form of the main school curriculum. In this way pupils who attend the Unit for most of their lessons, for example when they first arrive at the school, are ensured a broad and balanced curriculum that is suited to their individual needs. The planning, around themes, to ensure that all lessons are stimulating, have a practical element, and encourage signing and speech of key concepts is excellent. All pupils attend the Unit for literacy and numeracy hour lessons. The lessons follow national guidelines and the arrangement ensures that all work is individualised to meet the wide range of ages and needs of the pupils. The two year programme of the main school is shadowed by the Unit. However when several year groups and both key stages are taught together it is difficult to ensure that the planning of the work is suitably different for each year group. The excellent individualised questioning does, on the other hand, help to minimise this problem. Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) are good and clearly indicate long term and short term objectives. However they are not always easily measurable, lacking in some examples time scales or number of repetitions that would constitute success.

80. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Displays of pupils' art work around and outside the Unit rooms, including work inspired by other artists, is outstanding and helps provide a stimulating environment and atmosphere for the pupils to work in. Pupils also attend music therapy especially designed for them to gain the most from the experience and some show a good sense of rhythm. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their difficulties and those of others, and ways of overcoming them. For example some pupils attend Circle Time with their peers, with an educational communicator. Others work on "PATHS", which is a personal and social programme produced for pupils with hearing impairment to help them acknowledge and learn to cope with their feelings and frustrations, and recognise and empathise with those of others. Assemblies encourage all pupils to sign, for example saying good-morning and to accompany the hymns. Pupils are helped with their moral and social development by the excellent role models and clear guidelines provided by the Unit staff. All pupils are encouraged to attend the school clubs at lunch-times although there are still difficulties in attending after school clubs. However, most pupils do not choose to attend, probably because they prefer to relax as the additional concentration required of them in all social situations is so great.

81. The Unit has very good contact with parents. As well as the very good relationships with the main school and parents, pupils with a hearing impairment have a "Home-School Contact" book and there are Parent Meetings held each term, as well as encouragement to make contact with the Unit staff whenever it is wanted. Provision for welfare, health and safety of the pupils is very good. For example teachers in the main school and for

Assemblies always wear their microphones so that pupils using Radio Aids are able to hear. Pupils are encouraged to be as independent as possible in managing their own hearing impairment. Assessment is very good. Records of what pupils "know, understand and can do" in different areas are noted down as they are observed and then transferred to a recording system. The use of day-to-day assessment of what pupils understand is excellent and can be seen to shape the way in which questions are formed and what is taught next, enabling pupils to make very good progress within all lessons and over time. Pupils' personal development is also well supported by the very good relationships with staff and the setting of targets and additional curriculum such as "PATHS".

82. The leadership and management of the provision for pupils with hearing impairment is very good. The teacher in charge was not able to be present at the time of the inspection. However the other staff, and the very good procedures and systems, show that all aspects of the Code of Practice for pupils with Special Educational Needs are fully met. The teacher in charge is part of a Management Committee and has helped to develop a clear direction for the provision across the school. The accommodation in the Unit and one other classroom is acoustically treated and the school is carpeted throughout. The staff all work very well together as a Team and share aims and objectives for all their work. Teaching to include pupils in main stream classes is developing; the Unit staff are all committed to this and are also aware of the need to ensure a balance between inclusion and Unit teaching for each individual pupil to ensure all needs are met.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. In order to raise standards further, the governing body, headteacher and staff should :
1. develop arrangements for assessment in subjects other than English, mathematics and

science to ensure continuity and progression, by :

- drawing up and agreeing manageable procedures for each subject
 - ensuring they are consistently employed
2. provide more opportunities for work on using and applying mathematics and data handling, by
- reviewing the balance of lesson content
 - developing a range of appropriate opportunities for use with different year groups
3. provide more opportunities for work on scientific enquiry, by :
- reviewing the balance of lesson content
 - developing a range of appropriate opportunities for use with different year groups
4. develop the systematic use of literacy skills across the curriculum, and raise standards of presentation of written work, by :
- establishing appropriate uses of literacy in other subjects and standards to be expected
 - monitoring the use of literacy skills in other subjects
5. identify higher attaining pupils consistently and ensure their work is sufficiently challenging, by :
- ensuring that higher attaining pupils are identified on entry to school
 - using the more demanding elements of the National Curriculum consistently when planning lessons
 - setting targets and monitoring progress towards them.

In addition, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the post-inspection action plan :

- more use should be made of ICT across the curriculum
- speaking skills need more opportunities for development
- there is a need for greater time commitment to the school by some governors.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	88

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	15	49	36			

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	194
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	39

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	57

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	34	31	65

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	23	21	28
	Girls	20	18	20
	Total	43	39	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	66	60	75
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	19	19
	Girls	13	14	14
	Total	28	33	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	44	52	52
	National	68	69	75

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	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	194
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.7
Average class size	31.0

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	201

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
	£
Total income	603121
Total expenditure	578327
Expenditure per pupil	2653
Balance brought forward from previous year	60827
Balance carried forward to next year	85621

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	217
Number of questionnaires returned	117

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35.0	59.0	6.0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	32.0	55.0	7.0	1.0	6.0
Behaviour in the school is good.	28.0	56.0	11.0	1.0	4.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17.0	51.0	23.0	3.0	5.0
The teaching is good.	36.0	50.0	6.0	1.0	7.0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30.0	44.0	17.0	3.0	6.0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50.0	39.0	6.0	1.0	3.0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47.0	45.0	5.0	1.0	2.0
The school works closely with parents.	27.0	49.0	15.0	2.0	7.0
The school is well led and managed.	43.0	52.0	2.0	1.0	3.0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29.0	58.0	7.0	1.0	5.0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21.0	46.0	21.0	6.0	6.0

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

84. Standards in English overall are broadly in line with national average levels, a significant improvement from when the school was last inspected.

85. In the national tests, pupils' attainments at eleven have risen substantially, from 32% achieving the expected standard, level 4 or above, in 1997 (well below national averages) to 66% in 1999, which is still below the national average, but above that achieved by pupils in schools with pupils from a similar background. 11% of pupils attained the higher level 5, well below the percentage expected nationally. Although girls still outperform boys in the tests, the gap has narrowed since 1996 and is now insignificant. Overall achievement is good.

86. Most pupils attain nationally expected levels in listening, reading and writing, but below national levels in speaking. In some lessons, higher attaining pupils could achieve more with greater challenge. The oldest pupils are able to express in speech ideas, views and describe experiences with some confidence to other pupils, but in some cases with limited vocabulary and range of expression, and incorrect grammar. However listening is good; pupils pay close attention to teachers and their peers in, for example, a class discussion about creating impact in a newspaper article. Most write with a well formed, joined script, spelling most words accurately. They use imaginative and interesting words and phrases, with the full range of punctuation. Some pupils, for example, produced some lively modernised versions of the witches' scene from Macbeth. Pupils write effectively for different purposes, such as describing their making of sunglasses or writing letters to Council officers, but their reviews of books lacked critical rigour. Presentation is sometimes unsatisfactory, with insufficient care taken, and work is not always completed. Word knowledge is variable throughout the school; for example some Year 3 pupils could explain "swivel" and "slanted", but some Year 5 pupils did not know the word "climate" or what colour ivory was.

87. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of attainment from the ability to decode simple words to fluency with well-developed expression, but develop their reading satisfactorily. By the age of 11 most pupils read with some appreciation of characters and themes, and are developing the skills of inference and deduction; for example, most can make a reasonable attempt at predicting outcomes. They are very familiar with library cataloguing systems, can skim and scan, and use aids to information retrieval such as glossaries and the index. Home/school reading diaries vary in quality; in the best instances, both parents and teachers comment on reading, and objectives are set for improvement.

88. Pupils with special educational needs are carefully taken into account in teachers' planning and receive very good support from well-briefed learning assistants, which enables them to make good progress.

89. Pupils enjoy their English lessons. They are attentive for long periods of time, show strong interest, and respond well to questions. They behave well and co-operate with their teacher, although one or two classes can get excited and then take time to settle down again. They settle down fairly quickly to given tasks and most can work with little supervision from the teacher, although can be noisy. They get on with each other very well, and in general work hard; a few get little work done.

90. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good, and is good overall. This is an improvement from when the school was last inspected. Lessons are well planned and prepared, and topics and tasks are well judged. Teachers create a good working atmosphere in most lessons through a positive relationship with the pupils, good use of praise and very careful adherence to the school's behaviour policy. Most make astute use of questions, and of pupils' comments, for example a Year 3 pupil noticing that a picture contained all the stages of a frog's life cycle, to draw out learning points and to assess progress. The final part of the lesson is generally well used, but less so when it is not clearly supporting the learning achieved.

91. Teachers' marking of pupils' work usually includes helpful and interested comments, but occasionally is less encouraging. Targets set for pupils are well-understood by them and make a valuable contribution to their learning. Teachers' expectations are appropriately high in relation to behaviour and the levels of achievement of most pupils, but are not always high enough for some high-attaining pupils, who require a challenge that is better adapted to their needs. Very effective provision is made for pupils who have special educational needs, through well-briefed learning support assistants and good differentiation of tasks, so that these pupils learn very well. More consideration needs to be given to developing pupils' speaking skills. Almost no ICT was seen in use in English lessons during the inspection.

92. The school library is attractive and well laid out, and has a good stock of up-to-date books that are well catalogued. It is not, however, easily accessible, because of its distance from the main building and the need for it to be kept locked. Book provision has recently been substantially improved, with a good deal of funding from the EAZ that has been well used.

93. There is a very hard-working and effective co-ordinator for the subject, who has initiated and supported many developments in teaching and learning of literacy, including the development of the scheme of work, the school records of learning outcomes, planning, monitoring, and the purchase and organisation of resources. Hard work by all the staff, along with the very positive impact of the National Literacy Scheme, has led to a much better picture than when the school was last inspected, and one that is still improving.

MATHEMATICS

94. Pupils' attainment at the age of 11 shows steady improvement overall, in line with the national trend, since the previous inspection. However, the 1999 results show that the percentage of pupils attaining the nationally expected standards, level 4 and above, was well below the national averages and that this was due principally to the small proportion achieving the higher levels. Standards in tests are still below that of similar schools, but the provisional data for this year indicates a further improvement.

95. The school has carried out a thorough analysis of its results and identified a number of contributory factors that are being addressed. There have been a historically high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, which the school is working hard to reduce. A number of staff changes and long term absences have affected teaching provision. In addition, a large group of pupils are entering the school with limited mathematical knowledge and skills including many who have not reached the standard expected nationally at seven. This has meant that learning has not proceeded at the rate that might be expected. An example of this is the high proportion of pupils in Year 3 who have to be shown how to measure in centimetres before the lesson can proceed.

96. The findings of the current inspection confirm that standards are rising with most

older pupils achieving the standards expected for their age. Lesson observations and the analysis of last year's work indicate that pupils are entering the school at below the level expected for pupils of their age. The standards achieved overall are therefore satisfactory, a marked improvement from the previous inspection.

97. Recent monitoring and the system of collaborative appraisal, funded and supported by the Educational Action Zone (EAZ) initiative, identified the use of questioning by teachers and the mental starter to the numeracy session as key areas for development. Recent in-service training to address this and a focus on the grouping of higher attaining pupils have contributed to this year's improvement in results

98. Over time, pupils build steadily on their number skills. Pupils in Year 3 count in 5's to 50 and back and can double numbers up to 30. They understand halves and quarters, and can use them to read times on a clock. They appreciate that non-standard units of measure are unreliable and are beginning to measure lengths in centimetres. Year 4 pupils show fast recall of number bonds to 20. They estimate the size of objects and distances in metres and centimetres by comparison with known lengths before measuring to confirm their hypothesis. Pupils recognise the equivalence of 1.20m and 1 metre 20 centimetres. In Year 5 pupils show good recall of basic number facts as they quickly halve or double number numbers up to 100. They can find a quarter, third or half of a given number and segment regular shapes to show proportions of these. They understand the significance of the three and the four in $\frac{3}{4}$ and convert $\frac{7}{4}$ into $1\frac{3}{4}$. By Year 6 pupils can convert fractions such as $\frac{1}{10}$ and $\frac{1}{100}$ into decimals and vice versa as well as position them on a number line. They show good recall of the basic number facts and can count forwards and back in 2's, 25's, 0.2's and 0.25's. They understand that $\frac{4}{12}$ is the same as $\frac{1}{3}$.

99. Throughout the school, pupils benefit from the carefully planned tasks of the numeracy strategy. These are well matched to the needs of the majority of pupils and those with special educational needs. A higher attainer group is also identified within each class. These are frequently large, and undertake tasks that do not provide sufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils. The skills of using and applying mathematics and data handling are not well represented. There are few examples on display or in pupils' work of graphs, tables or other pictorial representations of information or of mathematical investigations that would provide opportunities for pupils to undertake independent learning and extend their intellectual capabilities.

100. Pupils make satisfactory use of their numeracy skills in other subjects but this occurs largely incidentally rather than as a deliberate intention. Year 6 pupils prepare symmetrical faces for art and record the results of a packed lunch survey for work on healthy eating. Whilst a graphical chart is used to record the number of times a Year 5 class read at home, computers are rarely used to support learning in mathematics. Pupils' mathematical work is displayed around the school and this and teachers' displays helps to raise the profile of the subject.

101. Pupils throughout the school show positive attitudes to mathematics. They listen very carefully and respond promptly, with evident enjoyment, to the mental questions that form the initial part of their lessons. They are eager to explain the methods they use and to increase the speed of their calculations. Pupils' work in lessons is well presented in their exercise books. It is dated and well laid out showing that pupils take pride in their work, with most forming numerals neatly and correctly. However, this is not so often the case with worksheets, or in the work from last year which is of more variable quality. Pupils' respond well to the praise and encouragement of teachers and assistants. They make good use and take good care of their equipment. They are well behaved in lessons and work well together maintaining concentration for extended periods of time.

102. The quality of teaching ranges from very good to satisfactory, and is good overall. Lessons follow the structure of the numeracy strategy. Teachers lead the introductory mental and oral sessions well, involving pupils in a brisk exercise of their number bond and tables knowledge or building on their prior knowledge of fractions and decimals. In the best sessions, teachers encourage pupils to explain how they achieve their answers and encourage the rest of the class to follow these explanations closely. In all sessions teachers make good use of careful, targeted questioning to assess, consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. The purpose of the lessons is shared effectively with pupils. Clear instructions and explanation of ensures they have a very clear understanding of the work to be achieved and of how to accomplish it.

103. Teachers manage their pupils very well and sustain a brisk pace of work. This ensures that pupils are well motivated and work hard. In a very few instances teachers show some insecurity in their explanation of tasks or choice of resources. When this happens, pupils choose shapes that are unsuitable for segmenting evenly for example, and time is lost as this is corrected. Teachers make good and efficient use of resources, including the support assistants, who are well briefed on lesson content and their role. They also ensure that provision for pupils with learning difficulties or hearing impairment is very good with pupils well supported and given help with work designed specially for them. In most instances, good use is made of the final session to consolidate and reinforce learning goals but it is not yet being used to show pupils how it will support the next steps in their learning.

104. Leadership in the subject is good. Analysis of data from both monitoring and a range of good ongoing assessment procedures provides the co-ordinator with a clear picture of the subject's strengths and weaknesses. The process of moderating pupils' work for inclusion in the subject portfolio improves the reliability of teacher assessments. Each class has a range of appropriate equipment including a group kit funded by the EAZ, but not all classes have sufficient copies of the newly chosen scheme or of more specialist equipment. The school has recently installed software and completed staff training on an integrated learning system that will improve pupils numeracy skills. This is targeted at raising attainment in Year 3 and higher attainers in Year 6, and is an EAZ initiative.

SCIENCE

105. In the 1999 national tests, the number of pupils achieving the nationally expected standard was below average. This was because the number of pupils achieving level 5 was well below average; the number of pupils who achieved the expected standard was slightly above the national average. Pupils' attainment was above that in most comparable schools.

106. Analysis of younger pupils' work and observation of lessons indicate that attainment on entry to the school is below average. Year 6 pupils reached standards similar to those in most comparable schools. Standards have improved consistently over the last four years, and the number of pupils who reach higher than expected levels in tests has increased, although it remains below the national average figure. Attainment is weaker in investigative science than it is in other areas of the subject, and this is adversely affecting overall results. The school has recognised this and has recently introduced a new approach to teaching investigative science. The system is working well and was raising standards during the inspection. The pupils' relatively low attainment in writing in science also has a negative impact on the quality of their work. Pupils demonstrate orally that they know far more than their written work suggests.

107. By the age of 11, pupils demonstrate sound understanding of electricity. They are fully

aware of its uses and dangers. They can construct series and parallel circuits and draw them using the correct symbols in circuit diagrams. As part of their design and technology work they use their understanding of conduction and insulation to help them make switches and to make a steady hand game with a buzzer. Pupils develop a sound understanding of the need to plan fair tests, and record their results in an appropriate variety of ways, although this rarely involves the use of computers. They are generally able to write sensible conclusions, but the higher attainers have yet to develop the ability to give reasons for their observations and explain unexpected results. These qualities would enable them to achieve higher levels. Pupils have a good understanding of the effect of diet and exercise on the body. They know which are the main organs in the body and understand what they do. Most pupils understand why we have night and day and they know how various forces work. The amount of written work produced is limited, but pupils learn a lot through discussion and investigation, which is not recorded.

108. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. The recently updated scheme of work ensures that they consistently build upon what they already know and can do. Pupils with special educational needs are taken into account in teachers planning and receive good support, which enables them to make good progress. Higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and the school realises it needs to address this issue.

109. Pupils' attitudes towards science are generally positive. They particularly enjoy practical investigations and are able to work co-operatively in pairs and small groups to carry them out. Occasionally, their enthusiasm means that they become very noisy and fail to put enough thought and effort into the accompanying written work. When this happens, it adversely affects the standards achieved. In structured situations, the pupils respond very well. They are very keen to ask and answer questions. On occasions, they show real enthusiasm and a desire to find out more, for example, when investigating what might affect the brightness of a bulb in an electrical circuit. They listen well to each other and to teachers in formal teaching situations, but teachers sometimes find it difficult to regain their attention once they become involved in practical activities. Pupils generally do the minimum written work required and many lack a pride in the presentation of their work. They find independent research difficult and the level of their literacy skills sometimes limits their interest and achievement in this aspect. Pupils share out responsibilities well when working in groups, and are confident when telling the rest of the class what they have done and found out.

110. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and often it is good. All teachers have a secure understanding of the subject. This enables them to provide pupils with clear explanations and demonstrations, which help them quickly understand new ideas. Recent staff training on questioning has enabled all teachers to use questioning very effectively to check what pupils have understood and to get them to explain and justify their ideas. Teachers are well organised and are clear about what they intend pupils to learn in each lesson. Teachers manage pupils well. They consistently use the schools' behaviour strategy, and pupils are fully aware of what is expected of them. All teachers are quick to praise and reward positive attitudes and good behaviour. This has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes. They are confident to volunteer answers to questions, as they know their contributions will be valued even if they are wrong. Teachers plan activities which are interesting and which link well to work in other subjects whenever possible. Work is frequently marked and teachers use end of unit tests to check pupils' understanding and to measure progress. Teachers make good use of resources available, although analysis of work indicates that the computer is not used as much as it could be. Learning support assistants and other adults in the classrooms are well briefed and make a positive contribution to pupils learning. Whenever possible visits are made to places of scientific interest, and visitors are invited into school to make the subject more interesting.

111. The recently appointed co-ordinator has a good understanding of the subject and has already correctly identified the areas requiring further development. In service training has already taken place and more is planned to further improve the quality of teaching in the subject. There are effective systems for monitoring teaching and learning and the school is carefully analysing attainment to identify and target areas of weakness. The school has an appropriate action plan for the future development of the subject and an awareness of the need to develop literacy skills through science.

ART

112. Art is an important part of the curriculum, and pupils are achieving standards that are well above those of pupils of the same age nationally. At the last inspection, standards achieved matched national averages, so there has been considerable improvement. Some of the work produced by pupils of all ages is of an outstanding standard. The quality of many of the displays around the school, for example on the study of wood, is exceptionally high and makes a valuable contribution to the provision of a stimulating and interesting learning environment.

113. Pupils achieve well in all aspects of the National Curriculum for art, but they do particularly well in the investigating and making side of the subject. Pupils have studied the work of Picasso in detail and have produced very good paintings in his style. They have had the chance to study art from other cultures, and have produced their own Aboriginal style paintings. Pupils have particularly well developed close observational skills and they pay closer attention to fine detail as they move through the school. Pupils in Years 3 and 5 have produced very good pastel drawings of kiwi fruit. While both produce standards well above those expected for their age, the Year 5 pupils have built on their previous experience and their skills are more developed than those of pupils in Year 3. As they move through the school, pupils develop skills in an increasingly wide range of media such as paints, charcoal, inks and pastels, clay and modroc to produce a variety of three-dimensional artefacts, such as hedgehogs in Year 3 and candle-holders in Year 6. Pupils develop an unusually broad and creative range of skills using textiles, including printing, tie-dye and batik. They work collaboratively to produce large-scale wall hangings using different weaving techniques, some of which are quite stunning. Work on display indicates that pupils have well-developed colour-mixing techniques using different media. They use tone and shade to good effect and pencil techniques to show texture. Pupils also learn to apply a range of embroidery stitches using beads and sequins with eye-catching results. There are lunchtime clubs for textile work.

114. Pupils display very good attitudes towards this subject. They clearly enjoy it and put in a lot of effort. They watch teachers' demonstrations carefully and try hard to replicate accurately what they have seen. This enables them to acquire a wide range of skills and knowledge at a good rate. Where pupils have been taught by the co-ordinator, they have been inspired to be particularly creative and, at the same time, careful when using their skills. Pupils use the resources carefully and show responsibility when tidying away at the end of lessons.

115. Few art lessons took place during the inspection but there was extensive evidence of teaching and learning in photographs and display. The quality of teaching is very good overall. The co-ordinator's teaching is excellent. Teachers have secure understanding of the subject and take full advantage of the training and advice offered by the co-ordinator. Teachers plan a very interesting range of activities which stimulate pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Many activities are closely linked to work in other subjects. Teachers are well-organised, and their planning clearly specifies the intended learning aims. They provide competent

demonstrations of new skills, and comments during lessons help pupils to improve their work. There is no formal system of assessment at the moment, but the co-ordinator plans to introduce one based on QCA guidance. Teachers make very good use of the school's wide range of resources.

116. The co-ordinator provides an invaluable role model, monitors work done in the subject and provides training in various skills and in-class support in order to further raise standards and staff confidence. She has sensible plans for the future development of the subject and sets achievable targets. The co-ordinator also ensures that the quality of display around the school is of a very high standard and that it represents work in all subjects.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

117. The previous inspection found that overall progress in the subject was unsatisfactory. Limited time meant the National Curriculum strands and requirements of the subject were not covered. In the intervening period the school followed national guidance that allowed a reduction of focus on foundation subjects whilst concentrating on the core. Consequently, the coverage of the subject has not progressed as might have been expected. Hence, whilst in the lessons observed pupils' attainments are broadly in line with those expected nationally it is evident that they have not developed skills and knowledge in the range and depth specified in the national curriculum programme of study.

118. This is well illustrated by the few examples that the school produced of pupils' work from last year. These show the limited experiences pupils have had in developing their skills of working with a range of techniques and materials. Younger pupils had used cutting and joining skills to make sunglasses to their own design and produced clay tiles and animals in conjunction with science and art work. Older pupils had tested biscuits, considered and produced recipes and designed packaging for their product. All of this work shows a good attention to detail and pride in the finished article, but its scope is limited.

119. Younger pupils are currently make working slide and push switches, before designing burglar alarms. In preparation, Year 4 pupils disassembled and identified the circuit and switch in a torch. However, they were insufficiently experienced in construction and knew too little about the properties of materials to design or make a free selection of materials to make their own switch. Year 6 pupils make free-standing structures to support axles and pulleys that will form the basis of motorised fairground rides such as carousels. They constantly consider and adapt their design as they work to ensure that the axle will move freely, the pulley fit firmly and the drive belt link the pulley and motor. Although they show good attention to detail in sanding the wooden edges to ensure a good finish, their making skills are not so well developed. A significant proportion have to be shown how to hold a saw and use a bench hook to hold their work, or how to glue and strengthen joints.

120. Links to other subjects are frequently made. For example Year 5 pupils follow a design brief to make colourful and varied masks. Whilst those in Year 4 draw on their knowledge of circuits from science to wire their batteries, switches and buzzers into working circuits.

121. In the two lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good, and pupils were making good progress in their learning. They learned to use tools safely and correctly and how to make strong, secure joints. The secure subject knowledge of the part time teacher ensures pupils develop their skills through a range of well thought out activities, for example when Year 4 pupils make a free choice of possible switch components from a limited selection. The co-ordinator supports the class teachers well by working alongside them. Questioning is well used to develop pupils' understanding and to challenge their thinking as they consider

how to strengthen structures, or check that their circuit will work. Good attention is paid to safety issues, and pupils use tools and equipment with care. Pupils' with special educational needs are well supported by staff and other pupils. They are able to take part in all the planned activities, making good progress in relation to their ability.

122. Since the beginning of this term and in response to Curriculum 2000, the school has ensured that design technology is suitably timetabled, and is implementing an outline scheme of work based on recent national guidance. Carefully chosen topics support improvements in the coverage of skills and ensure progression and continuity within the subject. The school now needs to put assessment arrangements in place to support this process. This will also help to ensure that the skills and competence of older pupils are being suitably extended within the two-year cycle. Links are being identified to other subject areas, and care is being taken to ensure that the subject has a clearly identified place in the school's work, and that pupils' skills are developed. The part time teacher who co-ordinates the subject has taken staff training sessions and is currently trialling the new scheme of work. Recent additions to the range of materials and tools available have improved the quality of provision. However, the school still needs more construction kits, artefacts for disassembly and a wider range of tools. The use of computers, particularly for control, is largely undeveloped.

GEOGRAPHY

123. It was only possible to observe a few geography lessons during the inspection week. Evidence was also gathered from a close scrutiny of current and last years' work in books and on display around the school, scrutiny of teachers planning files and discussions with the headteacher.

124. At the last inspection, pupils' standards were below nationally expected levels and progress was unsatisfactory. This has improved significantly since pupils are now working at a level similar to that of pupils of the same age nationally. They lack real breadth in their current understanding as the school, following national guidelines, opted not to teach the full requirements last year in order to concentrate on raising standards in literacy and numeracy. Pupils have sufficient depth of knowledge and understanding in aspects studied. In lessons observed during the inspection, pupils made sound progress. By the age of 11, pupils have a good understanding of types of settlements and know how they are different. They can give geographical reasons for the development of towns and cities. They are able to compare the similarities and differences between Basildon and the small village of Stanton, in the Peak in Derbyshire. They have used information in books and videos to help them account for the growth of Basildon. Pupils can use grid references to locate places on maps. They understand how to use compass directions and know about lines of latitude, longitude, the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn and the Equator. They understand how proximity to the equator affects climates. Younger pupils can use maps and aerial photographs to explain and account for land use along the River Nile. Older pupils are developing an understanding of the importance of water in the world and know why some countries are reliant on irrigation. Pupils' skills of geographical enquiry are developing at a good rate since the increased amount of time being spent on geography, and, the use of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) scheme of work which ensures pupils consistently build upon previous knowledge and skills.

125. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are generally positive. They enjoy finding out about other places, particularly when they are brought to life through the use of videos and television programmes. They enjoy using maps and atlases, but they produce a minimum of written work. They generally listen well to teachers, are keen to ask and answer questions and are consequently far more knowledgeable than written work suggests. They show good levels of interest in the tasks planned and are keen to take part in any practical activities.

126. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have a sound understanding of the subject and this enables them to provide clear explanations for pupils. Recent planning to ensure the requirements of Curriculum 2000 are met, has improved the time allocated to the subject and the quality of work planned for pupils. Teachers make good use of resources, including the local environment. Whenever possible, they arrange visits to places of geographical interest. Teachers are clear about the learning aims of lessons. These are always shared with the pupils so they always know what they should be aiming for. Teachers pay appropriate attention to the development of literacy and numeracy skills. There is some use of computers to support learning, but the school is aware of the need to develop this further. Teachers mark pupils work regularly and oral comments in lessons often tell them how to improve. However there is no formal system for assessment and the school knows that it needs to introduce one. The school has accurately identified the priorities for the development of the subject and sensible plans are in place to ensure the necessary development takes place.

HISTORY

127. Few history lessons were taught during the inspection. Consequently, evidence to support the main judgements is based on the scrutiny of last year's work, an examination of the schools' planning and looking at displays of work around the schools and in classrooms. Overall, pupils are working at a level similar to that of pupils of the same age nationally. This is an improvement from the last inspection, when pupils were working at levels below those nationally expected. Their breadth of their knowledge is more limited however as the school, following national guidelines, took up the option of not teaching the full programme of study last year in order to concentrate on raising standards in literacy and numeracy.

128. Pupils are developing a sound sense of chronology. They understand the terms 'ancient' and 'modern' times and can produce time lines showing the sequence of important events in the period being studied. The oldest pupils have a good understanding of life in Victorian times and know how it is different to their own lives. The letters they have written indicate that they understand the experience of children who lived then. Pupils have studied a painting of a Victorian railway station in some detail and asked a good range of historical questions. On investigating the answers, they have found out about the development of railways, inventions and clothes during the period. Pupils know about life in Victorian schools and can compare it with their own school. They have also found out about leisure in the Victorian era and appreciate how different it is to their own interests and activities. Pupils have had the chance to use both primary and secondary sources of information in their work and they have worked independently and in groups to carry out historical research at an appropriate level. Younger pupils have learnt about the development of Basildon in their historical study of the local area. They know why it developed and their understanding was given realism by the visit to the Dunton Plotlands, a house that had been preserved exactly as it would have been fifty years ago. They handled historical artefacts such as a wind up gramophone, a mangle and a flat iron, and learnt how life was different fifty years ago and how much easier it is to work in a kitchen now. Current work on the Ancient Greeks is allowing pupils to compare the reliability of different sources of evidence.

129. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, clearly enjoy history, and particularly their visits. Their written work for displays is generally neatly presented, although less pride is taken over their work in their own folders. They show interest in lessons, but become too noisy and inattentive on occasions. Pupils are able to work collaboratively to research information, which they are able to present to the rest of the class. The quantity of written work does not do justice to their knowledge.

130. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have a secure understanding of the subject and this enables them to plan interesting and relevant activities which the pupils enjoy. Planning is now based on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) document and ensures that pupils progressively develop skills and knowledge. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to achieve by the end of each lesson. They share this information with the pupils so that they know what to aim for and this is contributing to the raising of standards. Teachers manage potentially difficult pupils well. They praise pupils for what they have done well, recognise the effort put in and suggest how they can improve. Good use is made of learning resources and pupils have the chance, on a regular basis, to take part in activities that bring history to life for them. The lack of any formal system of assessment means that teachers do not always expect enough of the higher attaining pupils. Only limited use of computers is made to support learning in the subject. Teachers' expectations of the quantity and standard of written work are not always high enough.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

131. The previous inspection report criticised the lack of work done by pupils on information technology, and stated that standards at the age of 11 were below nationally expected levels.

132. The school is working hard to put this right. In the previous school year, the subject co-ordinator was absent on long term sick leave but has now been replaced by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who has already made some impact. A new computer suite has been established with 16 up to date machines, funded in part by the Education Action Zone, and new software. The school has adopted the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) scheme to ensure coverage of the National Curriculum, and continuity and progression in the development of skills and knowledge, supplemented by medium term plans which give guidance on when topics should be introduced. Classes have an hour each per week using the suite.

133. Pupils attain nationally expected levels in the work they do, but do not have enough experience of using ICT across the curriculum. Pupils newly admitted to the school at the age of seven can switch on, and generate and record their ideas in different ways, such as creating tables, drawing and printing colour pictures and producing word-processed text with varied fonts, sizes of script and colours. Older pupil can cut and paste text and use other drafting features, and produce 3 dimensional pie-charts. By the age of 11, pupils can understand and use simple simulation software, for example to create a computer model of the operation of traffic lights, can interrogate the internet and can create a simple spreadsheet to test out alternative solutions and explore number relationships.

134. Pupils are very interested in ICT, take care with the resources used, and learn well from experimentation and problem-solving, working successfully in pairs or threes; some are noisy but nevertheless get the work set done. They co-operate with the teacher and behave well.

135. Teachers introduce their lessons clearly, insisting on good attention from pupils. They manage them pleasantly but firmly, making very good use of the school's behaviour policy when necessary. Lessons and resources are well organised. Learning assistants are well prepared and give very good support. Teachers informally assess pupils' progress, and show appropriate expectations in the levels of work chosen. Teachers' confidence in their subject knowledge is variable but is currently being strengthened through intensive New Opportunities Funding courses. The school has adopted the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) scheme of work, and work will be needed to enable teachers to build it into their plans and ensure continuity and progression. ICT is appropriately a key focus for the

current school development and improvement plan.

136. Almost no computers were seen in use in classrooms, and very little evidence of computer-generated work was seen in pupils' books or on display. The school needs to find more opportunities for using ICT across the curriculum to support other subjects, and to create a culture where the computer is the natural tool for many tasks.

MUSIC

137. The previous inspection report found that standards were low, and that planned activities reflected too low a level of work. Teaching was often unsatisfactory.

138. These weaknesses are being eliminated. Standards achieved in lessons were broadly average, although their content was almost entirely whole class singing; only one brief example of instrumental work was seen, and none of composition. The youngest pupils can sing with reasonable pitch and timing, and pay attention to dynamics and word quality; they can use chime bars with good timing. Older pupils understand singing in unison and rounds; they can manage a sophisticated hymn, such as Eternal Father, with accuracy and expression, and are familiar with a range of genres of music. Older pupils can maintain their own part of a four part song, for example "If you're happy and you know it", and understand how the different parts fit together.

139. Pupils are very attentive and interested, listen well to the teacher and to each other, and offer lots of thoughtful observations. They handle resources well and share properly with each other. They are well-behaved and co-operative with their teacher's instructions.

140. Teaching is satisfactory, and sometimes better. This is a considerable improvement from the last inspection. Teachers introduce lessons well, show enthusiasm and support pupils effectively in improving their skills and knowledge. Teachers lack confidence in their musical knowledge, however, and need to develop it further in order to help pupils to reach higher standards. The school now needs to put assessment arrangements in place to support the improvement in the provision. This will also help to ensure that in the two-year cycle the skills and competence of older pupils are being suitably extended.

141. Teachers use a published scheme which employs recorded music and ensures that pupils progressively develop skills and knowledge. The scheme covers the whole of the National Curriculum. There is a scheme for assessment in music, but this is not being used consistently. The curriculum is usefully enriched by peripatetic instrument teaching, lunchtime recorder groups and a choir. There are also visits to concerts and other productions, and visiting instrumentalists and groups from the senior school and other cultures. Good use is made of the piano and recorded music in assemblies. There is no specialist music room.

142. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and very supportive to her colleagues. She has some non-contact time for monitoring lessons and modelling the teaching of music for other teachers, which helps to develop their confidence.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

143. Pupils make good progress in most lessons and attain standards that are broadly in

line with those expected nationally. It is clear that there has been some improvement since the last inspection when attainment was judged below national expectations in some classes. Pupils find different ways of travelling across the floor and on apparatus as they progress through the school, and develop these movements into sequences that show increasing refinement. They develop appropriate skills in throwing, catching, passing and dodging and begin to apply these effectively to tactical mini-games of netball and football. All year groups attend the local baths on a regular rolling basis. By the end of Year 6 most swim in excess of the 25 metres required by the National Curriculum. A high proportion can swim considerably further, and in good style.

144. The quality of teaching is good in most lessons, and satisfactory in the remainder. This is an improvement on the last inspection when it was judged unsatisfactory overall. Teachers give high priority to safety. They ensure that lessons begin with a warm up before energetic activity and that apparatus is moved safely and sensibly. Most teachers remind pupils of the effects of exercise on their heart, lungs and muscles, but pupils are not often encouraged to check or consider these. Feedback is used well by teachers to encourage pupils to refine their movements and to reflect on their performance. For example, in a Year 5 class gymnastics lesson, pupils watch one another to identify symmetry in their movements. This helps pupils to identify how well they are doing and how they might improve.

145. In the more successful lessons, teachers choose imaginative activities that are well matched to the abilities of their pupils. These capture their enthusiasm and ensure that pupils respond well. Year 3 pupils begin by playing a game of fox and hens. They twist and turn with great glee to avoid capture, and in the process learn how to dodge opponents and the importance of teamwork. In the best lessons, the teacher knows when to intervene to increase or modify the difficulty of the task maintaining pupils' interest and improving their skills. Support assistants make a valuable contribution to lessons, particularly through the support and encouragement that they provide to hearing impaired pupils and others with special educational needs.

146. The school offers a good range of extra curricular activities. During the year, there are teams and clubs for football, netball, gym and athletics. The school also draws on outside expertise to provide for cricket coaching and is seeking a similar arrangement for football. The school participates in a range of competitions with local schools. At the time of the last inspection, the lack of outdoor adventurous activities was a weakness. The school now has plans for a residential visit later this year, which will provide an opportunity for these.

147. The new co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and committed to improving the range and quality of provision. The recent introduction of a national scheme of work will ensure consistency of approach and further raise standards. Plans are in hand to introduce a programme of assessment and recording that will ensure staff are aware of pupils' prior knowledge and experience and able to plan accordingly. This will also ensure that within the two-year cycle older pupils are sufficiently challenged and extended. The co-ordinator is able to work alongside and support colleagues, and monitors their work and planning well. The extensive grounds and large hall provide excellent space for physical activities and this is well supported by the range of small game equipment. However, much of the large apparatus, whilst maintained in good condition, is heavy. This limits its use by younger pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

148. Older pupils reach standards which are broadly in line with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. These findings are an improvement on the last inspection, which found attainment to be below that expected.

149. Pupils' make satisfactory gains in their knowledge of the main characteristics of world faiths and in the skills needed to understand the significance of different religious ideas, so as to form their own view of them. Across the school pupils make sound progress in their religious understanding. They gain an increasing awareness of themselves, their own feelings and the importance of family and friends, whilst developing an understanding of their place in the school community and a sense of belonging. This implicit element of religious education is well supported and encouraged by the school's promotion of positive relationships and reflection on feelings and actions through its policies and use of circle time. The daily act of collective worship satisfactorily contributes to pupils' religious understanding through its choice of themes, celebrations of individual successes and by providing a time for prayer and quiet reflection.

150. In all lessons teachers work hard to make religious education a meaningful experience for their pupils, through the careful use of examples and the sensitive discussion of issues which enhance the quality of learning. In year 3, for example, pupils talk about their recent visit to St. Martin's church. They recall and vividly describe the rainbow patterns cast by the stained glass windows and the wonderful sense of tranquillity created. This supports their appreciation of the spiritual element well. They noted that the Church's footprint is the cross, and appreciate the symbolism of this for Christians, before beginning to make a calendar of the activities and festivals that take place within the church. Year 4 pupils, after making the same visit, can name and describe the purpose of items of religious furniture such as the altar, pulpit, font and lectern. They understand why the cross is an important symbol for Christians, and list activities that show that the church is the centre of its community.

151. Teaching continues to make an effective impact throughout the school, and helps older pupils to relate ideas to their own experiences. A very good example of this was seen in Year 5, when pupils thoughtfully considered their own and society's reactions to outcasts before analysing the prejudices illustrated in the story of Zaccheus. Taking viewpoints of different characters, they prepared their recollections before answering questions in character from the 'hot seat'. They empathise well with the person they have chosen and showed a depth of understanding and maturity in their response to the well balanced questioning. Year 6 pupils, in a sensitively handled discussion of human suffering, felt sufficiently secure to recount personal examples of how they and other members of their families had felt. They were very supportive of one another and empathised well with both these personal recollections and the scenarios in the newspaper accounts they studied.

152. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan and prepare their lessons well, selecting approaches that capture pupils' attention and interest. By ensuring that a brisk pace is maintained with a good level of challenge in the activities, they move pupils' learning. Teachers create a sensitive atmosphere in which pupils feel confident and able to express and share ideas and feelings. This ensures that pupils contribute fully and eagerly to discussions, consolidating and improving their intellectual skills. Learning is further supported and enhanced by the good relationships that teachers have with their pupils, and the good behaviour management strategies that they employ. Whilst pupils show good oral skills during their lessons, their written work is generally of inadequate quality with little care or attention in its presentation. Opportunities to extend pupils' writing skills are not developed. In all lessons, hearing impaired pupils and those with learning difficulties are able to contribute fully through the well targeted support of their teachers and the classroom assistants.

153. The leadership and management of religious education is good. To improve teachers' expertise, the co-ordinator has organised professional development for staff on Judaism and Hinduism and has worked with an external adviser on a scheme of work that is currently being introduced. Monitoring is currently carried out through viewing of planning and displays.

However, with responsibility for other subjects and aspects the time she can offer is limited. There are no assessment arrangements to measure attainment or ensure continuity and progression within the two year planning cycle that the school adopts. Centrally-stored resources and artefacts are well matched to the curriculum and linked to the assembly themes. Use is made of church representatives and visits to support teaching about the Christianity but this is not yet extended to other faiths.