

INSPECTION REPORT

WALTHAM HOLY CROSS INFANT SCHOOL

Waltham Abbey

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115286

Headteacher: Mrs L Hodgson

Reporting inspector: Mr G R Logan
11810

Dates of inspection: 4 - 7 June 2001

Inspection number: 230211

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Quendon Drive Waltham Abbey Essex
Postcode:	EN9 1LG
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Lisher
Date of previous inspection:	29 – 30 June 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11810	Mr G R Logan	Registered inspector	Mathematics Physical education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
13481	Mr D Binfield	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2740	Mrs B Barratt	Team inspector	English Geography History Equal opportunities	
22831	Mr C Lewis	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology The foundation stage Special educational needs	
14806	Mr J Stevens	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Music Religious education English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Waltham Holy Cross Infant School is a foundation infant school with 222 pupils in the main school; 123 boys and 99 girls. In addition, there are 60 children, 32 boys and 28 girls, attending part-time in the pre-reception class. This class provides pre-school experience for children beyond their fourth birthday for one or two terms prior to entering the reception classes. Children's attainment on entry to reception is average, although younger children, and those who enter the reception classes with no pre-school educational experience, typically have below average scores in speaking and listening and in personal and social development. Thirty-six pupils have special educational needs; none of these have Statements of Special Educational Needs. Both proportions are below the national average. Although a small number of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, there are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. Fifteen per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is broadly in line with the national average. Pupil mobility figures indicate that around one eighth of pupils leave or join the school, at times other than at the start and end of the year. The school is involved in a number of initiatives, including the Early Reading Research Project, the Essex Action Research Project on boys' achievement and the Essex Bridging Project on pupils' transition between infant and junior schools. The school is an active member of a consortium of schools which provide initial teacher training.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The headteacher is providing outstanding leadership for the school; this has been a crucial factor in the tremendous progress made in the last three years. She is well supported by her deputy, other staff and governing body. There is a strong, shared commitment to raising standards and to ensuring that the school provides an experience of high quality for its pupils. The quality of teaching is good, both in the Foundation Stage and in the main school, with some very good or excellent teaching across the age range. Children have a high quality start in the pre-reception and reception classes. The improved teaching since the last inspection has led to much better standards being achieved across the school. Almost all pupils are now making good or very good progress. Standards in a number of subjects, including English and mathematics, are now above average; in none are standards less than satisfactory. There is very good support, both for pupils with special educational needs and for the gifted and talented. The curriculum has been successfully developed and now provides a rich range of opportunities for pupils, with a strong extra-curricular programme. There are very good care arrangements. Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress and the partnership with parents is very strong. The school receives funding at a level well above the average. However, the school's many strengths outweigh the few areas for development. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the school; this is reflected in the very good improvement which the school has made.
- Standards have improved significantly and are now above average in the key areas of English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The personal development of the pupils and the relationships within the school are excellent.
- The curriculum has been imaginatively developed and provides a rich experience for pupils.
- The partnership with parents is very strong.

What could be improved

- While standards in science and information and communication technology are satisfactory, there is scope for further improvement in these areas.
- Some aspects of the teaching, such as the consistency of marking of pupils' work, could be improved.

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

This is a very good school, which provides a high quality education for its pupils; standards have risen, teaching is good and relationships are excellent.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Following its initial inspection in December 1997, the school was found to have many shortcomings and was made subject to Special Measures. By June 1999, when a subsequent inspection was conducted, there had been substantial improvements and the school was providing an acceptable standard of education. Some areas of concern remained, however, and these have been central to the school's programme of development since that time. Standards of attainment, particularly in English and mathematics and in many of the non-core subjects, have shown considerable improvement. The quality of teaching is now a strength. The use of assessment data to enable teachers to plan future work for pupils has improved. The monitoring role of subject co-ordinators has improved. Staff who manage subjects do so much better and this is helping to raise standards across the curriculum. The curriculum gives pupils a much better range of opportunities. The improvement in attendance recorded up to 1999 has been sustained. The school has built strongly upon the improvements recorded in 1999 and the progress made in the intervening period has been very good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
Reading	D	C	C	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Writing	E	C	C	C	
Mathematics	E	B	D	E	

The national test results for seven-year-olds in 2000 were average in reading and writing and below average in mathematics, compared to the national average. Standards in 2000 were average in writing, below average in reading and well below average in mathematics when compared to those of pupils from similar schools. Standards have risen over a four year period. Inspection evidence and the 2001 test data confirm that the proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected level has risen significantly in reading and mathematics and particularly in writing. Standards are also above the expected level in art and design, history and physical education and in line with the level expected in the remaining subjects of the curriculum. The majority of children enter the reception classes with average levels of prior attainment. The youngest children achieve well, largely because of the very good provision in the Foundation Stage. This gives them a very good start. Pupils make good, and rapidly improving, progress as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress overall.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to learn and work hard to achieve their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Standards of behaviour are very high in and out of lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Provision for personal development is outstanding, helped by a full programme of activities including visits and school clubs. Relationships throughout the school are excellent.
Attendance	Satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence has been reduced to a low level.

Pupils' very positive attitudes and very high standards of behaviour, the excellent relationships in the school and the high quality opportunities provided for their personal development all contribute to the very effective learning evident in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	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 has improved significantly since the second inspection, in 1999, and is now a strength of the school. In 1999, one-third of the teaching was good. Almost four-fifths of the teaching is now good or better, with no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching in the Foundation Stage achieves a high level of consistency, with good or very good teaching in all but one of the lessons observed, and is good overall. Teaching is also good in Years 1 and 2, although there is more variability between classes. Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations that pupils will achieve well. The best teaching sustains a brisk pace and catches pupils' enthusiasm. This promotes pupils' learning effectively. Questioning is used well. Staff manage classes very effectively and build excellent relationships with pupils. The improved quality of teaching is reflected in the steadily rising standards across the curriculum and the increased progress which pupils are making. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is good. Teachers are very effective in teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy - this is seen in the improved standards - but there is also a strong focus on the development of skills in other areas of the curriculum, such as art and design, history and physical education. Opportunities to extend literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum are improving. The very good support provided by learning support staff has a positive effect on the quality of pupils' learning, particularly those with special educational needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage and for those in the main school has been imaginatively developed, to provide a rich range of opportunities. The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; pupils are supported well, particularly by learning support staff, and make good progress towards the targets set for them.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good; the provision for moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils are very clear about the difference between right and wrong. The provision for spiritual development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A very supportive and caring environment is provided. Effective systems are in place to monitor academic progress and personal development. Assessment procedures are very good and information is used very well to support the planning of future work.

The school's partnership with parents is very good. Parents value the work of the school. They receive good information about how their children are getting on. All pupils benefit from the high quality curriculum and very good opportunities for learning which are provided by the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the school and has been instrumental in raising standards of attainment and in nurturing the school's many strengths. She is strongly supported by the deputy headteacher and senior staff, who together play a major part in moving the school forward.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are committed to the success of the school and have an increasing involvement in its life and work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is now very effectively using the analysis of test results. It successfully uses monitoring and evaluation procedures to target improvement. This has been a significant factor in the improvement in the standards being achieved.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school uses resources very efficiently, linked closely to improvement planning and current educational priorities. It implements principles of best value well when purchasing services and committing to other expenditure.

The headteacher, working closely with senior staff and a very supportive governing body, has established a highly successful team approach. Subject co-ordinators are playing an increasingly effective role in supporting colleagues and are contributing well to the improved standards being achieved. The school has a good number of effective staff. Learning support staff are enthusiastic and well managed and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. The accommodation is good and is maintained to a high standard. Learning resources are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school and make good progress. • The high standards of behaviour. • Teaching is good. • The very good relationships with parents. • Leadership and management. • The many improvements made in recent years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information to parents about children's progress.

Inspectors fully endorse parents' positive views. Parents are well informed about children's progress in the annual written reports and at consultation meetings with teachers during the autumn and summer terms. The facility for a meeting in the spring term, currently for parents of Year 2 pupils, is to be extended to the reception and Year 1 classes from 2002.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In the 2000 national tests for pupils aged seven, standards were average in reading and writing, and well below average in mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, standards of attainment were average in writing, below average in reading and well below average in mathematics. The overall scores in all areas other than science exceeded the national averages in 2000, but were affected because too few pupils achieved the challenging higher level. Standards have improved steadily in the last four years, although there was a dip in all subjects in 1998. The need to continue to raise pupils' attainment and improve their progress was an issue raised at the 1999 inspection. The evidence indicates that the school has been successful in doing so and there has been a significant improvement, particularly in mathematics and English, since that time. The results for 2001 became available prior to the inspection. These show a further, substantial improvement in standards, particularly in writing, mathematics and science, with the school exceeding its targets in all subjects and with a significant improvement in attainment at Level 3, where the school's targets were also exceeded in three out of four subjects. The standards achieved in 2001 comfortably exceed the national average figures for 2000. There is no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys.
2. Inspection evidence indicates that the standards currently attained by pupils aged seven largely reflect the latest test results, with attainment in reading and mathematics above expectation, attainment in writing well above expectation and attainment in science in line with what is expected. This is a reflection of the success of a number of initiatives to promote improved standards, including the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, the local education authority Early Reading Project and the 'setting' of pupils to boost the attainment of specific groups. It also reflects the steady improvement in the quality and consistency of teaching, which was identified during the inspection.
3. Children make good progress in the pre-reception class, with the majority achieving satisfactory standards. Their attainment in most areas is around the level expected for their age when they enter reception, although for some, attainment is above average. This is confirmed by the initial assessments that are undertaken by teachers on entry to reception, using the local education authority's baseline scheme. By the time the reception children are ready to start in Year 1, almost all children achieve, and the majority exceed, the Early Learning Goals¹ in all six areas of learning.
4. The pattern of attainment when children enter reception is varied. Overall, attainment on entry to the reception classes is broadly average, but there are some weaker aspects: occasionally in mathematics, often in writing and almost always in personal and social development. This is mainly because children have a range of experiences before they enter reception. Around half come through the pre-reception class, where some will have had two terms, but others only one term of pre-school experience. Of the remainder, who enter reception directly, around half will have been in playgroups for half-day sessions, while the others will have had no pre-school provision at all. Those who score best on the baseline test are those with two terms' pre-reception class experience. Where standards are lower, this tends to be the youngest children and those with no prior educational experience. For a significant proportion of children, there is much ground to be made up, in spite of the very good start provided in the Foundation Stage classes, and they are making increasingly good progress to reach, in many cases, the above average standards currently evident in the school.
5. Standards in literacy are above average. They have improved steadily over the last four years. By the age of seven, all pupils listen well and express themselves confidently. They read with improving fluency and accuracy and with increasing enjoyment. Higher-attaining pupils are

¹ Early Learning Goals - these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer mainly to achievements children make in connection with the following six areas of learning: communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development. There are many goals for each area of learning.

confident, independent readers, who find great enjoyment in books. Average and lower-attaining pupils also have very positive attitudes towards reading and work hard and successfully in improving their skills, making very effective use of a range of cues to aid word recognition and increase their understanding of the text. Pupils have a good range of vocabulary. They write well for a range of purposes, and with increasing skill in extended descriptive and narrative writing, not only in English but in subjects such as history. Letters are well formed and usually joined up: spelling, punctuation and grammar are usually correct.

6. Standards in numeracy are also above average. There is a systematic approach to the teaching and learning of basic mathematical skills and pupils acquire a secure knowledge of place value, as well as the procedures which enable them to add and subtract one, two or, eventually, three digit numbers. They learn to use units of time, weight, measure and capacity and recognise the features of two and three-dimensional shapes. They record data and represent them in graphs and charts. There are good opportunities for pupils to proceed to challenging, higher level work when they are ready to do so.
7. Standards in science have improved from being well below average and are now average. Pupils in Year 1 know about different materials and have an understanding of forces and of how sound travels. In Year 2, pupils demonstrate secure knowledge of pushing and pulling forces and of living things. Opportunities for the development of investigative skills have improved and are now good.
8. Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology is in line with the expected level by the age of seven. Pupils' skills are improving rapidly. However, the subject had limited priority until the computer suite was installed recently. There are still too few opportunities to use information and communication technology across the curriculum.
9. Standards in religious education are in line with those recommended in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils aged seven attain standards above national expectations in art and design, history and physical education and in line with national expectations in design and technology, geography and music.
10. Pupils with special educational needs, at all stages of the Code of Practice², make good progress in relation to their abilities and their Individual Education Plans. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and are generally well behaved.
11. The school assembles a wide range of information on pupils' prior attainment and has implemented comprehensive target-setting for individuals across the school. Targets were set appropriately for the standards pupils were expected to attain in the end of key stage tests in 2001 and challenging targets are in place for 2002. The school has exceeded its targets in English and mathematics in 2001.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They are keen to come to school and join in lessons and other activities with enthusiasm. Pupils co-operate well with one another when working in small groups. They listen attentively and respond well during discussions. Written and practical tasks are undertaken well, reflecting a willingness to work hard and to the best of their ability. For example, Year 2 pupils showed sustained interest in different winding mechanisms and this contributed well to a successful design and technology lesson. Attitudes to learning have further improved since the 1999 inspection and this has a very positive effect upon their standards.
13. Behaviour is very good. This is evident during lessons, in the dining hall and at playtimes. Pupils have a clear understanding of the high standards expected. They are polite to visitors and show respect for one another. Staff provide a friendly and supportive atmosphere, which acts as an excellent example for the children. The very small number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds integrate well into the life of the school. Bullying very rarely arises and

² Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.

there were no exclusions last year. Parents are understandably delighted with the high standards of behaviour, which contribute strongly to the effective learning environment.

14. An outstanding strength of the school lies in the excellent relationships which exist, both between pupils and between pupils and staff, together with the goodwill shown by pupils, staff, governors and parents. The school is to be commended on the quality of the improvements which have been introduced over the last three years.
15. Attendance is satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average for primary schools. The improvements made in the two years to 1999 have been sustained and the level of unauthorised absence is below average. Authorised absence is still affected by the rather high level of family holidays taken in term time, although the effect of this has been reduced in the current academic year. Pupils arrive punctually. Lessons and other activities start promptly and teachers ensure that very good use is made of available lesson times.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. At the last inspection in 1999, the quality of teaching remained a concern. The quality of teaching had improved significantly since the first inspection of the school. All of the teaching was, by then, at least satisfactory and around one-third was good. However, many of the staff were relatively new to the school and there was a concern that expectations of what pupils could be achieving were not yet high enough.
17. Current inspection evidence indicates that there has been a further, very good improvement in teaching quality. This is now good, overall, with a proportion of very good or excellent teaching, and is having a significant effect on pupils' attainment and achievement. Across the school, the teaching seen is satisfactory or better in all lessons. It is very good or excellent in 16 per cent, good in 62 per cent and satisfactory in 22 per cent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.
18. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall and frequently very good. More than nine out of every ten lessons observed were of good, or better, quality. The very good quality and range of learning opportunities and the ongoing assessment of pupils' attainment enable pupils to make good progress. Teaching is very well centred on the Early Learning Goals for pupils under five years. Teaching in the pre-reception class is good and is characterised by very good teamwork and liaison between the Foundation Stage co-ordinator and the hard-working and enthusiastic teaching assistants. They plan and resource a good range of well-supported, interesting and challenging activities, model a range of appropriate behaviour and constantly stress the development of speaking and listening and personal and social skills. Teaching in the reception classes ranges from very good to satisfactory and is good, overall. Teachers manage pupils very well, have high but realistic expectations of children, and utilise teaching methods which inspire curiosity and learning. This represents a significant improvement in teaching and attainment in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection.
19. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 1, with seven-tenths of teaching being good or very good. The percentage of good teaching is significantly higher in Year 2 (over four-fifths) than in Year 1 (just over half), reflecting merely adequate, as against consistently good, teaching in one of the classes. Overall, however, high-quality teaching and the high expectations of the staff are having a very positive effect upon pupils' attitudes, behaviour and learning and are closely linked to the significantly higher standards now being achieved.
20. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good, although there is further work to be done to increase their confidence in teaching information and communication technology. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics has improved as a result of the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies, which provide a tight framework for teaching and learning and clear guidance for teachers. Assessment is now a strength. Assessment information is being used well to ensure that planned activities match pupils' varying needs and prior attainment and work is usually sharply matched to pupils' needs. Higher-attaining pupils are planned for well. Short-term planning is very good. Learning objectives are clearly defined and provide a framework for every lesson. There has been an increased focus on planning the use of literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects. The school places considerable emphasis upon the teaching of basic skills, not only of literacy and numeracy but in other areas of the curriculum, such as physical education, history, science and art and design. While there has been an

improvement in planning the integration of information and communication technology in subjects across the curriculum, there is scope for further development here.

21. The quality of the marking of pupils' work is good, overall. The best practice places emphasis on what pupils need to do to improve their work further. However, practice varies in quality and some work is superficially marked, with few pointers for improvement provided. The school is now setting targets for individual pupils and adjusting these on a regular basis. This was seen in mathematics and literacy. Homework procedures are very effective across the school.
22. A key strength of teaching is the very effective way in which staff manage pupils and there is a very good consistency of approach through the school. Teachers use a range of appropriate teaching methods. These include whole-class teaching, group and individual work. Support staff make a very good contribution to pupils' learning and progress. In most classes, the pace of lessons is very brisk and this motivates pupils well. Almost no time is wasted. This was a common feature in all of the physical education sessions observed. When a good pace is expected, pupils complete sufficient work and extend their learning further.
23. Teachers provide good quality support and appropriate tasks for pupils with special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator liaises with teachers and support staff appropriately. The two learning support assistants with particular responsibility for special educational needs work very well with class teachers; they are informed of lesson content in advance of lessons, contribute well to the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress and provide pupils with an appropriate blend of help and challenge. Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into the school community.
24. The following are examples of how excellent and very good teaching positively affects pupils' learning:
 - In an excellent literacy lesson in Year 2, pupils were involved in an extended project, where they were learning about the nature and purpose of newspapers. They were stimulated by the nature of the task and the effective demonstration of interviewing skills. Planning was very detailed and resources were well prepared. The newspaper was used well to relate learning to pupils' own experiences. This required them to develop high level skills – accurate reading of the text, close observation, interpretation and perseverance. This encouraged a very positive response. They concentrated very well and worked productively together. Individual learning needs were planned for skilfully. Overall, pupils made very good progress and were very well supported in a tightly-managed session.
 - In a very successful reception physical development lesson, children changed independently and lined up briskly to walk to the hall. The warm-up activities were lively and effective. The teacher had very high expectations of what pupils could achieve. She provided challenging activities in the main part of the lesson, which centred on balancing, throwing and catching. She encouraged them to comment on how well they were doing and who around them was doing particularly well. There was a brisk succession of activities, enabling pupils to build on previous work. Relationships were excellent. There were clear gains in learning and improved skills by the end of the lesson.

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

25. Previous inspection reports indicated that the curriculum was broad. The 1997 report stated, however, that the curriculum was not balanced and there was insufficient depth of coverage in many subjects. There was no structured curriculum overview or guarantee that subjects were taught regularly. Links to the National Curriculum were inadequate. The 1999 report indicated that significant progress had been made. Planning had improved. The school had still to review the allocation of time to some subjects and to proceed with the revision of subject documentation. All these concerns have now been tackled. The breadth and balance of the whole curriculum is now very good. The school provides good coverage of all National Curriculum subjects. It meets all statutory requirements and the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education is in place. The quality and range of learning opportunities at both the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are very good and the curriculum provides considerable breadth of opportunities for pupils.

26. Good procedures for curricular planning have been developed. Detailed policies and schemes of work for all subjects are now in place. Planning takes place in year groups, with comprehensive half-term, weekly and daily plans. The long-term planning indicates what topics are to be taught each term. The medium-term planning gives clear guidance as to learning objectives and teaching strategies. Weekly and daily plans show the teachers' short term and lesson plans. There are specific learning objectives for each lesson and these are routinely shared with pupils and often displayed in classrooms. Across the year groups, teachers plan together effectively.
27. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented effectively. The Early Reading Research Project and the support for the development of writing in particular enhance pupils' literacy skills. The effectiveness of the implementation of the strategy for teaching numeracy skills is good. The school provides very good equality of access to the curriculum regardless of gender, ability or race. A few able and gifted pupils have been identified and are supported well. A policy is in place which acknowledges the needs of such pupils. The school actively promotes their interests by strategies such as the setting arrangements in Year 2 and the flexible movement of pupils between year groups where individuals need extended opportunities in particular subjects, such as mathematics.
28. Arrangements for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs are good. A comprehensive register of special educational needs is kept by the special educational needs co-ordinator and detailed, regularly reviewed individual educational plans are provided for pupils on the register. At the time of inspection there were no pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs. The very positive family atmosphere of the school promotes the effective inclusion of pupils with special educational needs into every aspect of the school's life.
29. The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent for an infant school. There is a recorder club, a choir session each week and a special choir. There are two gymnastics clubs and a mini-movers club, which provides gymnastics for the younger children. Football for both girls and boys is available after school, with coaching from professional footballers. The Upstarts club provides team games and the development of ball skills. Occasionally, gardening takes place in the courtyard garden.
30. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good. It is timetabled discretely, although some aspects are taught within the religious education curriculum. The scheme involves the school nurse and community policeman. They cover such topics as 'stranger danger', 999 calls and road safety. The attached police officer talks to pupils once a term. The nurse, in addition to her other responsibilities, talks to the pupils about healthy eating. There is a health education policy and sex education statement. Sex education is not taught directly but questions are answered and dealt with in an honest way.
31. Excellent provision is made for pupils' personal development. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop their social skills and undertake activities that widen their range of experience and knowledge. Curriculum activities are supported well by talks from visiting speakers, including the clergy, the community police officer and the school nurse. Educational visits are made in the locality and to a range of venues including museums and theatres. There is a good range of school clubs, which enable pupils to pursue interests in sport, music and other areas. Fund-raising activities to support charities give pupils an understanding of the needs of others.
32. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is very good. The school provides a wide range of visits to enrich the curriculum further. Visits are made to the Natural History Museum and the theatre in Harlow, together with other museums, zoological gardens, castles and churches. In addition there is a programme for fund-raising including genetic research, the NSPCC and Help the Aged. They enter a variety of competitions. Last year the school committed itself to "Music Live" with the BBC where every child either sang or played a musical instrument. There have been artists in residence and visiting theatre groups which have involved pupils in their productions. Each year, pupils undertake a project promoted by the local newspaper. This enables them to become familiar with newspapers.
33. The constructiveness of relationships with partner institutions is very good. All six infant and primary schools in the area are closely linked. The headteachers have a consortium which plans joint in-service training. They are involved in the Essex Bridging Project. Year 2 teachers

in the infant school work very closely with Year 3 teachers in the junior school. Work started in Year 2 is continued in Year 3. Targets for pupils which are set in the infant school are also carried forward to Year 3. The school is also one of ten schools in a Schools Consortium for Initial Teacher Training scheme, which is accredited by the Teachers Training Agency and affiliated to Anglia Polytechnic University.

34. The school makes very good provision overall for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is very good improvement since the previous inspection, when provision was judged to be satisfactory.
35. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual development. Through the religious education programme, themes such as "Sharing and Caring" in the daily school assemblies and "Circle Time" lessons which offer time for reflection, the school provides pupils with knowledge and insight into values and beliefs and enables them to reflect on their and others' experiences. The school complies with statutory regulations for a daily act of collective worship.
36. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. There is a strong, clear, whole-school ethos and a moral code for good behaviour, which is promoted consistently throughout the school by all school staff, who provide very good role-models. The whole-school programme of themes for assemblies relating to real life issues and the use of "Circle Time" to discuss issues allow pupils time to reflect on and consider their behaviour.
37. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. From the time they enter the school, pupils are encouraged to work co-operatively, take responsibility for their work, care for others and to be as independent as possible. Children are expected to collect and return resources from the time of entry to the Foundation Stage. Responsibilities increase as pupils get older - for example, Year 2 pupils help and guide reception pupils when they first start school and a "buddy" system is in place to support new entrants to the school. Pupils support a range of charities through fund-raising and are involved in a wide range of activities such as "Red Nose Day" and the very effective recycling project supported by the School Waste Action Group.
38. The provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Pupils are taught to appreciate their own cultural traditions, taking part in a range of local events and visiting local historical and cultural sites. Pupils are given regular opportunities to develop an understanding of the diversity of other cultures. They read stories from other cultures in literacy lessons, look at art from other cultures and study world faiths in religious education. During the school year a very good range of visitors talk to, perform for, and work with, the pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. Very good arrangements are in place for pupils' welfare. The pupils and their parents appreciate the caring and supportive environment provided.
40. A strong emphasis is placed on health and safety arrangements, including a comprehensive training programme for staff. Illness and accidents are dealt with efficiently and appropriate records are maintained. The governors' premises committee receives termly reports on safety aspects. Regular inspections of buildings and equipment are undertaken and risk assessment measures are in place. Child protection issues are handled effectively and all staff are familiar with the relevant procedures. Criticisms about this aspect in the 1997 report were quickly addressed. The close liaison with the adjacent junior school ensures that pupils are well prepared for transfer. This is helped by participation in the Essex Bridging Project, which is aimed at easing the transition process.
41. Lessons on aspects of health education are a regular feature of the curriculum, including talks by the school nurse. The school is participating in the Healthy Schools initiative and the Safer Journeys to School project. In recent weeks, the arrangements for drinks at lunch time for children bringing packed lunches have been revised to take into account parents' views and with due regard for health considerations.
42. Procedures for the monitoring of academic progress and personal development are very good. Class teachers know their pupils well and maintain records that enable good quality information

to be provided to parents in written and oral reports. Key information is kept on pupil profile sheets. Records relating to pupils with special educational needs have been harmonised so that the infant and junior schools operate the same system. A target system for work in the core subjects on a school, class and individual basis has been introduced. This is in the early stages of development. There is scope for improvement in tracking pupils' performance against targets in order to achieve greater consistency between classes and by making better use of information and communication technology.

43. There is good use of assessment procedures to identify pupils with special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator maintains a detailed and comprehensive register of special educational needs pupils; there are appropriate procedures for placing pupils on the register and Individual Education Plans are reviewed regularly.
44. The school has good systems for promoting regular attendance. Expectations are made clear to parents in the prospectus, newsletters and at meetings. Registration and follow-up procedures are undertaken efficiently. The education welfare officer and a designated governor undertake important tasks in helping to deal with individual problems that arise. Such work has been influential in securing low levels of unauthorised absence. Whilst the incidence of authorised absence due to family holidays during the school term is lower in the current year, efforts to seek further improvements continue.
45. Very good arrangements are in place to promote high standards of behaviour. The rewards and sanctions systems are implemented in a consistent manner and clear guidance is provided to all pupils. Behaviour management in lessons and during lunch-times, for example, is of a high order. This reflects the extensive training provided and the competent approach by teachers, learning support assistants and the midday staff. Parents' and pupils' views about behaviour are taken into account as part of the school's participation in the Essex Schools Awards Scheme.
46. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress and personal development are a strength of the school. The school has very good systems in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and the data obtained are used very well to guide planning. This constitutes very good progress since the previous inspection when assessment procedures throughout the school were characterised as weak. The school provides effective support and advice for its pupils, informed by the careful monitoring of their academic progress and personal development.
47. Teachers know their pupils very well and much useful assessment is done on a short-term, day-to-day basis. The school undertakes all statutorily-required formal assessments of its pupils: baseline assessment on entry to the reception class and national assessments in English, mathematics and science at the age of seven. The school also undertakes a range of additional non-statutory tests and assessments. A basic "screening" assessment of children is undertaken when they first join and again as they leave the pre-reception class. There are weekly reading assessments linked to the twice-daily Early Reading Research project lessons, which culminate in an annual reading assessment for pupils in the reception and Year 1 classes. Other regular assessments are linked to the mathematics scheme of work and a range of spelling, tables and end-of-topic tests are undertaken.
48. Results are thoroughly analysed and the information used well to set targets for pupils to achieve during the year ahead. A tracking system is used to analyse Baseline results and provide forecasts for the end of the reception year, Year 1 and the end of the key stage in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Individual targets are set for English and mathematics and, where appropriate, behaviour, and pupils and parents are made aware of current targets and the progress made towards them. Test information is used successfully to identify and support pupils with special educational needs and to group pupils for mathematics and English sets. It has also been used very effectively to identify writing and mathematics as areas needing further development and appropriate changes have been made to the curriculum and teaching as a result.
49. Procedures for monitoring and supporting academic progress are good. In addition to class and group targets for English and mathematics, pupils are given, and made aware of, individual targets for their learning. In most lessons observed during the inspection, learning objectives were discussed at the beginning of, and during, the lesson and progress towards

these was discussed in the plenary session at the end. Ongoing, individual pupil portfolios are maintained with examples of pupils' work as they move through the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. Parents are extremely pleased with the school and especially with the significant improvements made since the 1997 inspection. Such views are reflected in the 117 responses to the questionnaires and in the views expressed at the parents' meeting. Parents feel that children make good progress and that behaviour standards are high. Nearly all parents commend the good teaching and feel that the school is well led and managed. The school now has very good relationships with parents and has effective communications. However, over a quarter of the respondents to the questionnaire feel that better information should be provided about pupils' progress.
51. Inspectors fully agree with the parents' positive views. Very good information about progress is provided in the annual written reports and successful consultation meetings with class teachers are held in the autumn and summer terms. Parents of Year 2 children also meet teachers in the spring term and this facility is to be extended to reception and Year 1 from 2002.
52. The school has established very good links with parents. The partnership arrangements have been strengthened by parents' positive response to further initiatives introduced since 1999. Several parents undertake voluntary work in classes and help with other activities such as school visits. Parents also provide good support for reading and other tasks which pupils undertake at home. Such assistance contributes well to pupils' progress and development. There is a good attendance by parents at school concerts and at the weekly special assemblies to celebrate the achievements of a particular class. The Parent Teacher Association organises a full programme of social and fund raising events. Last year the association made a donation of £3,500 for additional facilities and equipment.
53. The quality of information provided for parents is good. High quality information about the school is provided in the prospectus and the governors' annual report. Regular newsletters are issued about current matters and forthcoming events. They often include a reference to notices exhibited in classroom windows setting out details of the curriculum work to be studied in each subject area by the particular year group over the next two weeks. However, not all parents are in a position to utilise such information. Consideration could be given to providing a short written summary of the main areas to be studied in the forthcoming term.
54. Parents are encouraged to raise any queries by informal discussions with staff and this leads to harmonious relationships. Meetings with parents are held to deal with induction, curriculum issues (for example the numeracy strategy) and transfers to the junior school. The introduction of additional consultation meetings with teachers during the spring term should ensure that all parents receive full information about pupils' progress. A particularly useful feature of the annual written reports is the inclusion of appropriate targets for raising attainment.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. When the school was inspected in 1999, its management had shown significant improvement against the situation which existed when it was first inspected. The recently-appointed headteacher was providing effective leadership, a comprehensive monitoring programme was in place, a clear management structure had been established and subject co-ordinators were becoming involved in developing policies and in monitoring the quality of work in their subjects. The governing body had become more confident and was providing effective support to the school. In the intervening period, this good start has been built upon successfully. The quality and effectiveness of management has improved further and the progress made in dealing with those areas of the school's work where weaknesses remained has been very good.
56. The headteacher and key staff are providing the school with very good leadership and management. Within that, the contribution of the headteacher to the significant achievements of the school and to the considerable progress made has been outstanding. She has a very clear vision for moving the school forward and has created a strong and cohesive team who share that vision. The ethos of the school is excellent. The headteacher is strongly supported by her

deputy, who has made a significant contribution to the leadership of the school, in particular to securing the consistency and quality of provision in the Foundation Stage. A range of very effective - and rigorous - strategies are in place for monitoring the work of the school and these are well established. High quality leadership has had a significant effect on standards and this is particularly evident in the purposeful learning environment which has been created and in the above average achievements recorded by pupils at the age of seven in 2001. This is the first group of pupils to reach the end of Year 2 whose time in school has coincided with the tenure of the headteacher.

57. There has been considerable focus on the professional development of staff with middle management and subject management responsibilities and the positive benefits of this approach are coming through. The majority of subject managers have had some opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching in their subjects and to contribute to subject documentation and to the extension of the skills of their colleagues. They see planning, have identified good practice and have an increasingly clear view of the standards being achieved and how these can be improved. They contribute effectively to the School Development Plan by evaluating recent progress in their subjects. Not all subject managers are yet confident enough to undertake detailed analysis of statistical data, where this exists, and this is, for some, an area for development.
58. The successes of the school have been clearly recognised by parents in their responses at the parents' meeting and in their questionnaires. Parents are very supportive of the values of the school and the range and quality of experiences being provided for their children. The school has explicit aims, with a clear focus on the raising of attainment, and these have been reviewed recently. The values promoted by the school are strong. The social dimensions of the community are a considerable strength. A strong partnership has been established with the neighbouring junior school and this is beginning to contribute significantly both to curriculum development and to better transition arrangements as pupils move between the schools.
59. The governing body, under the effective leadership of the chair, is very supportive of the school. Governors are increasingly well informed about the work of the school and confident in judging its quality, although they are still reliant to some extent on the information provided by the headteacher, particularly in relation to the curriculum and the standards being achieved. The role of 'link' governors is developing and several governors visit the school regularly. A number of governors are linked to specific aspects of the school's work, such as literacy and numeracy provision and special educational needs. They fulfil their roles effectively in relation to staffing and premises management. Committees are well established and work effectively, giving due attention to their particular responsibilities. Governors have benefited from good quality training by the local education authority and this is enabling them to contribute soundly to school development. They work effectively with the headteacher and staff to shape the direction of the work of the school. Legal requirements are met fully. Sound performance management systems have been implemented. The school development plan establishes appropriate priorities for the school. It is a comprehensive document, following the local model, with a wide range of targets, relating both to whole-school priorities and to the development of individual subjects and areas of the school's work.
60. The school cares well for its pupils needing particular care and attention. The co-ordinator of special educational needs, in consultation with teachers and learning support assistants, regularly reviews pupils' targets and the progress made towards these. Parents are kept well informed. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs visits the school regularly, bringing to the school valuable professional expertise, and has a good overview of special educational needs within the school.
61. The school's finances are very well managed and are used properly to support the educational needs of the pupils. Expenditure has been targeted to directly benefit pupils' attainment and progress by maintaining staffing levels, providing enhanced learning resources and creating an improved working environment. Governors set the budget taking into account the educational priorities identified in the school development plan. There is a clear cycle of financial planning, closely linked to the school development plan. During the year, the Finance Committee receives regular progress reports about expenditure and income to date. The use of specific funding, such as that provided for the support of pupils with special educational needs, is well focused. Much of the day-to-day financial work is undertaken efficiently by the bursar. Secure

arrangements are in place to obtain best value from service agreements and by alternative quotes for works and supplies.

62. The income per pupil is higher than in most primary schools, mainly because the school has been successful in obtaining allocations from the standards fund and a number of other grants. Taking into account the rapidly improving standards achieved by pupils, the high quality management and the substantial improvements made in recent years, the school provides good value for money.
63. The number of teachers is adequate for a school of this size. There is a mixture of very experienced and younger teachers with appropriate expertise for the delivery of the curriculum. The teaching staff has been fairly stable over the last three years and this has been a significant factor in securing the progress made. Good provision is made for the induction and continuing support of newly qualified teachers. A high priority is given to staff training and this takes into account both individual needs and the school's educational priorities. The school's involvement in an initial teacher training consortium ensures that this is an environment where inexperienced staff receive high quality support. Strong emphasis is placed on the provision and training of learning support staff to assist teachers in the classrooms. Each class has a support assistant for several hours per day together with additional help for pupils with special educational needs. These staff, who have been carefully trained, are making a significant contribution to pupils' learning. The school rightly values the contributions made by the office staff and midday assistants to the smooth running of the school and support for pupils.
64. The accommodation is good and allows for the curriculum to be well taught. Classrooms are spacious and good use is made of the hall and library. The impressive displays of pupils' work and the high cleaning standards help to provide an attractive learning environment. Externally there is a large field together with separate hard play areas for pre-reception, reception and infant pupils. There is a good range of adventure play equipment and the hard areas are marked to facilitate a range of play activities.
65. There is a good range of learning resources, which is well used to support learning across the curriculum. A suite of six computers has recently been installed and it is planned that the new facilities will become fully operational on completion of staff training. Recent investment in books and other items has produced good quality resources for English, mathematics, art and design, geography, history, religious education and the school library. Resources in other subjects are satisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. Although no significant weaknesses are indicated in the report, there are a number of areas, already identified by the school, where improvements could be made in order to raise the quality of the school's work still further.
- While standards in science and information and communication technology are average, there is scope for further improvement, particularly in extending the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

(paragraphs: 7, 97-102; 8, 20, 120, 122-127)

- Aspects of teaching, including the consistency and quality of marking of pupils' work, could be strengthened further.

(paragraphs: 19, 21, 139)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	58
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	33

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	15	62	22	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	30	222
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	39

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	36

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.7
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	39	46	85

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	35	34
	Girls	42	44	43
	Total	72	79	77
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (89)	93 (95)	91 (92)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	28	34	30
	Girls	42	41	39
	Total	70	75	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82 (88)	88 (92)	81 (83)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	217
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 – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	24.1

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	10.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	198

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	90

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7.5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	534360
Total expenditure	532871
Expenditure per pupil	2230
Balance brought forward from previous year	17853
Balance carried forward to next year	19342

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	260
Number of questionnaires returned	117

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	26	2	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	61	34	1	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	52	1	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	46	6	1	7
The teaching is good.	62	35	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	39	23	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	30	2	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	30	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	37	54	8	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	70	27	1	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	35	1	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	40	3	1	15

Other issues raised by parents

Few written comments were included with the questionnaires; almost all were very positive in tone.

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

67. Some children enter the reception classes after spending one or two terms in the pre-reception class. Others enter the reception classes directly. Of these, a significant proportion have had no prior educational experience. Children enter the pre-reception class in two stages during the school year, in January or after Easter, in the term following their fourth birthday. At the time of inspection, there were 60 children attending the pre-reception class for half-day sessions; two-thirds of these had been in school for six months and one-third for a few weeks only. Children move to one of the three reception classes when they leave the pre-reception class after one or two terms. Of the 74 children in the three reception classes at the time of the inspection, the majority had attained their fifth birthday and 17 were under five years of age. The school undertakes assessments of basic skills, such as knowledge of numbers and colours, when children enter the pre-reception class and, to assess progress, as they leave the class to enter reception. Baseline testing of children is undertaken in the first few weeks after entering reception. Results of this testing suggest that, although attainment in speaking and listening skills and social skills is slightly below average, children's attainment on entry is broadly average. They make good and in some cases very good progress in the pre-reception and reception classes from this broadly average attainment on entry with the result that attainment of the majority of children at the end of the Foundation Stage is above average for their age. The majority of children who were under five at the time of inspection are on course to attain at least expected standards, overall, by the age of five. Most children in reception are already at the expected levels and a significant number are working within Year 1 attainment targets.
68. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good, overall, and frequently very good. The very good quality and range of learning opportunities provided and the ongoing assessment of children's progress lead to children making good progress. Teaching in the pre-reception class is good and is characterised by very good teamwork and liaison between the Foundation Stage co-ordinator and the hard-working and enthusiastic teaching assistants. They plan and resource a good range of well-supported, interesting and challenging activities, indoors and out, model a range of appropriate behaviour and constantly stress the development of speaking and listening and personal and social skills. Teaching in the reception classes ranges from very good to satisfactory and is good, overall. Teachers manage children very well, have high but realistic expectations, and utilise teaching methods which inspire curiosity and learning. This represents a significant improvement in teaching and attainment in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection.
69. Teachers base their lessons on the identified Early Learning Goals for the Foundation Stage, incorporating information about children's skills gained from the assessment of basic skills in the pre-reception class and the initial testing undertaken on entry to reception. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator is very experienced and has very good knowledge of the needs of young children and the requirements of the Early Learning Goals. Learning support assistants work very well together and in co-operation with the class teachers, supporting the children very well. Provision for children with special educational needs is good with early identification of children with specific learning needs. Accommodation for the pre-reception class is good with a secure outdoor area which allows the provision of a wide range of interesting "free choice" and adult-led activities. Accommodation in reception is satisfactory.

Personal, social and emotional development

70. In the pre-reception class, children's personal, social and emotional development is satisfactory overall and, in a significant number of cases, good. Children are confident in their surroundings, moving to their chosen task or activity independently. They demonstrate an understanding of basic rules, taking turns and remembering to put up their hands to answer a question; they are able to concentrate for lengthening periods, sitting quietly and alertly on the carpet and in whole-school assemblies, in introductions to lessons, and when involved in a task. They respond well when told they are going to hear the "funny poem" they heard the previous day, laughing enthusiastically. They acknowledge the need for help and seek help appropriately where needed. They respond positively and confidently to a range of experiences, forming relationships, taking turns, sharing and co-operating well, for example, in

the class "Travel Agents", and paying an appropriate amount of attention to the task given to them. They become involved in the classroom routines, such as clearing away after activities, and demonstrate care, respect and affection for other children. In the reception classes, children's personal, social and emotional development is above average for their age. They develop good relationships with their peers and with adults; they take turns and share appropriately. They change for physical education lessons without adult intervention, approach activities enthusiastically and positively and behave well both within the classrooms and around the school. The pre-reception staff have developed a very good rapport with the children; they work together very well and organise an interesting and exciting variety of activities with a clear purpose, which leads to a high level of confidence and growing independence in the children. Teaching in the reception classes is good; teachers have good lesson management skills, maintain a good pace during lessons and generate a good working atmosphere in their lessons.

Communication, language and literacy

71. In communication, language and literacy, children's attainment in the pre-reception class is satisfactory, overall. Children are beginning to understand that words and pictures carry meaning and are aware that print is read from left to right and from top to bottom, as, for example, when "reading" holiday brochures in the "Travel Agents". They are beginning to associate sounds with patterns, words and letters. A minority are able to recognise some letters and point them out on the page. They enjoy marking and basic writing experiences, using a range of marking implements for drawing, marking, scribbling and writing, writing "tickets" for the aeroplane journey, for example. They are writing over the teacher's writing, to establish correct letter formation and copy their names under the adult's examples - with some children recognising their own names.
72. In the reception classes, attainment is above expectations. Most children are able to read a range of familiar words and sentences, understand what makes a story and can talk about the main characters in their reading book. They read regularly to the class teacher and other adults and listen to stories attentively and respond appropriately, sitting still and looking at the story-teller and communicating their likes and dislikes in clear and easily understandable speech. They are developing a neat, legible handwriting style with correctly formed letters spaced appropriately. They are able to read a range of familiar words from the National Literacy Strategy's "High Frequency Word List" for reception pupils and are beginning to spell these phonetically, knowing, for example, that "t" + "h" makes a "th" sound. The majority understand where and why you use capital letters and full stops, offering: "for a shopping list", "at the start of a sentence", "a person's name" and "for the name of a dinosaur" as correct places to use capital letters and "when you've finished a story" and "when you take a breath" as places where you need a full stop. They develop their handwriting skills in conjunction with spelling activities, tracing letters written in their exercise books, first with their fingers, then with their pencil, then over dotted lines, then independently. The majority of children are able to sort word cards into order so that they make sense and copy them into their work books in a legible handwriting style.
73. A significant contribution to the above-average attainment in reading skills results from the school's enthusiastic adoption of the "Early Reading Research Project" (ERR). In this project, teaching concentrates on the important skills which are needed to read: knowledge of the 26 letter sounds, the ability to put the sounds together to make words, recognition of the most common words and the ability to use these skills when reading. Children are "set" into ability groups within the reception classes and have two brisk, 12-minute intensive sessions each morning. Children are assessed individually on a weekly basis, with an end of year assessment of progress. Children respond very well to the brisk pace and the repetitive nature of these activities and as a result make good progress in early reading skills. Teaching in this area of learning is good. In the pre-reception class members of the teaching team have a good understanding of the learning needs of young children and work together very well to plan and organise activities. Adults have very good relationships with the children and value and encourage talk, with the result that the children make good progress in their speaking and listening skills. In the reception classes, teachers have appropriately high expectations, good classroom management skills and a good rapport with the children, leading to a high level of motivation and good quality of learning.

Mathematical development

74. In mathematical development children's attainment in the pre-reception class is satisfactory, overall. Most children are able to count from 1 to 5 and are beginning to recognise the numerals and sequence these correctly. They use simple mathematical language: "big", "little", "higher", "lower" and are using information and communication technology to reinforce counting to 5 and recognition of numerals. In reception, children's attainment is above average for their age. Children are beginning to use their developing mathematical understanding to solve practical problems and recognise and confidently use, for example, the sequence of numbers 1 to 10. The majority of children are able to identify the missing number in a sequence from 10 to 20 and a significant minority are describing and using number sequences beyond 20. They use information and communication technology to reinforce their mathematical understanding of simple addition sums. Most children know the names of the months of the year and are able to recite these in sequence. In the mathematical activities observed in the pre-reception class, the teaching was good. Activities are well planned and supported with purposeful tasks appropriately matched to the children's needs. Teaching in reception is good, overall. Teachers plan well, ensure activities are matched appropriately to children's ability and maintain a good pace throughout the lessons. Planning adheres closely to the National Numeracy Strategy guidance and higher-attaining children are provided with suitably challenging activities from the Year 1 Programme of Study.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

75. In knowledge and understanding of the world children's attainment in the pre-reception class is satisfactory, overall. Most children talk readily to adults and other children about day-to-day life and about events important to them, as, for example, when looking at and discussing photographs of Waltham Abbey. They select appropriate materials and develop building skills through such activities as model building with large construction kits and gluing carriages on a railway train in a mathematics activity. Children work at the class computer confidently. Attainment in the reception classes is above average. Children develop an understanding of other cultures and beliefs, retelling the story of "Noah's Ark" and understanding that Noah "lived a long time ago" and built the Ark because of the Flood, for example. When looking at photographs and identifying animals' needs, children are keen to contribute their ideas based on their knowledge of their own pets and demonstrate a good understanding of the differing needs of animals and of how these can be met. Teaching was good overall in these lessons; in the pre-reception class, an interesting and well-supported range of activities is provided that move children on with their understanding. In the reception classes, teachers have a very good rapport with the children, deploy the available classroom support very well and use resources well.

Physical development

76. Children's physical development in the pre-reception class is satisfactory. A range of role-play activities and outdoor activities with large play equipment are provided. For example, during the inspection, the main role-play activity was "Going on Holiday" and children were visiting the class travel agents, wearing appropriate labels: "I am the customer", "I am the travel agent", "choosing" a holiday by "reading" holiday brochures, asking the "receptionist" to book their holiday, which he or she did on the telephone: "I want four tickets for Florida", packing their cases with things they would need on holiday, getting on the "aeroplane" set out on the grass outside, flying to their destination, arriving and having a picnic on the beach. Children demonstrate an appropriate awareness of their own bodies and control of their own and others' space and respond to the activities with enthusiasm, imagination and confidence. Attainment in physical development in reception is good. Children change for physical education independently and with minimal teacher-intervention, and line up ready for the lesson quietly and co-operatively. Once in the hall, they occupy a space quietly and quickly, using space well. They warm-up appropriately, demonstrating good levels of co-ordination as they run between beanbags and balance beanbags on their heads. They comment positively on who is doing particularly well with the activity and judge at the end of the activity how well they have done. Children's attitudes and self-discipline in this lesson were excellent. Teaching in this area of learning in the pre-reception class was good, with especially good encouragement of speaking and listening skills and reinforcement of appropriate behaviour. In the reception classes, teaching is very good; teachers demonstrate very good management skills, organise resources

well, plan well, with specific learning targets for each lesson and use an appropriate blend of praise and direction.

Creative development

77. In the pre-reception class, children's attainment in creative development is satisfactory, overall. Children enjoy role-play and imaginative games, they join in with songs, singing simple songs such as "The Grand Old Duke of York" and respond to the mood and tempo of the music by playing "loud" and "quiet" sounds on untuned instruments. Attainment is good in the reception classes. When singing "Who built the Ark?", children use their voices expressively in a variety of ways, humming and singing with enthusiasm. Children are given opportunities to work with a wide range of media and materials and produce art work of a good standard. Teaching in the pre-reception class is good; creative activities are included in a well-organised range of activities with all resources readily available for the children to use. Teaching in reception is good; lessons are well planned and resourced and additional support is used very well to provide a good range of interesting and challenging activities.

ENGLISH

78. By the age of seven, pupils achieve above average standards in English. This is evident in the results of the most recent National Curriculum assessments, where the proportion of pupils reaching and exceeding the expected level has risen significantly, and also in the work of pupils seen during the inspection. The results of the national assessments of seven-year-olds in 2000 showed pupils' attainment to match the national averages for all schools in both reading and writing. Standards in writing also matched the average for similar schools, but levels in reading were below the average for these schools. The results of the 2001 assessments, however, were significantly higher in both reading and writing, exceeding the targets set by the school. Standards in literacy have improved steadily over the last four years and have benefited from the successful implementation of both the National Literacy Strategy and the LEA research based Early Reading Project.
79. From their entry to the school, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. On entry their attainment is broadly in line with the national average. At the end of the reception year, it is above average. Speaking and listening skills are particularly strong. Pupils listen well and speak with confidence. This was illustrated particularly well in a lesson where pupils spoke in turn about their pets. They spoke with great interest, extending and discussing their ideas with enjoyment and listening closely to each other and the teacher. Pupils also make good progress in writing and reading. They learn to form letters, to spell correctly, to write for different purposes and to read familiar words and sentences.
80. By the age of seven, all pupils listen well and express themselves confidently. The great majority speak fluently in a range of contexts and what they say is interesting and engaging. They read with improving fluency and accuracy, and with increasing enjoyment. Higher-attaining pupils read with avid interest both in school and at home. They are confident, independent readers, who find great enjoyment in books. Average and lower-attaining pupils also have very positive attitudes towards reading and work hard and successfully in improving their skills, making very effective use of a range of cues to aid word recognition and increase their understanding of the text. Reading records show all to be making good progress, often as a result of the close co-operation between home and school in advancing reading skills.
81. Pupils have a good range of vocabulary and learn to spell accurately, often using dictionaries effectively to find appropriate words and to spell correctly. They write well for a range of purposes, and with increasing skill, in extended descriptive and narrative writing, not only in English, but in subjects such as history. Letters are well formed and usually joined up. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are usually correct.
82. Pupils' learning is strongly promoted by their very positive attitudes. They are very keen to learn and to do well, setting themselves targets for improvement and responding well to those set by teachers. Their behaviour is very good and they work very productively together, helping each other to do well.

83. Pupils' good achievement and very positive attitudes reflect the high standards of teaching. Teaching is good throughout the school. In the eight lessons seen during the inspection, it was good or better in all but one, where it was satisfactory. In one lesson teaching was very good and in another it was excellent.
84. Pupils' learning is significantly promoted by the teachers' high expectations that they should achieve well, and by well judged praise and positive feed-back. It also benefits from detailed lesson planning to ensure clear purpose, good pace, and learning which is stimulating, enjoyable and supported by well-chosen resources. For instance, pupils in a Year 2 lesson made excellent progress in learning to read and identifying key features in newspapers. This was supported by imaginative lesson planning which included liaison with a local newspaper, leading to a productive and stimulating six week project. The relevance of the reading material, together with the challenging nature of the task set, resulted in a buzz of enjoyment and very good progress in developing reading and scanning skills.
85. High expectations and very good classroom relationships underpin the great majority of lessons. Both, along with skilful organisation and management, serve to create a very good learning ethos. Work is sensitively and skilfully matched to pupils' learning requirements, with learning support assistants making a very effective contribution, especially in supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Individual, pair and group work are used well to enable pupils to learn from each other and to provide individual and small group tuition and guidance. There are, however, a minority of occasions when this is not sufficiently purposeful and targeted and progress is slower as a consequence.
86. Pupils' literacy skills develop very well as a result of the skilful sharing of the teachers' subject expertise and through clear explanation and demonstration, for example, of handwriting skills. The great majority of teaching is brisk, lively and stimulating; only very rarely do lessons lack spark and vitality.
87. Pupils' progress is supported well by the regular marking of their work and constructive feed-back to help them to improve standards. Progress is monitored through ongoing formal assessment and target-setting, with systems currently being refined to ensure greater consistency in practice throughout the school.
88. The good standards being achieved in English reflect the very good leadership, management and co-ordination of the subject. This has resulted in very good improvement since the last inspection. The subject co-ordinator provides very clear direction and good support for teachers and is well supported by the governor with responsibility for literacy. Procedures for monitoring, planning and reviewing the quality of provision are thorough and systematic. Priorities for raising standards further are appropriate and clearly identified and include the up-dating of the school policy statement for English to meet the requirements of both the National Literacy Strategy and the Early Reading Project.

MATHEMATICS

89. When the school was inspected in 1999, standards in mathematics were reported to be average by the age of seven, a judgement confirmed in the national tests. The report was broadly positive. A number of strengths were identified, such as the increased emphasis being placed on mental and oral work and the challenge provided for the more able. Pupils were making steady progress. Results in 2000, although over nine out of ten pupils achieved the expected Level 2, were below average, overall, because of the relatively low percentage of pupils achieving the more challenging Level 3. The recently-published results for 2001 indicate that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level has risen again in the current year, with a very high proportion of pupils achieving Level 2 and almost one-third achieving Level 3. The school has exceeded its overall target for mathematics in the current year, and also its target for achievement at Level 3. The current Year 2 group was, as a group, below average in mathematical understanding on entry to the reception class in 1998. A number of changes have occurred since that time, in particular the introduction of the daily numeracy lesson, which is having a steady and positive effect on standards. The school's strategy of grouping pupils by ability for some mathematics lessons in Year 2 is successfully supporting their efforts to raise attainment by the age of seven.

90. Standards found during the inspection confirm that attainment is above average by the age of seven, and that pupils are achieving well in mathematics through the school. Overall, the progress made since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
91. From the variable levels of prior experience of mathematics evident when children enter the school, they make good progress through Key Stage 1. There is a high level of consistency to the quality of experience in mathematics and the school has clear strategies which enable it steadily to raise attainment. Across the school, there is no significant variation in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make similar progress to the others.
92. By the age of seven, the more able pupils understand place value to hundreds. They correctly add two digit numbers. They estimate length and weight in appropriate units and then measure quantities accurately. Most pupils sequence accurately in twos, fives and tens. They are learning simple tables bonds and the more confident are developing strategies for mental calculations involving addition and subtraction, multiplication and division. They read simple clock faces accurately and recognise odd and even numbers and simple fractions. They calculate fractions of shapes and given numbers. They recognise key features of two- and three-dimensional shapes. They can generate number sequences. Most pupils use mathematical vocabulary, such as 'longer' and 'shorter', accurately. They understand symmetry and some pupils, at Year 1, are beginning to grasp the implications of rotational symmetry. At present, around one-third of the Year 2 pupils are achieving at a level above that expected for their age.
93. There are some opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in subjects such as science and geography. Pupils occasionally use computers to extend their mathematical understanding, although this is not a strongly developed feature across the school.
94. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Planning to meet individual needs is a positive feature in almost all lessons. Support staff are well prepared and the needs of pupils who have special educational needs are well provided for. Almost all lessons benefit from the high quality relationships which underpin learning in the school. Pupils are invariably enthusiastic and keen to learn. They are mature and independent in approach and this is beneficial for learning. In a very successful Year 1 lesson on turning movements, the teacher sustained a brisk pace throughout. She asked clear, challenging questions during the oral session and later made appropriate connections between the mathematical concept being taught and previous work covered using a floor robot in information and communication technology. Links were made between fractional turns and part-rotations and, for the more able, to degrees and fractions of 360 degrees. This session provided challenging, but carefully-judged, activities for almost all the pupils and promoted their learning very successfully. In a Year 2 lesson with the most able pupils, the oral session was appropriately competitive and stimulating, with pupils attempting to generate ever more inventive and convoluted number sentences, using combinations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to reach two or three digit target numbers. Their spirited response was handled successfully by the class teacher. In some lessons, teachers do not create enough opportunities for pupils to talk about what they have discovered and to articulate their perceptions. This is an area for development. There is a broadly consistent approach to the marking of pupils' work across the school, although this often consists of ticks rather than identifying exactly what pupils need to do to improve their performance; however, there is a strong focus on the identification and achieving of targets for improvement and much of this takes place orally.
95. Most teachers use the closing few minutes of the lesson well, although occasionally, where the timing of the lesson is insecure, it is underdeveloped. They reinforce the use of correct mathematical vocabulary effectively. This helps to extend pupils' learning in literacy. Oral sessions support the development of improved mental skills and agility. The use of assessment is good. The school has been implementing comprehensive target-setting for year groups and for individuals.
96. The co-ordinator is providing good leadership for the subject and has had opportunities to observe teaching. She maintains a detailed file showing what she has done. Detailed analysis of national and optional test information has begun. This is helping teachers to track pupils' progress and identify areas of weakness across the school. The effective use of this information to push up standards further is a priority for the co-ordinator. Record keeping

provides teachers with an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils. Good curriculum links have been established with the junior school and this is beginning to have curriculum benefits in relation to pupils' progression in mathematics.

SCIENCE

97. The Teacher Assessments in science at the age of seven in 2000 indicated that standards were well below average for pupils achieving the expected Level 2 and below average at Level 3. This is also the case when results are compared with similar schools. However, in the assessment results for 2001, there has been considerable improvement, with 93 per cent of pupils achieving Level 2 and well over one-third reaching Level 3. Inspection evidence indicates that there has been an improvement in standards in the last year and that standards are now in line with those expected by the age of seven.
98. Pupils in Year 1 know that there is a range of materials, such as wood, metal, plastic, wool and cotton, with different characteristics. They know that some materials are hard and some soft. Displays around the classroom and in the books show that they have understood how some forces are used for pushing and some for pulling. They know about magnetism and understand about natural forces, such as the wind. They have investigated how far away they can hear sounds.
99. Year 2 pupils extend their knowledge of forces and are able to distinguish more objects for pushing and pulling. They also investigate which objects can bend, twist or stretch. They are particularly knowledgeable about life and living processes. They can name nine insects and differentiate between those that fly, crawl and walk. They have studied why humans and animals are alike and unlike. During the inspection, a teacher from 'Waste Watch' talked to pupils about waste. This is an ongoing programme to raise pupils' awareness of the need to reduce, reuse and recycle redundant material. Pupils make a promise as to which objects they will try to recycle and reuse.
100. Both Year 1 and Year 2 pupils display good investigative skills. For example, Year 1 pupils demonstrated from their understanding of plants that roots are necessary to enable the plant to take in food and water. Year 2 pupils investigated and recorded their findings as to why flowering plants need seeds. Pupils are challenged to find seeds in fruit and flowers and, where possible, to open them.
101. The quality of teaching ranged from satisfactory to good, but was good, overall. In the best lessons, the teachers displayed good subject knowledge, which was used effectively to develop pupils' understanding and ideas. Good whole-class teaching set high expectations and led to challenging work for pupils of differing attainment. In general, lessons have a good pace and, through good questioning techniques, teachers ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged. Support staff are very well deployed and have a significant effect on the generally good progress made, particularly by lower-attaining pupils. Pupils' learning and behaviour are very well managed. Their attitudes are very positive. They are interested in their work and can concentrate well for extended periods. The majority behave well and make good progress. As a result, pupils' learning, including those with special educational needs, is good.
102. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator. She has been instrumental in establishing the positive ethos in science which now exists. Sound documentation and assessment procedures are in place. Resources have improved and are now good. Pupils use their literacy skills well to record their investigations. They apply their numeracy skills accurately when using weights and measures. Occasional use of information and communication technology for research purposes helps to support pupils' learning in science.

ART AND DESIGN

103. Two art lessons were observed during the inspection. An analysis of work undertaken during the current school year, displayed in classrooms and around the school, indicates that a good range of work in a wide variety of media is planned at an appropriate level for each year group. Pupils' attainment in art by the age of seven is above that expected for their age and pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good and frequently very good progress

in art skills and knowledge as they move through the school. This constitutes very good progress since the last inspection when standards in art were judged to be below expectations. A particular strength of art in the school is the valuable contribution of the well-qualified and enthusiastic teaching assistant who co-ordinates art in the school, organises and teaches the subject in each year group during the week and is instrumental in achieving the high standard of displayed work in the school.

104. Pupils in Year 1 are using clay as part of their topic on “Sculpture”, following previous discussion of sculptural forms, such as those of Henry Moore. They make good quality thumb-pots, join two together with ‘slip’, smooth the joins and make holes in the resulting sphere, adding texture to their sculptures with modelling tools. Year 2 pupils, in a lesson on Aboriginal art, are exploring the possibilities of a variety of materials, techniques and tools. They represent their own observations and designs and produce images and artefacts in the style of craftspeople and designers from different times and places. Work on display around the school indicates that pupils have good opportunities to develop an understanding of the work of artists such as Henry Moore, Andy Goldsworthy, Henri Matisse, Paul Klee and Roy Lichtenstein and apply it to their own efforts. There are good examples of weaving with natural materials, such as raffia, string and straw. There are carefully-produced observational drawings of flowers in pencil, pastel, crayon and paint, intricately-designed three-dimensional structures of balloons, glue and twigs, natural collages, paper sculptures and observational drawings in charcoal.
105. Pupils’ response in lessons ranged from good to very good and was very good, overall. Pupils clearly enjoy their art activities, responding well to practical guidelines and showing pride in their work. The quality of learning is very good, overall, reflecting the overall quality of teaching. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good. Where teaching is very good, teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge, maintain a good pace throughout the lessons, resource lessons appropriately, motivate pupils well and, through good one-to-one support, encourage them to evaluate their work in progress and develop pride in their work. Because a good range and variety of resources are used so well, pupils are enthused and persevere to produce good-quality work.
106. Resources for art are of satisfactory quality, are well utilised and are readily accessible. The school has adopted the national scheme of work for the subject, with a review at the end of the current year.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

107. Evidence from lesson observations, a survey of work on display throughout the school, and discussions with teachers and pupils indicates that pupils undertake an appropriate range of activities, in which they design, make and evaluate products. Attainment at the age of seven is in line with what would be expected and pupils, including those with identified special educational needs, make at least satisfactory progress in design and technology as they move through the school. This constitutes good improvement since the last inspection when standards in design and technology were judged to be below expectations and pupils’ progress to be unsatisfactory.
108. In Year 1, pupils explore fruit and vegetables with their senses and describe them through smelling, touching and tasting. They evaluate and investigate products and discuss their ideas, their likes and dislikes. They develop an understanding of food safety and hygiene – the need to wash fruit before eating and wash hands before preparing food – and use pictures and labels to record their observations. Pupils in Year 2, in a lesson in their topic on “Toys that Move”, learn how a winding mechanism works. They understand the terms: “structure”, “mechanism” and “axle”. They evaluate products and develop their understanding of the different ways mechanisms can be used, by observing and evaluating a range of models incorporating winding handles and chains.
109. Pupils’ attitudes and behaviour in the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to very good and were good, overall. Pupils are interested in the tasks and respond well to the teachers’ questions and directions. They offer their own ideas, make appropriate suggestions and clearly enjoy what they are doing. The quality of teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good and was good, overall. Teachers demonstrate satisfactory subject knowledge, resource the lessons well and provide clear explanations. Where teaching was very good, the teacher was very well

prepared, had very secure knowledge of the subject, provided very good opportunities for pupils to contribute their ideas and demonstrated very good questioning skills, leading to a high level of enthusiasm and very good quality of learning during the lesson. The quality of pupils' learning, overall, was good.

110. The school has adopted the national scheme of work for the subject. Resources are broadly satisfactory. The co-ordinator provides good support for teachers and maintains a portfolio of examples of work undertaken.

GEOGRAPHY

111. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in geography and at seven they reach standards appropriate to their age. They acquire sound geographical knowledge, understanding and skills. For instance, they have a secure knowledge of the characteristics of their local area and are able to compare these with those of contrasting localities. They are also aware of environmental issues and especially of the need to conserve resources through recycling, and of human and physical interaction on the quality of the environment. They are able to measure distance, plot routes on maps and draw well on their own experiences of different forms of travel in identifying the best method, for example, of crossing the Channel.
112. Pupils' learning is well promoted by their very positive attitudes and interest. They work hard, concentrate well, are keen to contribute their ideas and respond very well to good teaching. Their behaviour is excellent.
113. Teaching is good. In the limited number of lessons seen, teaching was good, and consistently good practice is also reflected in planning documents, display, assessment records and pupils' written work. Teachers use their good knowledge and understanding to provide effective introductions to lessons. These establish clear learning objectives and at best stimulate interest through engaging pupils actively from the outset. For example, in a Year 2 lesson on different forms of transport, a lively, clearly focused debate resulted from the pupils being asked to identify different ways of crossing to France. This helped them to explore and develop their knowledge and ideas. In this lesson and overall, the progress of all pupils was well supported by their good literacy skills, which enable them to express their ideas well, both orally and in writing. Numeracy skills are also used well in analysis and measurement.
114. Pupils' learning is helped significantly by the teachers' very high expectations and use of a range of well-conceived teaching strategies. Questioning is employed effectively to maintain interest and a good pace of learning. Resources are used well. For example, white boards are used successfully to illustrate key factors. Individual and small group work is monitored and guided effectively to ensure that pupils understand the tasks set and that the work is appropriately adapted to meet their learning requirements. Whilst most of the learning is clearly focused on the acquisition of geographical knowledge, understanding and skills, there are occasions when the momentum of learning is slowed through too long being spent on tasks such as drawing pictures and designing posters. While these may be useful in allowing time to consolidate understanding, the tasks can reduce the focus and time spent on rigorous skills development.
115. The relevance and meaning of geography to the pupils' lives is established through the use of the immediate locality of the school to promote geographical skills of investigation, analysis and comparison. Year 2 pupils, for example, carried out a survey of the ancient town of Waltham Abbey to identify and categorise different types of buildings. The focus on the locality also promotes very good links with pupils' study of history. Geographical skills of mapwork and knowledge of places are well supported by the effective use of the national Barnaby Bear Project to track routes, measure distances and identify characteristics of different locations and countries.

HISTORY

116. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in history and by the age of seven, reach standards which are above those expected for their age. They acquire

good historical knowledge and understanding and develop a range of historical skills, especially in chronology, empathy and the ability to make comparisons and links between events and causes. They also learn to judge the reliability of historical accounts and evidence. For example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils were confident in judging the story of the finding of the Waltham Holy Cross as legendary.

117. Pupils' learning is well supported by the good quality of the teaching. Evidence gained from sources, such as the analysis of pupils' work, displays, planning documents and assessment records, clearly indicates consistently good practice in teaching. Teachers clearly use their good subject expertise and enthusiasm skilfully in planning well structured lessons designed to arouse pupils' interest in the subject through a good range of imaginative teaching strategies, and to enable them to work accurately as historians. The interpretation of such planning in practice was well exemplified in the lesson on the Holy Cross where pupils responded well to the high expectations of the teacher, and worked with interest and enjoyment as a result of skilled narrative combined with well-structured learning activities focusing on the development of historical skills.
118. The strong emphasis placed on the development of historical skills is also clearly shown in the pupils' written work - for example, in good quality work on time lines, when making comparisons between old and new (toys, cars and styles of dress), in detailed, factually accurate accounts of events such as the Fire of London, and in the interpretation of primary sources of evidence such as Pepys' diary. Written work develops well, reflecting increasingly good knowledge and understanding. Pupils' progress is regularly assessed through day-to-day marking which is helpful in assisting pupils to improve their standards. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is often better than expected as a result of their needs being well known, and skilfully and sensitively met. The progress of all pupils is well supported by their good literacy skills.
119. Pupils' learning is strongly promoted by their very positive attitudes and interest in history. They concentrate well and work hard. This is shown in their written work, in the very good relationships in the school and in pupils' excellent behaviour.
120. History is brought to life for pupils and their enquiry skills are strongly promoted through the very good use made of the rich historical resources available in the ancient town of Waltham Abbey and also of those further afield - for instance, in the Natural Science Museum. The local studies also promote good links with work in geography. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to promote learning.
121. History is very well led, managed and co-ordinated. The co-ordinator provides clear direction, and skilfully shares her enthusiasm. Planning is detailed and there are effective procedures for monitoring and review, which are well integrated into performance management processes. Development planning is strategic in nature and clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection, especially in the quality of teaching and provision and in the leadership and management of the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

122. At the 1999 inspection, standards in information and communication technology were satisfactory with sound development of pupils' skills. Standards continue to be in line with what would be expected by the age of seven and pupils make steady progress. Pupils with identified special educational needs make good progress, particularly when supported by additional staff. The level of improvement in the provision for ICT has been satisfactory.
123. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 can name parts of the computer and know their basic functions. They are competent and confident in the basic skills such as using the mouse to move the cursor and retrieve the data. In English, they use word processing skills to write sentences about themselves or what they do on holiday. In mathematics, pupils have drawn block graphs to show their favourite fruits, pets, colours and cars. Examples of the use of a paint package were seen where pupils had made symmetrical patterns. In these ways, pupils use ICT effectively to develop their knowledge and understanding in these subjects while also improving their

computer skills. However, ICT is little used in other subjects of the curriculum and this is an area for further development.

124. In a lesson observed with Year 1 pupils, the pupils learnt how to enter data, on the ways they travel to school, into a prepared database. They were able to answer such questions as "How many children come by car?" and "What is the most common way of getting to school?" Most pupils know how to print a document.
125. In Year 2, pupils were taught how to enter commands in a programmable robot to enable it to reach its destination. Pupils initially drew their path from base to home and then wrote down the instructions. Towards the end of the lessons, pupils were able to demonstrate that they had understood by entering the correct commands into the programmable robot.
126. Where teaching was observed it was at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Some staff are more confident than others in the subject. The management of pupils and the use of support staff is very good. Each class has at least one computer and a printer. Six computers are now housed in a suite, although this was used only once during the inspection. It is intended that the school builds up the suite to 15 computers which will enable whole-class teaching to take place.
127. The subject is well led and the co-ordinator carries out her duties efficiently. There is a policy and the national scheme of work has been adopted. The school covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum in a systematic way, building upon earlier learning. Assessment arrangements are very good with a skills list for each pupil. This enables staff to see where progress has been made and where extra work is needed.

MUSIC

128. Two lessons were observed during the inspection, together with observation of extra-curricular music and assemblies and discussion with pupils and staff.
129. Attainment in music is in line with what would be expected by the age of seven. This represents a good improvement since the 1997 inspection. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, now make good progress in gaining basic knowledge and skills in music.
130. Singing is part of the curriculum from pre-reception class to Year 2. In the collective acts of worship, pupils sing well with good phrasing and expression. Singing and making music is a regular element in class lessons.
131. Pupils in Year 1 respond enthusiastically to rhythm. This was evident in a lesson when pupils used clapping to identify rhythm in a piece of recorded music. As the lesson progressed they become confident in singing, chanting and clapping to "Red socks, yellow socks".
132. All three classes in Year 2 were observed singing together. Some pupils also played percussion instruments when the rest of the pupils sang "caterpillar crunch". They showed a sense of melody in all three songs from which a choir was to be chosen for a Music Festival.
133. The quality of teaching and learning is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. There is a new music policy and the school has adopted a nationally known scheme of work which covers all elements of the subject. There is a beginners' recorder class, in which two teachers assist. There is a choir for special occasions. This choir sang well in the "Golden Book" assembly during the inspection. Music is played at the start and end of daily assemblies to introduce pupils to a wide range of music by many different composers from around the world. The music for assembly during the inspection was "Nkosi Sikelel'i" by Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Good relationships are a strong feature of lessons, with pupils behaving well and eager to be involved. They work at a good pace, are enthusiastic and enjoy the subject.
134. A criticism in the 1997 report was that the range of percussion instruments was barely adequate. There was also no use of taped music. Resources have much improved with a wide range of percussion instruments, a keyboard, CDs and tapes. The subject is well-managed.

However, at present, there is no formal assessment and pupils' progress is not recorded. These are areas for development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

135. Although standards were satisfactory when physical education was inspected in 1997, a number of weaknesses were identified. There were some shortcomings in the teaching of skills, progress was inconsistent between classes, largely because of the absence of documentation to support teachers in their planning, and there was no co-ordinator to monitor the subject. In the intervening period, all of these weaknesses have been tackled and there have been significant improvements, with pupils now achieving standards, in those elements of the curriculum observed, which are above what would be expected by the age of seven.
136. A limited range of activities, mostly games skills, was observed. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 show a high level of commitment and work with enthusiasm and enjoyment in skill sessions. The school follows a programme of activities which are closely focused on specific games skills, such as catching, throwing or skipping. In all the sessions observed, there was clear progress in the development of pupils' skills.
137. Year 1 pupils stretch, balance and perform jumps competently as they warm up. They balance with the expected level of agility. They show reasonable awareness of space and move in a variety of ways. They throw and catch quoits with increasing confidence. They throw accurately from different positions, including underarm throws at different heights. They throw with their eyes closed to experience the sensation. The activities are challenging and extend pupils well. There is a strong emphasis upon the effects of exercise on pupils' bodies and health: how they feel, whether they can hear their heart beating. The teacher stops activities from time to time to demonstrate an improved technique. Pupils are encouraged to comment upon the work of others and, equally importantly, to assess their own performance and to suggest what they might do to improve. The standards of work observed in this session were high.
138. Year 2 pupils were observed developing skills in skipping, ball control in football and in ways of moving around the hall. These were all tightly structured sessions, with a wide range of appropriate and varied activities which challenged pupils and extended them physically and, to some extent, creatively. In the skipping activities, pupils were acquiring the skills to sustain basic skipping movements. By the end, almost all could handle and swing the rope appropriately and sustain a sequence of jumps. In the movement session, pupils could copy and repeat simple actions, such as drawing pathways in the air or on the ground, alone or with a partner, with a high degree of control and co-ordination. The football skills session, taken by an outside coach, provided pupils with skilled specialist input. Again, the close focus on skill development was highly effective and produced noticeable gains in learning as the session progressed. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by additional staff. This enables them to participate fully and make similar progress to others in the class.
139. Overall, standards in games are above those expected for the age of the pupils. This reflects above all the good quality of the teaching and the very sharp focus on specific skills and on the identification of activities which promote those objectives. The close relationships which exist between staff and pupils and the high expectations of behaviour, together with the very positive response from the pupils, create a very good atmosphere for learning. No time is wasted and the pace is consistently brisk. Time can be used very productively. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They are mature and committed throughout and work very confidently with others when asked to. A minor teaching weakness evident in some Year 2 lessons is the lack of emphasis upon the effects of exercise on health. Not all teachers provide enough opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work or that of others, although where this happened it was clear that pupils are developing the confidence to respond perceptively.
140. The co-ordinator is providing very good leadership for the subject. She has a clear view of standards and where improvements can be made and has worked hard to provide good quality guidance within which staff can prepare their lessons. Good support has been provided for dance. The subject is carefully monitored. Good assessment procedures have been implemented and this information is used well to inform subsequent teaching and learning. Facilities are good. There are good links with the junior school. A particularly strong feature is the very good extra-curricular provision, unusual in an infant school, which significantly

enhances pupils' experience. This includes a Minimovers Club, two Gymnastics Clubs and a Football Club. These are well supported by pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

141. Standards of attainment in religious education are in line with those expected of seven-year-olds in the Locally Agreed Syllabus and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with identified special educational needs make good progress, particularly when supported by additional staff. The 1997 inspection report indicated that standards were below expectation in relation to the requirements of the Essex Agreed Syllabus. Pupils' understanding of religious education was poor because the school did not fulfil the statutory requirement to teach to the Agreed Syllabus. All that has now changed and the school fulfils its obligations.
142. Judgements are based on the lessons observed, interviews with teachers and pupils and the analysis of pupils' work.
143. Pupils in Year 1 begin to learn about Christian stories. They know the Easter story. They have written about Jesus calming a storm and how he made a blind man see again. In a successful lesson on Bartimaeus, pupils were asked about disabilities and how they would feel if disabled in any way.
144. Personal and social education is also taught in religious education. Pupils in Year 1 know what is fair and unfair and what is right and wrong and learn to say sorry when they have said something inappropriate. In a lesson in Year 2, pupils were made aware of the benefits and the potential dangers of medicines and drugs. They studied empty packages and were able to decide which were good for children and which were harmful.
145. Much work is covered by Year 2 pupils. In Sikhism, pupils describe Guru Nanak in words such as calm, peaceful and holy. In Judaism, pupils know about the Star of David and Hanukkah. They learn about the synagogue, the Ark and the prayer shawl. Pupils know that in Muslim countries the Mu'adhin climbs to the top of the minaret five times a day to issue the "call to prayer". Many aspects of the Christian faith are also studied.
146. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers have sufficient subject knowledge and confidence to enable them to interpret and deliver the Agreed Syllabus. Pupils are challenged with questions such as "What is a beggar?" when talking about Bartimaeus. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject, are keen and generally behave well in lessons.
147. The co-ordinator, although relatively new, is effective. National schemes of work have been adapted to the Essex Agreed Syllabus. Pupils' progress is recorded on a weekly basis. Resources have improved considerably. A wide range of books and artefacts for six different religions helps pupils to understand more about religious education. Assemblies and the religious education curriculum play an important part in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.