

INSPECTION REPORT

GRANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wickford

LEA area: ESSEX

Unique reference number: 131579

Headteacher: Mrs Linda Smith

Reporting inspector: Ms Frances Forrester
11590

Dates of inspection: 18 – 21 September 2000

Inspection number: 224495

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Elder Avenue Wickford Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Mark Parish
Date of previous inspection:	Not applicable

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Frances Forrester	Registered inspector	Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage English Special educational needs	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements English as an additional language How well the school is led and managed
Rosalind Hall	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
Edmond Morris	Team inspector	Science Art Physical Education	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
Janet Dyson	Team inspector	Geography History Music Religious education	
Christopher Taylor	Team inspector	Mathematics Information technology Design and technology	Teaching and learning

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Grange School is situated in a well established housing estate in Wickford, Essex. It was opened two years ago after the amalgamation of the infant school with the junior school. The school is larger than average with 326 pupils on roll. There are 20 pupils entitled to free meals. Eight pupils speak English as an additional language, which is slightly higher than most schools of this size. The main other languages spoken in the school are Bengali and Urdu. There are 49 pupils with special educational needs, which is below average, and two of these have formal educational statements. When children start school, their knowledge of reading, writing and counting is below average for their age. Children are admitted at the start of the school year before their fifth birthday, into two classes. Those with spring and summer birthdays initially attend part-time. Some of the youngest children were only admitted to the Early Years class on the second day of the inspection. The staff spent much of their time assessing these children as part of a local education authority initiative to monitor children's knowledge as well as their ability to mix with other children. The numbers in each year group vary and consequently classes are arranged in different ways. Some have two-year groups and in others the pupils are of a similar age. During the inspection, the school was badly disrupted because builders were extending the junior building to accommodate classes for younger pupils. The builders had demolished the computer suite, and the library had been relocated. The additional noise from machinery made it difficult for pupils' voices to be heard. There were moments when the teacher had to pause until the machinery outside moved away.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with a number of very good features. The excellent procedures for promoting school improvement are having a significant impact on its work. The school's strengths outweigh its weaknesses and it gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and her deputy have created an ethos where all members of staff are committed to school improvement.
- Excellent procedures are in place for monitoring the school's own performance.
- The quality of the teaching is good, with just over a quarter of lessons very good.
- The standards achieved in science and art are particularly good.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about their school.
- Behaviour is good and, in lessons, is often very good.
- Members of staff demonstrate great care for all pupils, including those with special educational needs.

What could be improved

- The consistency of handwriting and spelling in all subjects, not just in English.
- Staff confidence in teaching computer skills and the inadequate quality of resources, which is having a detrimental impact on the standards pupils attain.
- The provision for children who are under five by employing a specialist-teaching assistant.
- The high percentage of unauthorised absence. Pupils miss lessons because too many parents continue to take their holidays in term time.
- The standards achieved in music by older pupils. The school has no one to accompany singing in school assemblies or music lessons.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was amalgamated just over two years ago and it has not been inspected before.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:1999	Compared with			Key
	all schools		similar schools	
	Year-1998	Year-1999	Year-1999	
English	N/A	B	B	well above average A above average B
mathematics	N/A	C	C	average C below average D
science	N/A	C	D	well below average E

The school has worked hard to raise its standards. In 2000, the national tests results are improved, especially in science. Reading standards are better than writing throughout the school and test results show that each year more seven and 11-year-olds reach the expected standards for their age group. The school has introduced additional handwriting lessons and members of staff are monitoring the standards of spelling and handwriting to improve standards further. The school's results in mathematics are gradually improving, and good quality numeracy lessons have made a positive contribution. Recent national test results show that more pupils achieved the standard expected for their age group. The inspection findings confirm that standards of work in lessons are continuing to improve in all three subjects. In 1999, the National Curriculum test results for the 11-year-olds showed that boys' performance was better than girls' in English, mathematics and science. Although girls performed appropriately in English, their results were only broadly average; in mathematics, they were below average. Inspectors noticed that in some lessons there is a tendency for boys to dominate class discussions although teachers try hard to give girls equal opportunities. When the school's performance is compared with other schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals, the standards are very similar. The school has agreed appropriate targets for the future. Targets for 2001 have already been exceeded in the national test results in 2000 for English and mathematics.

Notable strengths in pupils' work are the much-improved quality of writing in English exercise books. Pupils' writing is often in ink and neatly formed with spelling usually correct. Throughout the school, pupils make good use of punctuation in their written work. They try hard to write imaginatively and with sensitivity. Children who are under five are well supported and they achieve well in the reception class. In the early years class, although their social, creative and physical development is in line for their age group, they do not achieve as well in language and literacy. The standard of art throughout the school is also very good and pupils use a wide range of art materials. Design and technology is also taught well and standards are good. The school strives for the best results possible and it is most successful. The standards achieved by 11-year-olds in information technology and music are too low. This is due to the limited computer resources and teachers' lack of confidence in the subject. The school has no one to accompany pupils' singing and there has been a lack of good music teaching for some time. The school meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, and 11-year-olds achieve appropriate standards for their age group.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are proud of their school and they have very positive attitudes.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good and any natural boisterousness is quickly controlled. In the best lessons, pupils try hard to behave very well.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good at all levels. The pupils' personal development is very good and is a priority for the school.
Attendance	This is unsatisfactory. The school tries hard to encourage regular attendance but too many families take their holidays in term time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching in more than three quarters of lessons is good or better. Among these, a quarter is very good. This is having a significant impact on pupils' learning. Teachers are skilled at asking pupils probing questions. They manage their classes very well and have high expectations of behaviour and productivity. There are only a few weaknesses. In lessons that are only satisfactory, the topic often lacks inspiration. The teacher often takes too long over one task and pupils quickly lose interest. Literacy and numeracy lessons are good, and sometimes they are very good. Teachers confidently teach basic skills and they make their lessons interesting. The school meets the needs of all pupils very well. The pupils with special educational needs or those who are learning English as an additional language are very well supported. Pupils throughout the school are well motivated, learn well, and make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum and it provides a very good range of additional clubs and out-of-school events.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school carefully assesses pupils' needs, and provides very good support for those pupils who require special educational provision.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school provides very good support for pupils learning English as an additional language. These pupils attain similar standards to their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision is made for pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged to become responsible citizens, and social development is very good. Members of staff provide good role models and they promote pupils' moral development very well. Satisfactory provision is made for spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Members of staff demonstrate great care for the welfare of all pupils. Support staff, especially the dinner supervisors, are very effective.

The school has a good partnership with parents. It provides very good quality information to help parents support their children's learning. The school sends out regular questionnaires to parents;

governors and members of staff consider the responses and note any suggestions for improvement. The school has very good relationships with other local schools and the technology college. These have a significant impact on the school's provision for its pupils. The recent school redevelopment programme and the loss of computer suite are having a detrimental impact on the standards attained in information technology. The local technology college is providing additional tuition to try to compensate for this loss. Pupils in the older classes have not had the advantage of good music teaching for some time. The school has no musician on the staff and the older children's standards in music are too low.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership is very good and it has excellent strengths. The headteacher has introduced excellent procedures for monitoring standards and the quality of teaching. Members of staff have a shared commitment to school improvement and a capacity to succeed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are enthusiastic and effective. They regularly visit the school, willingly involving themselves in school life.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has excellent procedures for evaluating its own performance.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very effective use of resources.

The school's leadership is a great strength. The governors, headteacher and staff are constantly striving to improve. The steps taken as a result of monitoring the quality of the school's work have a positive impact on the standards of teaching and overall quality of the education provided. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate except in information technology. The school is managing the present disruptions very well and the new extension will eventually reduce the time taken to move from one building to another. The school has adequate support staff; however, there is no specialist early years' teaching assistant in the two classes that cater for children who are under five. The school very effectively applies the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The improved behaviour in school. • The standards of work are good. • The headteacher and her staff are always willing to talk to parents. • Members of staff work extremely hard. • Parents value the Year 6 pupils' annual residential experience. • Children enjoy school and they are keen to work hard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents feel their children have too much homework. • There are concerns that the new building will not provide sufficient space for a higher number on roll. • Some parents think behaviour is not good. • A few parents do not believe the school has an effective partnership with them.

The inspection team disagree that pupils have too much homework. The quantity of homework is similar to that which is provided in other good primary schools. The inspection team are unable to comment on the new building arrangements as only the local education authority has access to the information about the numbers they intend to admit. Throughout the inspection, and despite very wet weather one day, the pupils' behaviour was good. Pupils were polite and friendly towards the inspection team and they showed initiative when they offered to direct inspectors to the right room. The inspection team were impressed with their attitudes. They recognised the hard work that has gone into promoting a good partnership with parents, despite the very small numbers of parents who attended the inspection meeting or who responded to the questionnaire.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. When children start school, many have difficulty recognising or writing any alphabetical letters. They have some idea of the sounds of letters in, for example, their own name and they enjoy listening to stories and learning to read. Overall, this means that the children's knowledge when they first start school is broadly below average. From this starting point, pupils' achieve well throughout the school.
2. In the early years and the Reception class, children settle well and they soon become very sociable. Their development is in line with the expectations for their age group in social, creative and physical development. Most can already take turns and readily play with other children, but some lack confidence and are reluctant to talk in a group. Many find it difficult to hold a pencil or to recognise their own name. They have little understanding that writing communicates meaning in, for instance, a shopping list. Most have very little understanding of number and can only count to five. They cannot recognise many numbers. By the time they are five, they achieve well in the reception class but, in the early years class where children are younger, they do not achieve as well as their peers in the reception class. Children in the early years class have difficulty counting with confidence and their ability to solve little mathematical problems, such as adding on or taking one number away from another, is only satisfactory. The difference between the classes is because the teaching in the reception class presents more challenges and the teacher has higher expectations of the children. For instance in teaching handwriting, the children in the early years class are allowed to write with a mixture of capital letters and small letters. This means that, on transfer to Year 1, they still have not learned the form of handwriting they use throughout the rest of the school. In both classes, children learn well and they achieve well in social, creative and physical development. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the world and they confidently use a computer. Children with special educational needs, and those who are learning English as an additional language, are well supported and they make similar progress to their peers. This allows them to achieve well and according to their individual ability.
3. The results of the National Curriculum tests for 1999 showed that although the number of seven year olds that attained the required standards in reading was broadly average, not many read well enough to attain the higher standard of Level 3. Writing standards are not as good as reading. In comparison with similar schools in 1999, the standards of reading were below average and writing was well below. In mathematics, the national tests results show that standards are above average. There are no national tests in science for this age group, but teachers' assessments in 1999 indicated that a below average number of pupils reached the expected national standards for this age group. This was because the pupils had insufficient knowledge of some parts of the science National Curriculum.
4. The school has worked hard to raise its standards. The strategies that have been introduced to monitor pupils' progress have proved very successful. In 2000, the National Curriculum test results for 11 year olds were much improved; in science, 96 per cent of the pupils reached the expected standard for this age group. The inspection findings confirm that standards of work in lessons are improving in all three subjects and that pupils make good progress.
5. The results of the 1999 national tests in English for 11 year olds were above average and the reading results were improved. In mathematics, an average number of pupils attained the expected level of attainment for all 11 year olds. In science, the results last year were only average. Comparisons of boys' and girls' results in 1999 showed some differences. Boys' performance was better in English, mathematics and science. The inspection findings confirm that in lessons there is a tendency for boys to dominate the discussion if they can. In the best lessons, the teachers try

hard to make sure girls have equal opportunities. The national test results for boys and girls in 2000 show that this is having a positive impact on standards. The recent results show that, by the age of eleven, boys and girls attained similar standards. When the school's performance was compared in 1999 with other schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals, English was above average, mathematics average and science below average. The school has agreed appropriate targets for improvement for the future. It has already exceeded its target for 2001 in the national test results in 2000 for English and mathematics.

6. Test results have much improved at Key Stage 2 since the school first opened. The inspection findings confirm that standards of work in lessons are improving in all three subjects. The national test results for 2000 are improved in mathematics and science. In English almost three quarters reached the appropriate standards but writing standards remained weaker than reading. In mathematics, there was a similar result with over a third of the pupils attaining the higher standard of Level 5. In science, the results were very much better. Over half of all 11 year olds attained Level 5. This is a great improvement.

7. The standard of information technology is variable across the school and, at Key Stage 2, is unsatisfactory. Pupils at this key stage have not covered all areas of the curriculum for this subject and consequently their computer skills vary, but few are likely to reach the required standards by the time they leave the school. The present disruptions caused by building works have led to the computer suite being closed. At the time of the inspection, computers had been moved to classrooms and the computer club had been disbanded. The present computer resources are limited and some need urgent maintenance. Although the local technology college provides tutorials for Year 6 pupils to help them to develop basic skills, the standards are too low to meet the national expectations by the age of 11.

8. In religious education, pupils are on course to attain the standards expected in the locally agreed syllabus by the time they are seven and 11 years of age. In Year 2, pupils explored their feelings and emotions sensitively, while the oldest pupils in Key Stage 2 were able to explain the physical and spiritual needs of human beings. In other subjects, pupils are on course to reach at least an appropriate standard of attainment. In art and design and technology, there is evidence that pupils may do better than that and reach standards that are above average.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils show very positive attitudes to school. All but a very few arrive on time, ready for work. They are enthusiastic about their learning and about additional club activities. They are keen to participate, for example, 23 children arrived at school at 8.15 in the morning for the chess club and over 40 attended a lunchtime recorder club where they played with great enjoyment.

10. Pupils behave well in lessons. There have been no exclusions. The children who are under five have good personal development. By the time they are five, they play together well and take turns. They concentrate well on their activities and eagerly try to please their teachers. They behave very well, and quickly apologise when they accidentally hurt someone else.

11. Pupils are quick to respond to teachers' instructions and settle down to tasks well. In assemblies they listen and participate appropriately. They move around the school in a careful and orderly way and as a result the school has a calm and businesslike atmosphere. They are polite to staff and visitors and hold doors open for adults and each other with care. This was particularly noticeable given the difficult conditions of the rebuilding and the very poor weather the school endured during the week of the inspection. At lunchtime pupils behave well; they are able to relax and chat together round their tables as they eat. In the playground they share equipment well and make full use of the space for a variety of games. There was no evidence of bullying seen during the inspection.

12. All staff and pupils have good relationships. They work well together, for example, this was seen in a Year 2 music session where they were composing with percussion instruments as a group. Most pupils have a clear understanding of the effect of their actions on others and demonstrated this in class discussions; for example, in an infant assembly pupils gave a teacher advice on how to welcome a new arrival into a group and they identified well with the feelings of being a newcomer. Pupils are encouraged from their first days at school to take responsibility for themselves and to use their initiative as special helpers or class monitors. Older pupils undertake office duty, act as play leaders at lunchtime and undertake roles as prefects. They have a mature approach to these responsibilities.

13. Parents indicate that behaviour and the poor attitudes of the junior age pupils have been areas of particular concern in the past. The headteacher and her staff have worked hard to instil a sense of self-discipline in all pupils and as a result attitudes and behaviour are a strength of the school.

14. Attendance levels are unsatisfactory and are declining. This is a result of the increased number of pupils who are taken out of school for holidays in term time. Although the school does much to impress upon parents the importance of regular attendance, parents have yet to recognise the possible implications of such interruptions on the continuity of their child's learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of the teaching is good, with over a quarter of lessons very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed during the inspection. This high proportion of good quality teaching represents a significant achievement for the school. The consistently good quality teaching was underpinned by the teachers' strong knowledge of all their subjects, thorough planning, good use of questioning and productive sharing of lesson objectives with pupils. This powerful combination has had a substantial effect on pupils' learning and their academic progress.

16. Teachers know their children well, and they have very good relationships with them. They plan their lessons well, and ensure they have appropriate activities that are suited to the ability levels of pupils in their classes. They have been well trained in the national literacy and numeracy strategies and use them effectively.

17. The teachers explain ideas clearly, demonstrate techniques well and use questioning very effectively. Their class management and the way they use resources are very good. Lessons are well planned to allow all pupils to participate fully, with work suitably adjusted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. More often, the class is grouped according to ability, which allows pupils to discuss their work with other class members of a similar ability. Class assistants provide good support. In English for instance, there is very effective support for pupils who have fallen slightly behind in tests. Teachers monitor their lessons effectively. Challenging questioning is used in some lessons, for example in mathematics, where 11-year-olds were asked to keep doubling and halving numbers. In other lessons, questioning was used to assess pupils' understanding. In some lessons, pupils were captivated by the teacher's demonstrations. In other classes, pupils were very well used to explaining their ideas to the rest of the class. Where lessons were only satisfactory rather than good or very good, they tended to lack pace and a sense of urgency, leading to a loss in attention by the pupils. The quality of teaching in most English, mathematics and science lessons is having a significant impact on raising the standards in these subjects. In English, the teaching of reading and writing is effectively raising pupils' standards of work. In numeracy lessons, the teachers effectively promote pupils' ability to accurately calculate in their heads. However, some teachers lack confidence and subject knowledge in information technology and in music at Key Stage 2. This has led to low attainment in these subjects.

18. The noticeable strengths of the good teaching are:

- systems for monitoring pupils' progress;
- staff relationships with pupils;
- the quality of planning for lessons;
- effective classroom management;
- good knowledge of the subject.

19. Pupils learn very well. From their very first days in school they are encouraged to work hard. They put a lot of effort into getting their work right. Throughout the school, pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They are motivated well by their teachers to attempt challenging work and, in the best lessons, their interest, concentration and perseverance when they have challenging activities to do, is very good. This is particularly apparent in the older pupils. Pupils discuss issues maturely and they try very hard to please their teacher, for instance in a literacy lesson where they discussed the ideas in a text. 'How your body works'. They related the text to their own experiences and eagerly read aloud, as a class and with expression, the paragraph describing how people eat food. Their infectious enthusiasm led to good results from all of the class and, as well as developing their literacy skills, they learned scientific terms on a diagram. Pupils who have special educational needs also have very good attitudes. During the inspection, some were very anxious to give inspectors a good impression, especially in Key Stage 2. They reacted well to their teacher's instructions, and worked hard to make a good impression. They have a good self-esteem that is well promoted through good teaching.

20. The headteacher, deputy and some subject co-ordinators regularly monitor the quality of lessons. This has had a significant impact on the quality of the teaching. The teachers monitor their pupils well, both on a day to day basis in the classroom and in the longer term by regular assessments and target setting. This helps pupils to achieve their full potential. Homework is used to good effect, to extend work in the classroom and to put topics into a meaningful context.

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

21. The school provides a suitable range of activities in its educational programme to promote the nationally agreed early learning goals for four year olds in both the early years class and the Reception class. The programme for social and physical development is good. However, because the classroom support for these children is not specifically qualified to work with this age group, there are often missed learning opportunities in the children's play. Children benefit from being able to play with an appropriate range of activities in a calm, supportive atmosphere. This effectively eases them into school life. The school had committed time and funding to develop the outdoor activities for this age group; however, unexpectedly the local education authority agreed the building developments, which meant the school's efforts had to be curtailed and reserved for the new building. Consequently, there is only a limited range of outside activities, which includes bicycles, other wheeled toys or tabletop activities. The school effectively compensates for this by providing timetabled activities in the school hall. By the time they are five, most children make good progress in social, physical, creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. In the early years class, children make sound progress in language and literacy and mathematical development. The good teaching in the reception class means that children are achieving well.

22. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for its pupils. All National Curriculum subjects and religious education are taught throughout the school and statutory requirements are met. Despite the recent focus on literacy and numeracy, which has proved successful, the school has continued to provide pupils with a range of learning opportunities in other subjects. For example, in art and physical education, the school has included all aspects of the programmes of study in its planning to give pupils as wide a range of experiences as possible. The amount of time allocated to the teaching of each subject is appropriate and monitored by the

headteacher. This ensures that there is sufficient teaching time available over each year to enable pupils to increase their skills and knowledge in all subject areas including personal, social and health education. Indeed, the length of the school day for pupils aged five to seven has been suitably increased to above the recommended minimum time to allow for the movement of these pupils between the two buildings for such activities as assemblies and physical education. This will be reviewed when the building work is completed. There are useful schemes of work in place for all subjects and these are being used successfully by teachers to plan worthwhile activities for their pupils. Recent changes to the National Curriculum are currently being taken on board by subject co-ordinators who are making appropriate adjustments to their schemes of work to comply with the new requirements. The curriculum is carefully planned using a two-year cycle designed to meet the needs of all pupils including those in mixed age classes and ensures that they are being given work appropriate to their age and ability. This also prevents pupils from repeating or missing work in subjects as they move through the school. The school has successfully implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy and the effect on raising standards has been considerable. Literacy and numeracy work are well planned and effectively taught throughout the school.

23. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The individual education plans are well written with targets, which are realistic and measurable. Support is discreetly given during class lessons. The school is committed to providing support in class so that pupils do not have to miss work in other lessons. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are also effectively included in subject areas. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding and they maintain detailed records that record the outcomes of their monitoring of pupil progress.

24. The curriculum committee of the governing body meets regularly to approve policies, discuss strategies and monitor the effectiveness of the provision. Individual governors take responsibility for overseeing and supporting a particular subject. They visit the school, observe classes working and liaise closely with subject co-ordinators. After their visit they report back to the governing body and highlight the strengths and any weaknesses they have observed. The governors have adopted an appropriate policy for sex education but there is no agreed policy for promoting drug awareness. Parents are fully consulted about the content of the sex education provision. Personal, social and health education is included in the curriculum and is effectively planned and sensitively taught in all classes.

25. All pupils are fully included in the life of the school enabling them to benefit from the many learning and social opportunities provided. On the few occasions when pupils are withdrawn from classes for additional support, the school carefully monitors the situation to ensure that pupils do not miss other work. For example, they will usually be engaged in tasks similar to those provided for their classmates but at a level closely matched to their own ability. Grange Primary is a school in which all pupils are valued and great care is taken to include them in every aspect of the school's provision.

26. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of visits to local places of interest such as Kentwell Hall, Suffolk and a local toy museum. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 visit Harlow Outdoor Pursuits Centre for a day and have a wonderful time climbing, kayaking and problem solving. One pupil wrote enthusiastically about the visit and added, "It was the best day of my life – so far!" Year 6 pupils go on a residential trip to the Arethusa Centre in Kent. This trip includes good quality educational and adventurous activities as well as giving pupils many opportunities to develop socially and live harmoniously in an environment away from home. There are various visitors to the school who talk to, and often work with, the pupils. Through the Commonwealth Institute, a Kenyan visited the school and ran an African workshop which included dance and mask making. This was thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils and the good quality artwork and masks they produced are prominently displayed in the school.

27. The school provides its pupils with a very good range of additional clubs and out-of-school events. Pupils of all ages are able to take part in these activities, many organised by teachers. They include recorder playing, choir, chess, mathematics, football, dance and computer club. The school also runs after school booster classes for pupils in Years 2 and 6 to give them additional learning opportunities and help them reach higher standards in their tests. A homework club is held to enable pupils to work without external distractions. The 'Green Club', which includes parents and governors, works to improve the environment of the school. All these clubs are well attended and enthusiastically received by pupils and parents alike. Some, such as the chess club, are held before school and parents make a great effort to help their children attend.

28. The school has good links with the local community, including some local businesses such as Ford Motor Company who helped clear some of the grounds ready for improvements to be made. Pupils in the choir sang in the Millennium Festival and regularly entertain the elderly folk in a local home. The Wickford Lions club also support the school in ground improvement projects to make the learning environment more attractive. There are very good links with both other local primary schools and, in particular, to the local secondary school. The secondary school often lends resources to the school, such as a skeleton to be used in science, and welcomes groups of pupils to use its computers to improve their literacy and numeracy. It has recently made funds available for the local primary schools to purchase equipment to enhance their work in science and information and communication technology.

29. Overall, the school makes good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for social and moral development is very good and is a strong indication of the importance the school puts on this aspect of its pupils' learning. It has a noticeable impact on all aspects of school life and is responsible for the calm, caring and mature attitudes of the pupils. Spiritual development is mainly fostered through assemblies and religious education lessons. It is also developed through work in other subjects such as art, science and literacy. One example seen which amply illustrates this was a rainbow poem written by one of the older pupils:

'Blue is the sadness of a dying death,
Orange is the happiness of Spring,
White is the glowing ball on a Midsummer's day.'

30. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. It pervades all aspects of the school's daily life and is actively supported by all members of the school community. The behaviour policy is implemented in a consistent and caring manner. Members of staff provide very good role models in their dealings with each other and the pupils. Pupils are taught right from wrong from the moment they join the school and are actively encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and the impact it has on both adults and other pupils. The school rules are prominently displayed and each class negotiates its own set of classroom rules. Rewards for good and caring behaviour, such as the 'Friendship Tree' and team points are highly sought after by pupils. Pupils consider environmental issues and have been involved in the planning of the school grounds and the new building work.

31. The high quality of relationships in the school supports the pupils' social development very well. Pupils willingly take responsibility and are provided with many opportunities to look after equipment and each other. Year 6 pupils act as play leaders for the younger children and also make books for them. They set up the hall for assemblies and take on office duties which include answering the telephone. There is a prefect system designed to give older pupils greater responsibility and a school council is planned to give pupils further opportunities to have a voice in the organisation of the school. The annual residential visit helps pupils to learn valuable lessons in living together. All of these planned opportunities help develop a strong sense of community in the pupils and they feel a useful and valued part of the school.

32. Cultural development is satisfactory with pupils learning about their own and other faiths in religious education, artists from other countries in art lessons and music from around the world in assemblies. The African workshop proved to be an interesting way of introducing pupils to some of the cultural heritage of Kenya. Other provision includes a range of cultural artefacts from other countries and book weeks introduce pupils to the work of authors from other lands. The school library has books that reflect life in other countries although some are now out of date and give a rather patronising view of people from the third world.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils are strengths of the school. Good relationships between all staff and pupils ensure that each child is supported well in both their personal and academic development. Thorough records and comprehensive systems underpin this good work.

34. Health and safety is given a high priority, for example, as the building work has progressed and fire exits altered, staff and pupils undertake extra fire drills to ensure that the school can be evacuated safely. The school has adopted the local education authority policy for health and safety but has also started work on producing its own. Risk assessments and audits are carried out regularly with good involvement from a member of the governing body. There is appropriate coverage for First Aid and detailed records are kept of any incidents. Medication is stored appropriately. Staff are well informed about child protection procedures and midday assistants have also been well trained in this.

35. The implementation of the behaviour policy is very effective. Pupils agree the codes for behaviour and they are rewarded in a variety of ways such as appearing on the 'Friendship Tree' or in the achievement book. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are monitored and children are put 'on report'; this was seen to work well as positive aspects of pupils' behaviour are highlighted and they are encouraged to maintain this attitude throughout the day. Procedures are in place to deal with bullying and there is little evidence of incidents of this nature and relationships between pupils are good. The positive approach taken by all staff towards behaviour means that class control is good and that all pupils are treated fairly. Dinnertimes are well organised and pupils are supervised well. They are allowed plenty of time in which to eat their meal and as a result chat together in a relaxed manner in the dining hall.

36. Procedures for attendance are applied consistently; registers are filled in accurately and unauthorised absence is low. The school promotes attendance through newsletters and certificates but parents continue to book holidays in term time and this is increasing. As a result the figures for authorised absence are high and the continuity of pupils' education is being affected.

37. The educational and personal support and guidance for pupils is very good. Assessments and records in the core subjects and in personal development enable staff to know exactly how pupils are progressing. An assessment calendar is in place and specific tasks such as a piece of unaided writing are undertaken at set times. Regular assessments are undertaken when a module of work has been completed in maths and science and the results are used for future planning. Halfway through each term, teachers complete the personal profiles, which highlight attitudes, behaviour and any concerns. Assessment in foundation subjects is currently undertaken at the end of Year 2 against the end of key stage statements and this informs future planning. As the new curriculum becomes more embedded, assessment in foundation subjects will extend to all year groups. Following assessment, teaching and targets are reviewed well. The school assesses children when they first start school and continues with regular testing throughout the school to monitor overall performance. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are also monitored to ensure that they are progressing appropriately. The teacher who has responsibility for the school's assessment policy analyses the school's performance to check for differences

between the achievements of boys and girls, ethnicity and the school's performance compared to other schools of a similar type. She presents the information to the governors and to the relevant subject co-ordinators.

38. All pupils are set individual targets in English, maths and personal development. They are regularly discussed with pupils and with parents at consultation evenings and in the annual reports. These include separate judgements about attainment and effort in English, maths and science and what the child needs to do to improve. Children are also given the opportunity to write their own reports for academic as well as personal performance.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. Parents value the school's provision for children who are under five in the early years class and in the Reception class. Members of staff have established a good partnership with parents and carers. The class teacher's relationship with them is relaxed, friendly and supportive. As parents or carers deliver and collect their children, they are made to feel welcome and bring their children right into the classroom. The pre-admission meetings for parents play an important part in building effective communication between home and school.

40. A very small number of parents completed the questionnaires or attended the meeting with the registered inspector but those who did were supportive in their views about the school. They praised the commitment of the headteacher and staff, and felt that teaching and behaviour were strengths. They appreciated the wide range of activities both within and outside the curriculum that the school provides. Six months ago a school questionnaire produced a much larger response that was very positive. Parents raised few concerns during the inspection and so, overall, their views are judged to be positive. Concerns were raised about homework arrangements, behaviour and how closely the school works with parents. Each of these aspects was judged to be good.

41. The school provides very good information for parents. In addition to the prospectus parents receive a useful handbook and booklets such as 'Reading Together' and 'Helping Your Child to Write and Spell Successfully', which give advice on how they can help their child progress. Parents are given a curriculum outline at the start of each term and attend meetings on aspects of the curriculum, for example, literacy, numeracy and personal, social and health education. Parents of seven or 11-years-old pupils who are undertaking the national tests are invited to a briefing meeting in plenty of time before the tests take place. Annual reports on pupils' progress are well written and explain clearly how pupils are achieving and what they can do to improve. The school has an open door policy; an example of this is in Year 2 where parents are invited to come into the classroom for a short time before school to sit and hear their children read. Teachers are accessible to parents and many were seen dealing with queries at the end of the day. Parents are canvassed for their opinions through general questionnaires, a post induction questionnaire, in evaluation slips at parents meetings and as part of the annual report. The school considers responses carefully; it has introduced daytime as well as evening meetings as a result of parental views.

42. Parents support their child's education well by hearing their child read regularly and by ensuring that homework is done. This was evident in a Year 1 class where pupils were asked to bring in pushing and pulling toys from home and every pupil remembered to do so. School assemblies, concerts, open days, and parents' consultation evenings are well attended. A parents group is successful in organising social events and fundraising. However, few parents attended the inspection meeting or completed the questionnaire. The current levels of pupil attendance are low and declining. This is unsatisfactory and reflects the growing numbers of family holidays taken during term time. In this area, parental support for the continuity of their children's education is poor.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

43. The leadership of the school is very good. The headteacher and deputy head have worked very hard to make a positive impact on the quality of education that is provided for the pupils. Together with several teachers who have important co-ordination roles, they have developed outstanding systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's improvement. Governors are effective in fulfilling their duties.

44. The school has suitably delegated curriculum subject co-ordinators' roles. However, some teachers have been allocated new roles this term and consequently they have not had time to influence the standards in their particular subject. The co-ordinator for the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very effective and support staff are very clear about their work and the targets which have been set to ensure pupils achieve as well as they can. The co-ordinators for English, science and art are also very effective. The impact they have on the standards achieved by all pupils is very significant. The national literacy and numeracy initiatives have been most successfully implemented across the school.

45. The co-ordination of some subjects has recently altered, due to changes in staff. For instance, in information technology the co-ordinator has changed twice in the past two terms. This has hindered the development of the subject and, as a result, the school's development plan has not been fully implemented in this subject. Staff training has also been delayed and, together with poor resources, this is having a negative impact on the development of computer skills.

46. The school meets the legal requirements of the Code of Practice for special educational needs. Governors ensure that all legal responsibilities are fully met. The governors have an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The relationships between them and the school are very good. The governors have clearly defined roles and they are knowledgeable about issues affecting the school, including health and safety.

47. The school's evaluation of its work is excellent. The headteacher effectively monitors the quality of teaching in the school. Regular questionnaires sent to parents and staff significantly influence the direction of the school. For example, many parents indicated that they preferred information meetings to take place during the school day, and the school took up this suggestion. The school has a good policy for appraisal and it has Investors in People Status. It is well placed to introduce performance management. The teaching strengths of particular staff members are recognised and opportunities to observe good practice are regularly arranged. This strong teamwork results in careful curriculum planning and consistency in managing pupils. Teachers' expectations challenge pupils appropriately and the school has set appropriately high targets for the pupils and for each year group. The school analyses pupils' achievements very well and continuously uses the results to influence pupils' work. There is a very efficient system for tracking pupils' progress that enables staff to set realistic and achievable targets, particularly in English. This is especially apparent in the school's provision for pupils who are learning English as an additional language. They are effectively supported in class because the teachers are clear about their level of achievement. The school's policy for supporting these pupils, and also the pupils with special educational needs, is based on a philosophy of inclusion. This ensures they do not miss work in other subjects to work elsewhere.

48. Financial planning is very good and the school has a significant fund reserve, which is earmarked to provide additional equipment and other resources for the new building. The school's administration is very efficient and members of staff ensure that procedures are followed meticulously, enabling the financial and other administrative work to be carried out unobtrusively. Additional funds, available for the school's work in supporting pupils with special educational needs, are used effectively. The school uses new technology appropriately to support the administration.

The school very effectively applies the principles of best value.

49. There is adequate staffing for the number of pupils on roll. However, the school does not provide a specially trained teaching assistant for the children who are under five years of age. The school buildings are well maintained and attractively decorated with pupils' work and displays, which often support the curriculum. The disruption caused by the present building project is being very well managed and members of staff have effectively continued to provide a consistent standard of education.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. In order to continue to raise the good standards already being achieved, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- i. continue the good work, which has been accomplished in English, by ensuring the quality of pupils' handwriting and spelling is consistent in all subjects;
- ii. raise the standards in all aspects of music by the time pupils are 11 years old, by improving teachers' confidence and subject knowledge;
- iii. raise the standards of information technology by:
 - improving teachers' confidence and subject knowledge;
 - developing resources in order to give pupils regular access to a computer when the new suite is completed;
- iv. appoint a specialist teaching assistant to work with the children who are under five.
- v. Continue to work closely with parents to discourage them from taking holidays in term time.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

70

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	27	56	17	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	352
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	49

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	45

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.8
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 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	34	20	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	27	31
	Girls	19	17	20
	Total	46	44	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (n/a)	81 (n/a)	94 (n/a)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	33	30
	Girls	18	19	17
	Total	45	52	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (n/a)	96 (n/a)	87 (n/a)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1998. The school was amalgamated just over two years ago which is why there are no school figures for 1998. (n/a) – not applicable

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	26	20	46

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	21	23
	Girls	17	12	16
	Total	38	33	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (n/a)	72 (n/a)	85 (n/a)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	22	22
	Girls	16	15	16
	Total	38	37	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (n/a)	80 (n/a)	83 (n/a)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1998. The school was amalgamated just over two years ago which is why there are no school figures for 1998. (n/a) – not applicable

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	4
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	0
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	24

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	141

Financial information

Financial year	1999
	£
Total income	645953
Total expenditure	579991
Expenditure per pupil	1577
Balance brought forward from previous year	68653
Balance carried forward to next year	134615

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	334
Number of questionnaires returned	19

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	32	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	79	11	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	42	0	11	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	32	32	5	0
The teaching is good.	47	47	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	16	21	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	21	16	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	26	0	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	47	26	16	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	53	26	16	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	37	5	20	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	47	16	0	11

Other issues raised by parents

- Concerns were expressed about the unpredictable numbers on roll for the future due to new local housing projects.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

51. The development of children's personal and social skills is a strength of the provision in both the early years class and the reception class. The school effectively encourages children to be socially confident and independent at all times. Children benefit from joining in activities with other classes, such as a joint singing session with Year 1 and 2 pupils. All children are likely to achieve the nationally expected standards for five year olds, and some will have more mature attitudes and above average social skills. Children settle quickly into the routines of the class as a result of the calm atmosphere and the teachers' sensitivity to the needs of young children. Members of staff are very skilled at welcoming parents and promoting a warm, friendly, supportive approach which encourages children to feel safe. The good relationships that have been established with parents before admission to the school ensure that children feel more confident about starting school. In lessons, the children are very well managed and are sensitively handled when they have difficulty playing with other children. Children play together well, share their equipment and choose their activities responsibly. They make up their own games. Their behaviour is good and they are aware of right and wrong. They become increasingly more confident and many have a good self-esteem. They develop responsible attitudes and, for instance, take registers to the school office and perform other simple tasks with the help of a class assistant. Children's moral, social and spiritual development is further promoted when they join in school assemblies and other activities.

Communication, language and literacy

52. The programme for language and literacy promotes the nationally agreed early learning goals for young children. In the early years class children enjoy books and story tapes. They listen well to stories and they particularly enjoy sharing a book in a small group with an adult. In the reception class, children join in with a simplified literacy hour and they are developing good attitudes to books. Children appreciate the importance of books, and they try to recall events and characters in the stories they hear. As they settle into school, they are encouraged to take books home regularly to read with their parents. By the end of the year in both classes, many will begin to learn to read. Most children will have below average standards in writing and find it difficult to write more than a few words unaided. They recognise that print and pictures convey meaning. Tracing activities provide opportunities for them to develop writing skills, and often work sheets are used to promote letter recognition. However, the lack of specialist adult support limits the progress children make. In both classes, although the class assistant and teacher work well as a team, there are missed opportunities when skilled questioning would develop children's learning. By the end of the school year in both classes, children have an increasing confidence in talking in a large group and they regularly contribute their ideas or speak clearly to the whole class. A few less confident children find it difficult to express their thoughts or answer questions. Regular class discussion and role-play, which allows them to pretend, encourage those who only respond with one-word answers to talk confidently. Children listen well in their lessons and in school assemblies. In both the early years class and the reception class they readily follow their teacher's instructions when activities are explained.

Mathematical development

53. The school provides a suitable programme for mathematical development, which promotes the nationally agreed early learning goals for this age group. By the time they are five, most children in the early years class and in the reception class are likely to count to 10 or beyond. Regular counting and number games develop their knowledge of number. In the reception class, children are coming to terms with a scaled down version of the numeracy hour. Children know the names of shapes and sort and match similar shapes. They know the names of colours and make patterns in a sequence. They count to themselves as they pretend to give out cups of tea in their play. Children weigh and measure and, in their water play, they begin to understand volume. They solve simple problems when they build with construction equipment. They use simple mathematical terms such as 'circle' or 'bigger than' to describe different shapes. They make simple graphs, for instance to record the number of children with different coloured eyes. In both classes the children have access to a computer program that provides additional mathematical opportunities.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

54. The school's provision for knowledge and understanding of the world is good and it effectively promotes the nationally agreed early learning goals for this area. Children achieve well and, by the time they are five, they will reach the expected standard for this age group. Children have a developing understanding of their senses and they know the different parts of their body. They look at shadows and watch them move as the sunlight changes. They use torches to experiment with light and they examine their reflections in mirrors. Children have a developing understanding of transparency. They have regular access to a computer and, as they mature, develop an early understanding of simple programs. They discuss the things they see in the school buildings and grounds, and recognise the early signs of autumn. In the reception class for instance, they were fascinated to see the builders' machinery. Children confidently use simple tools and construction equipment.

Physical development

55. The school makes good provision for physical development. By the time they are five, children in both classes achieve well and they move confidently in hall activities. They have a developing confidence in climbing and balancing, and an awareness of space. In the early years class, they confidently control tricycles with skill and accuracy. They jump and skip, avoiding bumping into each other, when they have physical education lessons in the school hall. The more agile achieve above average standards for this age group. They have increasing control of tools such as scissors and paintbrushes. For instance, even at the start of the year when many are still only four years of age, they paint self-portraits.

Creative Development

56. The school provides a sound programme for creative development, which promotes the early learning goals. Most children achieve appropriately so that, by the age of five, they attain the nationally agreed standards for five-year-olds. They paint and draw, sometimes using a magnifying glass to check details. They assemble collage pictures using twigs, fir cones and leaves. Children dress up in a range of clothes and play family games. They play at pushing each other in a wheel chair, and they look after dolls. In the school hall with older children, they learn songs by heart and many sing in tune. They clap to a simple rhythm and use simple percussion instruments. By the time they are five, they have some understanding of mixing colours and of shade.

ENGLISH

57. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests show that standards are gradually improving each year. The national test results in reading for seven year olds were broadly average and writing standards are not as good as reading. In comparison with similar schools in 1999, the standards of reading were below average and writing was well below. The test results for 11 year olds have much improved since the school first opened. The national test results for 2000 show that almost three quarters reached the appropriate standards but writing standards remained weaker than reading. The inspection findings confirm that standards of work in English lessons are improving.

58. The school has worked hard to raise its standards since it first opened. The strategies that members of staff have introduced to ensure pupils make steady progress have proved successful.

59. In the latest national tests in English for 11 year olds the overall results were only average and not as good as the results in 1999, but 90 per cent of pupils reached the expected standard in reading, which is good. English test results have improved since the school first opened. However, the lower standards of writing are impeding the overall standards for English. Comparisons of boys' and girls' results in 1999 showed some differences. Boys' performance was better in English. The inspection findings confirm that in lessons there is a tendency for boys to dominate the discussion if they can. However, in the best lessons, the teachers try hard to make sure girls have equal opportunities. This is having a positive impact on learning and the 2000 results show that girls achieved similar results to the boys. When the school's performance was compared in 1999 with other schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals, English was above average.

60. By the age of seven, the inspection findings show that pupils' standards are broadly average although the standard of their handwriting in English exercise books is above average for their age group. By the age of 11, most achieve average results and an increasing number each year reach Level 5, which is above average. The school's standards are in line with the national trends. The school has begun to analyse test results, setting specific targets for individual pupils and subsequently implementing a school improvement strategy. For instance, staff recognised that writing standards had slipped due to the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. The school examined examples of pupils' work to review the progression through the school and teachers realised the importance of insisting on consistent writing standards in all lessons. This has been successful and, during the inspection, the standard of pupils' writing was noticeably improved. The school has been effective in its implementation of new procedures to ensure school improvement. This is having a positive impact on the achievement of all pupils including those with special educational needs or those who are learning English as an additional language.

61. By the time pupils are seven years old their standards of speaking and listening are above average. They are confident and fluent speakers. In discussions they give their opinions with clarity and in other lessons they willingly answer questions. By the time they are 11 years of age, some pupils are eloquent speakers and their standards are above average. Most pupils readily express a point of view. They debate issues in class discussions and show, by relevant questions and apt answers, that they follow the thread of a point of view that may not necessarily be the same as theirs. They enjoy conversations with school visitors.

62. By the time pupils are seven, their standard of reading is broadly average. Most know how to work out unfamiliar text and they have an appropriate knowledge of letter sounds. Many pupils talk about a range of fiction and they also enjoy looking for information in reference books. By the end of Year 2, pupils answer questions that show they understand the text. The school monitors pupils' achievements and when members of staff feel that someone has fallen behind their peers, they provide additional booster sessions, which focus on developing word building and spelling skills. Pupils with special educational needs throughout the school attain according to their

individual ability, because they are so well supported. Those pupils who are learning English as an additional language are also achieving well because their teachers monitor their progress against their personal targets. By the time pupils are 11 years old, they enjoy books and happily talk about the text in their stories in relation to the different characters. They often make comparisons with their own experiences. They read for different purposes and, for instance in reading a text for meaning, skim to gain an overall impression whilst scanning to locate information. They use the library for reference purposes and often download information from the Internet. They appropriately use dictionaries. By the time they leave the school, pupils experience a wide and varied range of literature including poetry.

63. By the age of seven, pupils' standards of writing are broadly average, although there are examples of writing in English exercise books that are above average. Pupils are confident to write and most of them are very careful to include punctuation. When they are taking care with writing their handwriting is tidy, carefully formed and in ink. Spelling is variable and in work in other subjects there are often careless errors. By the time they are 11, pupils write fairly confidently for different purposes. Work is tidily presented, handwriting neat, letters are of even size and often joined. The content of written work is often much better than the quality of the handwriting and spelling. Pupils plan, organise and express their own ideas in stories and poems. They write for a range of purposes, for example the script for a weather forecast. Pupils make collections of different rhyming words and compose sensitive poetry, for example, a poem written by an eight year old to be spoken quietly:

'It was so quiet that I heard a fern leaf fall to the ground.
It was so quiet that I heard a caterpillar bite through its leaf'

64. By the end of Year 6, most pupils write in a range of styles for different purposes, including stories, poems, diaries, letters, newspaper articles and dialogues. They are confident writers and try hard to write with expression. For example one of the oldest pupils writing about different colours wrote:

Red is the burst of hope inside your heart,
Amber is an insect trapped in a jewel.
Indigo is love between two different people,
Navy is the colour of pain.

65. This poem demonstrates a mature understanding of wider issues. The school has worked hard to improve the standards of handwriting without impeding pupils' ability to write confidently and sensitively. It has not yet been totally successful as inaccurate spelling and variable standards of handwriting are reducing the overall standards achieved in national tests.

66. The quality of teaching in most lessons is good throughout the school. Of 11 lessons observed, two were satisfactory, five good and four lessons in the older classes very good. The teachers have high expectations of their classes. They have confidence, and the literacy lessons are well planned. Teachers ensure there is a good balance between direct teaching and pupil participation. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their pupils' ability. They are skilled at asking questions to assess what pupils know, and they use this information to influence their teaching. When lessons are very good, the rate of the pupils' learning is promoted through the teachers' thorough planning which builds systematically on what the pupils can do. For instance, in a Year 6 literacy lesson, the teacher compared tabloid with broadsheet newspapers. She very effectively promoted pupils' learning by skilful questioning which encouraged them to think more deeply and to consider new ideas. Where the teaching is not of such high quality, not enough emphasis is placed on ensuring that the lesson challenges all pupils. This was particularly apparent in Years 3 and 4, where two parallel classes followed similar literacy activities. In one good lesson the teacher, using a book about the body as the shared text, ensured that pupils were

appropriately challenged and well motivated to read the text aloud and with expression. In a similar lesson, the teacher spent far too long looking at the structure of the text such as noting sub-paragraphs, and pupils did not read the text aloud. As a result, they lost interest and became restless.

67. Very good lessons are characterised by the following features:

- effective questioning;
- high expectations and very good class management;
- an infectious enthusiasm and an interesting approach to presenting the text;
- very detailed planning;
- the ability to make the lesson fun.

68. Throughout the school, pupils respond well to their teachers and they learn well. In most lessons, pupils try very hard and behave very well. Homework is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils are conscientious about doing it and they try hard to improve their standards of work. Teachers regularly mark pupils' work and they make appropriate comments that promote confidence, while providing constructive criticism.

MATHEMATICS

69. The results of national tests for seven year olds in 1999 showed the number who attained the required standard for this age group was above average. For the eleven year olds it was average. The recent national test results for 2000 for seven year olds are improved and more pupils achieved the expected standards for their age group. The 2000 results for eleven year olds are also slightly better. Inspection evidence shows that the children entering the school have number skills that are below average. Children starting Year 1 were observed counting on their fingers, had difficulty adding simple numbers up to 10 and did not know what a plus sign meant. Scrutiny of work showed that higher attaining and average pupils of the previous cohort knew numbers to 100, and children of all abilities knew number facts to 20. They could tell the time to half an hour and knew the names of simple shapes. By the age of 11, the pupils had a very good sense of number and could calculate figures mentally with little difficulty. They knew numbers larger than 10,000, they could undertake long multiplication and division, and could convert between decimals and vulgar fractions. Their mental ability in lessons was good, they were able to double numbers up to eight times, and use this skill to help with division and multiplication. The quality of work undertaken was high, with good quality presentation; pupils took pride in their work. However, the pupils had few opportunities to structure their own learning. Pupils with special educational needs learn effectively, with lessons being well planned and structured for their needs. Likewise, pupils learning English as an additional language also achieve well in mathematics. There were no obvious differences in attainment between boys and girls across the school. The results of the 2000 national tests and inspection evidence indicate that the performance of the 11-year-old pupils in the schools is steadily improving.

70. The teaching of mathematics in the school is mainly very good at Key Stage 1, and good in Key Stage 2. The teachers have implemented the Numeracy Strategy effectively across the school. They assess the pupils' work well and use it for future planning. Samples of work and assessments are kept in a portfolio with National Curriculum levels to provide a profile of an individual pupil's progress across the school. Lessons are planned well, resources are prepared before the start of lessons and teachers have high expectations of their pupils. During the lessons, new knowledge is presented clearly, questioning is used well, and children are used to explaining ideas to the rest of the class. Non-teaching assistants are deployed effectively to help low attaining children, and materials are prepared to suit different levels of ability. Teachers, with the aim of extending pupils' experiences, set appropriate homework, for example to find out the price of a range of shopping items under £1, then to increase the price by 9 pence. Because the school has

chosen to place the emphasis of teaching on number skills and mental mathematics, this has been at the expense of investigative work.

71. The children learn well in the mathematics lessons. Their rate of progress across the years is good at Key Stage 1, and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. The progress in individual lessons observed was good throughout the school. Members of staff have focused on developing pupils' number and mental maths skills, so that children have a particularly good sense of number and can calculate well in their heads. However, they have relatively few opportunities to undertake mathematical investigations, to learn independently or to transfer their knowledge into other subject contexts.

72. The subject has a co-ordinator who fulfils her task effectively. There is a subject policy and scheme of work for use across the school. The co-ordinator effectively monitors lessons and teachers' planning across the school. Resources for mathematics are satisfactory and, at the time of the inspection, were distributed throughout the classes. Information and communication technology is only used to a limited extent to assist with children's learning of the subject, and there was little evidence of the use of the environment. There are some computer programs for use in mathematics, but there was little evidence of use of computers for data handling, sequencing and developing the concept of angles. Non-teaching assistants were deployed satisfactorily to assist pupils with special educational needs. The provisional results of the 2000 National Curriculum Tests, and inspection evidence, indicate that the performance of the 11-year-old pupils in the schools is steadily improving.

SCIENCE

73. Standards in science are good. In 1999, the attainment of pupils aged seven, based on teacher assessment, was close to the national average. Inspection evidence, and the results of the more recent teacher assessments, indicates that standards have risen and that pupils are now attaining standards above those expected nationally. The 1999 tests for 11 year olds showed standards to be broadly in line with those found nationally. Again, inspection evidence and the tests taken this year show that nearly all pupils are attaining the expected levels with over half of them reaching the higher level. For pupils aged seven and 11 there has been a good improvement in standards in the past two years. Pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language also achieve well and make the same good progress as their classmates.

74. By the age of seven pupils can use scientific vocabulary with increasing confidence and understanding. For example, in their work about light, they understand the meaning of such terms as translucent, opaque and transparent and use them correctly in their writing. They understand pushing and pulling forces and, through investigative work, decide which force would be used to move, or change the shape of, a specific object. They predict possible outcomes prior to conducting their experiments and can record their findings in a variety of ways. Much of their work is 'hands on' which successfully develops their investigative skills and gives them many good opportunities to work cooperatively with other pupils and discuss their ideas and findings. At the age of eleven pupils have a good understanding of the importance of fairness in their scientific investigations. They complete a wide range of interesting experiments to find out about sound and how it travels; forces, including gravity, upthrust and magnetism; separating mixtures by sieving, filtering and evaporation and investigating a variety of electrical circuits. The results of these, and many other, experiments are carefully recorded and pupils draw thoughtful conclusions about the outcomes using correct scientific terminology. Science work makes a useful contribution to learning in both literacy, through report writing, and numeracy by pupils' recording of results in a variety of tables and graphs.

75. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In all lessons observed the quality of teaching was always satisfactory and more often good with some very good teaching. Teachers have a

good subject knowledge, which enables them to make pertinent teaching points and deliver each lesson in an interesting manner. This helps pupils learn effectively and motivates them to produce their very best work in every lesson. This was well demonstrated in a Year 1 lesson about forces. The teacher explained, using appropriate vocabulary, different pushing and pulling forces very clearly to pupils so that they could understand the differences and apply their knowledge to their experiments with toys they had brought in for the lesson. Pupils of all abilities made very good progress in their learning during the course of this lesson and could demonstrate a secure understanding of the work by the end. Teachers clearly state the objectives of each lesson at the start so that pupils can focus on the learning intentions and know what they have to find out. Management of pupils is particularly good and teachers have high expectations of both work and behaviour. As a result, pupils work diligently, are attentive and make good progress. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and this helps them create a secure and purposeful working atmosphere. This was clearly seen in a Year 6 class studying food chains where the pupils were eager to learn and enthusiastic about their work. They made many sensible contributions to the discussions and demonstrated a mature approach to their learning. Behaviour in lessons is always appropriate and often good or better. Pupils have a good attitude to their work and are very keen to succeed. They work well both individually and in groups and rarely waver from the set task so that time is used effectively and learning opportunities maximised.

76. The co-ordinator gives very good leadership in science. She has worked extremely hard to raise standards in the past two years with a high degree of success. The scheme of work is of good quality and was written by the coordinator who also writes the medium term plans for teachers to ensure that all aspects of the subject are fully covered using a two-year cycle. Through a staff audit of strengths and weaknesses, she identified investigational work as an area for improvement and, through running successful in-service training, has improved the teaching of this aspect considerably. She monitors teachers' short term planning and has monitored some teaching to identify any areas requiring further input. Assessments take place regularly in science, usually when pupils have completed a particular unit of work. These, together with the test results, are used to monitor standards, set targets for specific groups of pupils and to help plan suitable work for the future. The links with the local secondary school are very good. They give good support to the subject through lending good quality resources to the school such as a skeleton being used effectively in a Year 3/4 class. They are also supplying substantial funds for the cluster of local primary schools to enable them to jointly purchase more equipment to further enhance the provision.

ART

77. Art and design is a strength of the school. The standards, when compared with those expected nationally, are good for pupils aged seven and very good for those aged 11. All of the work displayed around the school is of a high quality and some of it is quite breathtaking. The work seen in pupils' sketchbooks is also of a similar high quality as is the work seen in photographs from previous school years. Pupils make good, and often very good, progress as they move through the school.

78. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 can use a wide variety of media and techniques in their work. From an early age they are introduced to colour matching and mixing and can produce attractive artwork using charcoal, pastels, crayons, pencils, chalk and paint. They can choose the media they consider appropriate for the effect they wish to produce as seen in their work matching and extending the colours used in a small sample of a coloured photograph or magazine picture. They look for, and identify patterns, in the environment, which they reproduce with a good degree of accuracy. Close observational drawing is also good and often linked to other subject areas such as science where pupils drew minibeasts. They design and make good quality sculptures of butterflies and evaluate their finished work, suggesting improvements and outlining any difficulties they encountered in the making process. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 work confidently with a very good

understanding of the potential of the materials they use to produce eye-catching effects. The work by Year 6 pupils displayed in the school hall is of excellent quality and is most attractive. It is in the style of Leger and depicts urban and rural landscapes executed in a variety of interesting, and sometimes innovative, ways by the pupils. They also evaluated their work and explained how looking at Leger's pictures had stimulated them and influenced their efforts as had the visit to Leigh-on-Sea where they made preliminary sketches. The water-world display by Years 5 and 6 is amazing and reflects the care with which pupils work. The quality is exceptional as is the range of techniques used that include batik, weaving, paper and fabric collage, printing and painting. They also used a computer program successfully to make pictures of the underwater world. The work by pupils in their sketchbooks is thoughtful and carefully produced. It shows a clear progression in the developing of skills as pupils move through the school. Work in the style of famous artists features in all years from the Lowry pictures in Year 1, the Hockney pictures in Year 3 and on to the Picasso and Monet style work produced by Year 4 pupils.

79. The quality of teaching and learning is always good or very good. Only three lessons were able to be observed during the inspection but judging from these and pupils' finished work, photographic evidence and teachers' plans, it is clear that the teaching is of a high standard throughout the school. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and provide good quality resources for pupils to use. This was clearly seen in a Year 6 class where the teacher had provided pupils with a wide range of reflective objects for their work on distortion. Pupils used these resources very thoughtfully and they successfully chose their own media to produce their very effective pictures. Teachers manage their pupils well and create a calm working atmosphere that enables pupils to concentrate and produce their best efforts. A good example of this was seen in a Year 2 class where pupils were drawing natural objects with a focus on textures, lines and patterns. The teacher's good management skills ensured that pupils could work unhindered and produce good quality sketches. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their work and behave well in lessons.

80. The co-ordinator provides very good leadership in the subject. She supports her colleagues very well, has provided training in the use of sketchbooks and has very good subject knowledge. She has monitored some teaching, keeps very useful records of work produced throughout the school and regularly looks at pupils' sketchbooks and displays to assess standards. One important aspect of the work in art is its cultural links. Pupils have designed and produced super African masks following the visit of a Kenyan who organised an African Workshop. They have also produced Islamic style tiles and designed and embroidered six panels for local church altar cloths.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

81. Few lessons of design and technology were seen during the course of the inspection, with only one lesson in Key Stage 1. There was no opportunity to see samples of work as the inspection took place at the beginning of term, and it was not possible to interview the co-ordinator.

82. The quality of teaching however, is good across the school, and mainly very good at Key Stage 2. Teachers plan their lessons well, they have good ideas for activities with the children and deliver the subject effectively. Resources are used effectively and the lessons are well managed. However, the building works meant access to cooking facilities were difficult, restricting work with food. The class sizes in Years 5 and 6 made work with resistant materials difficult in the classrooms, and there were no specialist teaching spaces. Despite this, the teachers were still able to inspire their pupils, for instance in one lesson, the pupils were captivated by the teacher demonstrating how to use air to move objects. In the best lessons, the teachers did not need to impose discipline, pupils are expected to behave well and get on with their work. In one case, a child compared the work they were doing making simple pumps to the actions of the heart. However, the emphasis of the practical activities in the lessons observed was on drawing or writing rather than making things or handling materials. There was no record of previous pupils' work

available, either of their designs or photographs of things they have made.

83. From the lessons seen, it was obvious that the children learn well and make good progress in the subject, there was little evidence of their capability in designing and making things. They have good drawing skills, and create clearly labelled and informative diagrams. There were some examples of a computer being used in design and technology, however, this tended to be low-level activities, such as printing out labels rather than as a design tool. A great strength is teachers' ability to explain to the whole class the ideas they are working with, using knowledge from other subjects such as science.

84. Pupils enjoy the subject a great deal. They behave well, maintain concentration and undertake their work with enthusiasm. In the best lessons, they have excellent self control and concentrate fully as the teacher demonstrates. In the weaker lessons, the teacher did not use time well and pupils became fidgety.

85. There is a subject policy for design and technology, but some teachers confessed to having a lack of confidence in using it. They were keen to receive ideas on how to develop the subject in their classes. Systems for recording and assessing pupils' achievements are not in place. Although there were trolleys with collections of tools and materials, facilities were poor for delivering the subject. The cooking facility was out of action due to the building works, and the large class sizes in Years 5 and 6 made practical work difficult in the classroom.

GEOGRAPHY

86. The school organises geography so that it is taught in alternate terms, and at the time of the inspection it was not being taught. At this stage in the year, there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the standards attained by pupils. However, work from last year and discussions with pupils shows that they have a developing sense of place through the study of the school, the local area and contrasting localities around the world. Pupils in Key Stage 1 identify ways in which their local area could be made safer. In one good example of map work in Years 3 and 4, pupils had moved from the view from their classroom window to mapping journeys from Wickford to Harlow. Pupils in Year 4 drew maps and plans to a range of scales and recorded physical and human features in the school environment and in Wickford. Field visits take place during the summer term for pupils in Years 5 and 6.

HISTORY

87. Pupils are on course to attain the national expectation by the ages of seven and 11. Lessons are well planned to focus on historical objectives and pupils are making satisfactory progress. They are developing a sense of chronology, dates and terms relating to the passing of time as they move through the school. In Year 1 pupils looked at pictures of famous people and discussed reasons why they are famous. They are beginning to have an awareness of past and present, which is built on effectively by teachers in Year 2 where pupils were finding information about a famous person by looking at books and old pictures and suggesting the kinds of questions they might ask to gain historical knowledge. Pupils also have an early understanding of using information sources to discover answers to simple questions about the past. By Years 5 and 6, pupils are using increasingly complex sources of evidence to find out about the past, responding to questions such as 'what does this source of information tell us?' They are able to organise and communicate their findings, for example comparisons between Roman and Celtic ways of life recorded in table form; writing in different formats such as letters, notating pictures and recording findings in bullet points.

88. Pupils have positive attitudes to the study of history. They listen attentively, show interest and sustain concentration well. This is in response to the good quality of teaching. Teachers make

their lessons interesting and have established clear expectations about behaviour, which they reinforce consistently.

89. Teaching is good across the school, with some very good features in Key Stage 2. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They know what sort of questions to ask to help pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding, for example, 'What do you see in this picture that gives you a clue that it was taken in the past?' Teaching methods successfully achieve a balance between giving pupils information and enabling them to engage in enquiry. For example, a very good selection of resources was provided to help pupils in Years 5 and 6 to investigate Victorian schools, including pictures, extracts from log books, contemporary accounts and artefacts such as ink wells, pens, slates and copy books. In the best lessons questions are challenging and prompt pupils to interpret evidence from different sources. Older pupils apply previous knowledge, drawing on their own experience and making sensible comparisons. In Year 4 effective questioning about the Tudors enabled pupils to draw evidence from pictures about differences between rich and poor in Tudor times.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

90. Information technology [ICT] is not covered consistently across the school to support the curriculum and develop pupils' skills. Some teachers lack confidence to teach the subject effectively. This has been complicated further by the disruption to the ICT suite at the time of the inspection. The combination of these factors has prevented the full development of pupils' skills and effective use of the technology. During the inspection, the ICT suite had been temporarily disbanded due to building works, with computers dispersed around the classes. This meant that access to the Internet was impossible. Recent staff changes have disrupted co-ordination of the subject with two changes of co-ordinator in a short time, preventing effective implementation of the school's development plan. Several computers were broken, preventing classes from including ICT work in their lessons during the inspection. There were no facilities for children in Years 5 and 6 to undertake work with control technology, or to take measurements.

91. There were few opportunities to see computer skills being taught as a subject during the inspection. In Key Stage 1, three lessons were seen where teachers introduced ICT activities to their class. In all cases, the teaching was good. Teachers planned their lessons well, delivered information clearly, had good relationships with their pupils and had sufficient subject knowledge for the activities undertaken. The teachers followed up this work by allowing groups to practise using the computer systems throughout the week. However, this caused disruption to other lessons and prevented pupils from using computers for other subjects. There is evidence that computers are used in other subjects, for example, to create labels as a part of a design and technology lesson. No teaching was observed at Key Stage 2, although pupils used a computer to support their work in other lessons. For instance, a mathematical game was used in a numeracy lesson. In another case, pupils were word processing a design brief as a part of a design and technology lesson. The school is planning to introduce work on measurement during the coming year. ICT activities are not commonly included into lesson planning in Key Stage 2.

92. Learning in ICT is satisfactory. By the age of 11, pupils can use the computer confidently for a range of activities, but they have had fragmented experiences of certain parts of the curriculum. They use a range of programs, type effectively, edit, save and print their work independently. They had used word processors, for example, to plan a simple dinner party. They draw graphs and calculate numbers. Prior to the building refurbishment, they used the Internet to search for information and to create a sample school web page. They had also used some other forms of technology. For instance, they had used a cassette recorder to record music and the younger pupils used electronic music keyboards and robots. Each week, a group of Year 5 and 6 pupils benefit from a tutorial to cover basic skills at the local technology college. This initiative had proved to be very successful.

93. In the areas of the subject where pupils have adequate experience, attainment in ICT is satisfactory. Pupils are confident in their ability to use a computer by the time they are 11. They can use the keyboard and the mouse and sort out simple problems with the technology. However, there are other areas where experience is fragmented. The use of ICT to create and search data was only apparent in one year, where information is used to draw simple graphs. There is no evidence of pupils in Key Stage 2 controlling devices with the computer, although a small programmable robot was used in Key Stage 1. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work. They are keen to use the technology, and the majority of those interviewed have access to a computer at home, which they use for games, finding out information and doing their homework. Behaviour is good and pupils take care with the computers and they concentrate well.

MUSIC

94. Pupils are on course to achieve the national expectation by the time they are seven but they do not sustain their good progress through Key Stage 2. By the time they are 11 they are below the expected standards. Pupils who are currently in Key Stage 2 have not previously experienced a coherent and progressive music curriculum. From the age of seven listening is not well developed. Many pupils find it difficult to maintain a steady pulse and pupils in Years 3 and 4 became very quickly out of time with the accompanying tape when singing and clapping. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 composed rhythm patterns, recorded them on a grid score and used body percussion and unpitched instruments to perform them. However, rhythmic accuracy and the ability to combine sounds to produce an intended effect are underdeveloped for many pupils. Standards of performance in singing are below expectation, although pupils sing regularly and with enjoyment in assemblies, have taken part in a local music festival and perform to elderly people in the locality. They do not rehearse in ways which will refine their performance, and there is little attention to breathing or posture (most singing is done sitting on the floor, both in classrooms and in the hall), and insufficient attention is given to dynamics or to the character of the music.

95. Teaching is good with very good features in lessons for pupils up to age seven. Teachers are effectively combining listening with performing and pupils make good progress. Year 1 pupils are beginning to understand rhythm and beat. Most are able to copy a regular pulse accurately. They enjoyed learning a song about clocks and made up additional verses very successfully, which they performed several times, improving their performance each time. Their listening skills are developing well. They respond positively to music they hear, for example, they enjoyed listening to an extract from Hary Janos by Kodaly which they described accurately as being 'about clocks'. They identified the instruments and sounds correctly. Teaching from age 7 was satisfactory in the lessons seen. Teachers plan carefully but rely heavily on a published scheme and taped accompaniments. They need to improve their subject knowledge and understanding in order to become more confident in teaching music at this level. They also need to be more confident in talking about the musical elements and using technical terms. The development of strategies for counting in accurately at the beginning of a song or piece of music, for example, '1, 2, 3' when there are 3 beats in a bar, and for pitching a song to start in tune, using a chime bar, would support pupils' learning.

96. Pupils enjoy music and their response is positive. The youngest children sustained their interest and concentration extremely well, listened carefully and sang with enjoyment; older pupils also concentrate well, staying very focused on their tasks. The choir and recorder club, which had just started for the term during the inspection week, are popular and very well attended by pupils from Year 2 upwards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

97. Standards attained in physical education are as expected for the age and ability of the

pupils throughout the school. They are similar to those expected in schools nationally. Only dance and games lessons were observed during the inspection but from looking at school and teachers' planning it is clear that all aspects of the subject are covered over time, including swimming, athletics, gymnastics and adventurous activities. The school has made commendable efforts to ensure that the provision has remained at such a level despite the recent appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy.

98. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 understand the need for correct warm up activities and are learning to understand the beneficial effects of exercise on the body. They can bounce a variety of different sized balls on the ground and then catch them successfully. More able pupils can move around whilst bouncing and catching a ball. They use space well and understand the importance of rules when playing a small-sided game. Pupils in Year 3 can move in time to music reflecting the mood of the music and the theme of the lesson. This was about landing on a new planet and investigating their surroundings. This they did effectively individually and then with a partner, devising a sequence to demonstrate to their classmates. Year 6 pupils also dance with feeling and expression. Their theme was the rainforest and they responded well to the music, using movements to show growth and good imaginative work in groups. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 take part in good quality outdoor and adventurous activities during a day at the Harlow Outdoor Pursuits Centre. The activities include climbing, kayaking and problem solving and are very popular with pupils who learn a number of new skills in a concentrated time. Year 6 pupils have a residential trip to the Arethusa Centre in Kent where they can also learn new outdoor skills. By the time they leave the school the vast majority of pupils can swim at least twenty-five metres and are confident in water.

99. The quality of teaching and learning is good with teachers having good subject knowledge. Teachers manage their pupils particularly well and use time effectively to keep pupils active throughout lessons. Pupils have a good attitude to the subject and their behaviour is always good. This has an extremely positive effect on learning as pupils remain focused on the learning intentions throughout each lesson. A brisk and appropriate warm up at the start of each games and dance lesson is followed by the main learning activity which is well planned to build on the prior attainment of all pupils and help them learn effectively. Pupils dress correctly for lessons and teachers fully address all health and safety issues. The curriculum is enriched through a number of extracurricular activities such as dance and football clubs. The school holds an annual sports day that is well attended and much enjoyed by parents. Pupils take part in the district athletics meeting against other schools. There is a scheme of work, which is being used well to help teachers plan lessons but assessing, and recording procedures to monitor standards of attainment are not yet in place.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

100. Pupils are on course to achieve the standards required by the Essex Agreed Syllabus by the time they are seven and 11. In Year 2, pupils explored their feelings and emotions sensitively as part of a unit of work on 'Myself', while the oldest pupils in Key Stage 2 were able to explain the physical and spiritual needs of human beings. This included identifying some reasons why belief in God is important for some people. The youngest pupils in Key Stage 2 understand how the idea that each person is special can be expressed through stories and are familiar with stories that Jesus told. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 retold and illustrated the parable of the Lost Sheep in a lively and often thoughtful manner. They drew out the deeper meanings of the story. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work. They tackle written tasks thoughtfully, take the issues raised in lessons seriously and work well, both independently and in collaboration with others.

101. Teaching is good. Teachers successfully create a climate in which pupils feel secure to reflect on, share and develop their thoughts and ideas. Questioning is often used well. Teachers listen carefully to pupils and build on their answers. Lessons are well planned to move from the implicit to the explicit areas of religious education, although the link between these aspects sometimes needs to be more clearly established by teachers. Effective management of the subject by the co-ordinator is having a positive impact on attainment. She has a good subject knowledge and understanding. There are newly developed schemes of work in place, which will help to ensure a more coherent coverage of the Agreed Syllabus than was previously the case. The next steps should be to develop a broader range of tasks, and ways of assessing and recording pupils' attainment in religious education.

102. The subject makes an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual development by encouraging them to develop a reflective stance. For example, one Year 6 pupil, when considering why humans have particular needs wrote: 'I need love and care so that I can learn to love and care for somebody else.' Pupils visit local churches and have opportunities to meet and interview religious leaders from churches in the area as part of their course of study.