

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **RYEDENE SCHOOL**

Vange  
Basildon

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114949

Headteacher: Mr K Furlong

Reporting inspector: Alan Andrews  
6436

Dates of inspection: 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> October 2001

Inspection number: 230742

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Ryedene  
Off Clover Way  
Vange  
Basildon  
Essex

Postcode: SS16 4SY

Telephone number: 01268 559291

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Duncan Grant

Date of previous inspection: 01/11/1999

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
6436	Alan Andrews	Registered inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? How high are the standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9619	Bob Miller	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
7694	Martyn Richards	Team inspector	Science Religious education Equal opportunities English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?

1359	Lyne Lavender	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Music Physical education Foundation Stage Curriculum	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Ryedene Community Primary School is an average sized primary school situated on the southern edge of Basildon. It has 188 full-time children on roll in seven classes, including a reception class. In addition, 41 children attend part-time in the nursery where they are admitted in the term after their third birthday. Children join the reception class in the term they are five. Overall, there are slightly more boys than girls, with the boys outnumbering the girls significantly in Years 3 and 5. Most children come from local authority housing. The area has high levels of unemployment and economic disadvantage. It also has difficulties with vandalism. Few children come from ethnic minorities. Three children are at an early stage of learning English as a second language and this is a little bit higher than in most schools. The percentage of children identified as having special educational needs, including statements of particular need, is above that found in other schools nationally. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Achievement of most children on entry to school is well below that typical for their age, especially in language, number and social skills. There have been considerable changes of staff recently and five of the eight class teachers are new. The school is a member of the Basildon East Education Action Zone.

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

Ryedene is an effective school facing its many challenges with optimism and energy. A calm, positive climate for learning is created and the headteacher, governors and staff work hard to raise standards. In science and information and communication technology standards are rising quickly. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. In the foundation stage and Year 1, teaching is good and sometimes very good. Parents have a high regard for the school and its work. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- The headteacher and governors provide strong and effective leadership.
- The foundation stage gives children a good start to school life.
- Teaching at the foundation stage and in Year 1 is good and sometimes very good.
- Standards in science have improved significantly at the junior stage.
- Children make good progress in information and communication technology.
- Assessment procedures are good and used effectively to help plan children's work.
- A calm and ordered learning environment is created and children enjoy coming to school.
- Children's spiritual, moral and social development is promoted well.

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

- Standards in mathematics at both the infant and junior stages.
- The systematic development and reinforcement of children's writing skills and use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- The precise diagnosis of the learning difficulties of children with special educational needs and how they might be addressed.
- The systematic use at the junior stage of the programme of work that accompanies the local syllabus for religious education.
- Level of work for bright children in some lessons.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has improved in many respects since the last inspection. The leadership provided by the headteacher is now good. The school is coping well with a high turnover of staff and the challenging environment and background of many of the children. Its positive ethos for learning has been maintained and Key Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled rigorously. The school monitors its performance carefully and directs funds in ways that will bring further improvement. Realistic targets to raise standards have been set. The overall quality of teaching has been raised with increased priority given to pace and challenge in lessons. Provision for lower attainers is satisfactory and the school is trying to ensure that brighter children are extended sufficiently, although more needs to be done in this regard. The role of subject leaders has been clarified and includes well set out responsibilities for assessment and the promotion of high standards. There has been significant improvement in the governors' understanding of the school and they have become increasingly influential in helping to raise standards.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	E	E*	D	C
mathematics	E*	E	E	D
science	E	E	D	C

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

E\* means very low standards.

This table shows that results of national tests at the end of Year 6 in English and science in 2000 were below average when compared to all schools. They were well below average in mathematics. Results were in line with those found in schools with children from similar backgrounds in English and science. In mathematics the results were below average. These grades are based on an average points score calculated by adding up the points awarded to each child for each level of achievement, divided by the number of children taking the tests. In all three subjects, a reasonable proportion of children gained higher levels in 2000, though less than the national average. This said, the trend over the four years to 2000 in English, mathematics and science shows a significant rise. Although still below the national average, the upward trend has been at a much faster rate than the national scene. Initial analysis of the school's results in 2001 indicates a fall in performance, but the school was expecting this because of the high number of children with special educational needs.

In 2000, the school's performance in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 put them in the lowest 5% nationally. In mathematics they were well below average. Few children reached the higher levels. The same picture emerged when the results were compared to similar schools. However, children start from a very low base and the overall trend from 1997 to 2000 was up. Initial results in 2001 indicate a rise in the percentage of children reaching average levels. This is because the school's efforts to raise standards are paying dividends.

Lesson observations and scrutiny of work from children in the present Year 6 show standards in English to be below average and standards in mathematics to be well below average. Standards in science are in line with the national average and this is a considerable achievement. The school has set challenging targets and is predicting an improvement over the year so that results in English and mathematics will be nearer the national averages.

At age seven, standards in art, design and technology, history, physical education and information and communication technology are in line with those of most schools. Standards in geography and music are lower. By age eleven, standards in art and design and technology are average. In swimming, all children can swim the recommended 25 metres by the time they leave the school. Standards in all other subjects are below average. Standards in religious education at age seven and eleven are below that expected in the local syllabus, although some work in Year 6 was of a high quality. In the foundation stage, the majority, if not all, of the children will reach the required national levels by the end of the year. This is because the high standard of teaching enables most children to achieve well.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Children enjoy school and settle quickly to work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Consistently good in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good. Children co-operate with each other well. They undertake responsibilities sensibly.
Attendance	Attendance is steadily improving, but is below the national average.

Children arrive at school on time and take part in lessons with enthusiasm. They are happy to help one another and are polite and respectful to adults. These features contribute positively to children's learning. The school is working hard to improve attendance.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, teaching is satisfactory. It is good and sometimes very good in the nursery and reception classes. In Year 1 it is consistently good. In other year groups, the quality of teaching varies, but is seldom less than satisfactory. The daily literacy and numeracy lessons are mostly taught satisfactorily. Strengths in teaching stem from demanding tasks that challenge children to work hard and to make good progress in their learning. Some teaching in science, religious education and information and communication technology really captures children's interest and their progress is good. The teaching of children with English as an additional language is good. In a small number of lessons, tasks are not matched appropriately to the ability of the children and time is lost in controlling them adequately. There is sometimes an over reliance on work sheets and brighter children are not extended sufficiently in all lessons. The school recognises that in religious education lessons at the junior stage, teachers do not make enough use of the programme of work that accompanies the local syllabus. Teachers could do more to reinforce literacy skills and the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. The teaching of children with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, although it is better at the foundation stage where good use is made of additional support.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good at the infant stage and satisfactory in both the infant and junior stages.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall, with particular strengths at the foundation stage where children do well with the additional support they receive.
Provision for pupils with	Good. Their progress is monitored carefully and they play a full part in all

English as an additional language	learning activities.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for children's personal development is good. Spiritual, social and moral development is promoted effectively in lessons, assemblies and at other times. Cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school is highly attentive to children's needs. Their health and general welfare is catered for well.

Parents are pleased with the school and hold it in high regard. Its caring and supportive environment helps children to feel secure and happy in their work. The curriculum is broad with priority given to literacy and numeracy. It is enriched by links with the community, study visits to places of interest and a satisfactory range of out of school clubs. In particular, the foundation stage curriculum successfully promotes children's independence as well as their social, literacy and numeracy skills. Throughout the school, children's personal well-being receives considerable attention. Good procedures help teachers track children's academic progress. However, more attention should be given to monitoring arrangements for ensuring children from ethnic minority groups benefit fully from all that the school provides. Children with special educational needs are enabled to experience success, but the diagnosis of their learning difficulties and how they might be addressed is not always precise enough.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Strong leadership provided by the headteacher enhances the school's capacity to improve.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are determined to raise standards further.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. School analyses its performance rigorously and sets appropriate targets for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Money is directed effectively to the school's priorities for raising standards.

The school has undergone considerable changes in staff recently, but a calm, orderly atmosphere has been maintained successfully. Strengths in leadership and management stem from a thorough approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning, increased skills and knowledge of the governors and the successful promotion of teamwork. There is a satisfactory level of teaching staff and learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to children's progress. Accommodation is satisfactory, although the open-plan nature of the classrooms means there are sometimes problems with noise levels. Resources for the foundation stage are good and for information and communication technology they are very good. They are satisfactory for all other areas of the school's work. The budget is managed well. The headteacher and governors apply the principles of best value very effectively. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant improvements to many aspects of the school, including teaching.</li> <li>Good relationship with parents.</li> <li>Children enjoy school. They are expected to work hard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More activities outside school.</li> </ul>

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establishment of the new computer suite.</li></ul> |  |
|--|--|

Inspection evidence supports parents' positive views and found a satisfactory range of activities outside lessons for children.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Attainment on entry of most children is well below that typical for their age, especially in language, number and social skills. The school is coping well with a high turnover of staff and the challenging environment and background of many of the children. New teachers who arrived this term are settling well and beginning to have a positive impact on children's achievements, particularly in the nursery class and in Year 1. From a low base steady progress is being made, although there are variations from year to year. This is a similar finding to the previous inspection. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work shows that in the current Year 6 standards in English are below average, in mathematics they are well below average and in science they are average. Standards in Year 2 are well below average in all three subjects and this reflects the high number of children with special educational needs. The nursery is giving children a good start to school life and in the reception class the majority of children, if not all, are on course to reach the required national standards by the end of the year.

2. Results of national tests in 2000 for children aged eleven were below average in English and science and well below average in mathematics when compared to all schools. Results were in line with those found in schools with children from similar backgrounds in English and science. In mathematics the results were below average. This said, the trend over the four years to 2000 in all three subjects shows a significant rise. Although still below the national average, the upward trend has been at a much faster rate than the national scene. A reasonable proportion of children reached the higher levels of achievement in the tests, though less than the national average. The school is working hard to improve its provision for brighter children, but more still needs to be done. Unverified results for 2001 indicate a fall in performance, but the school was expecting this because of difficulties with staffing and a high number of children with special educational needs.

3. In 2000, results for children aged seven in reading and writing put them in the lowest 5% nationally. In mathematics, results were a little better but still well below average. Few children reached the higher levels. When compared to schools in a similar context the same picture is seen. However, children start from a low base and the overall trend from 1997 to 2000 was up. Unverified results for 2001 indicate a rise in the percentage of children reaching average levels. This is because the school's efforts to raise standards are proving fruitful in spite of difficulties with staffing.

4. The school is putting considerable effort into analysing data to find reasons for its results and so improve standards. Children's progress is checked carefully and the information gained is used to help plan programmes of work. The analysis of results has led staff to realise that boys tend to achieve less well than girls. Action is being taken to rectify this and centres on developing and extending the oral contributions boys make in class lessons and discussions.

5. Children are pleased to talk to visitors about their work and interests, but discussions with them show that their range of vocabulary is often limited. Speaking and listening skills

are well below average at age seven and children are reluctant to give views or express preferences. As they move up through the school their confidence increases and they are more willing to communicate orally. At age eleven their speaking and listening skills are better but below average. Teachers expect children to listen attentively and they encourage them to use appropriate subject vocabulary. For example, in a Year 6 science lessons on plants, children were able to correctly use words such as pollen, stigma and stamens.

6. In discussions with children it is clear that their reading at home is often irregular. Few parents complete the home/school reading records. At age seven, children enjoy listening to stories, but their own reading is often halting and lacking in confidence. By age eleven, children's reading skills have improved and are close to the national average, though they express little enthusiasm for the activity. The more able children have read the work of a number of authors. Many children know about the use of an index and contents page, but their research skills are often limited.

7. Many children have considerable difficulty with writing and this hinders their progress in other subjects. At age seven, standards are generally well below those of other children nationally. There is a growing understanding of how to sequence events in the right order, but children's knowledge of basic sentence structure, including the use of capitals and full stops, is developing only slowly. By age eleven, standards have improved but remain below average. Children write for a range of purposes and think more carefully about the use of language and its meaning. They are beginning to plan their stories, but their writing often lacks imagination and they could accomplish more in the time available.

8. In mathematics standards are well below average at age seven and eleven. Infant children like practical tasks, but there is an overuse of worksheets that are often unfinished or too difficult for children to understand. In Year 6 there has been an emphasis on consolidating and practising numeracy skills. Children have also considered symmetrical shapes, but their work is well below the standard normally expected at this age. The school is using a grant from the Education Action Zone to help raise standards in basic skills.

9. In science, standards are well below average at age seven. However, commendable progress has been made and standards at age eleven are now at a similar level to most other schools nationally. Children have successfully learned how to set up simple experiments and to control the factors that might make the results unreliable.

10. The school has improved significantly its resources for information and communication technology. As a result, teachers' skills have increased and standards have risen quickly, particularly at the infant stage where they are now in line with that expected for children of this age. Since the new resources have only recently been introduced they have not yet allowed the older children to make up the gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Although ground is quickly being made up, standards at age eleven are below average.

11. At age seven, standards in art, design and technology, history and physical education are in line with those of most schools. Standards in geography and music are lower. A newly appointed co-ordinator for music has the expertise to raise standards in the subject. By age eleven, standards in art and design and technology have been maintained. In swimming, all children can swim the recommended 25 metres by the time they leave the

school. Standards in history, geography and music are below average at age eleven. In religious education, standards at age seven and eleven are below those expected in the local syllabus, although some high quality work was seen in Year 6.

12. The percentage of children on the school's register for special educational needs is higher than in most other schools. It includes one child with a statement of special educational need. The school has a part-time special educational needs co-ordinator and the provision is managed satisfactorily. All the support is given within class lessons and relies heavily on the programme of work provided by class teachers. The achievement of children with special educational needs is satisfactory. The work of the learning support assistants is valuable in helping them to make progress. However, the identification of children's individual learning difficulties and how they might be addressed needs to be more precise.

13. Children with English as an additional language are supported well and make good progress.

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

14. Children's attitudes to learning and to the school continue to be good from the last inspection. Behaviour in class and in and around the school continues to be good also, with one child excluded in the past year. Opportunities for children to show initiative and take responsibility around the school have improved since the last inspection. Attendance, although still below the national average, has steadily improved.

15. Children have positive attitudes towards school. The opinions of the parents that their children enjoy coming to school are confirmed by the inspection. They are keen to learn, both in lessons and at extra activities at lunchtime or after school. This eagerness is demonstrated by the way in which they settle quickly to tasks in the classroom. In most lessons, children have a strong desire to do their best. Their capacity to work hard to succeed has a positive impact upon the progress they make.

16. Children work with sustained concentration, especially where the teaching is inspiring and expectations are high. Occasionally, children become inattentive as a result of a lesson that proceeds at too slow a pace for them or when they do not find the subject matter interesting.

17. The behaviour of children in and around the school is consistently good. Parents' perceptions that high standards of behaviour exist are accurate. In classrooms, teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and deal with rare infringements with suitable firmness. Children behave sensibly, when moving around the school and in the playground, aggressive behaviour is absent. The absence of disruptive behaviour enables learning of sound quality to occur.

18. There are good relationships between children and adults and between children themselves. Children are courteous to visitors and to each other. All children, including those at the foundation stage, have friendly yet respectful relationships with teachers and other members of staff. Adults employed in the school present very positive images to the children. For example, when it is necessary, support staff use their initiative to work flexibly to meet the needs of all children. When specifically asked to work in groups, children co-operate well. There are a number of opportunities for them to demonstrate their ability to work

in a truly collaborative way and to take responsibility and display initiative. Examples include Year 6 children preparing the hall for assemblies and getting equipment out for lunchtime play, as well as all classes having monitor duties. Children's views are now sought on a number of issues such as playground equipment and other matters, in an effort to continually improve the school.

19. Attendance at the school is currently around 93 per cent, which is below the national average. There are an increased number of parents who continue to take family holidays during term time, despite advice from the school, that this will have an adverse effect on their child's attainment. Punctuality is good and lessons start and finish on time.

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

20. Teaching is good and sometimes very good at the foundation stage. It is satisfactory at both the infant and junior stages. Almost half of all lessons seen across the school were good or even better. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when good lessons were seen only occasionally. Particular attention has been given successfully to improving the pace and challenge in lessons, although brighter children are not always extended sufficiently. The number of learning support assistants has been increased since the previous inspection. Teachers generally deploy them effectively in lessons and they make a valuable contribution to children's learning. Good teaching occurs in all year groups, but most of it takes place at the foundation stage and in Year 1. Five of the eight class teachers are new to teaching at the school and, even when their lessons are consistently good, there has not yet been enough time for them to impact significantly on children's progress.

21. Until a permanent teacher is appointed, the nursery class is taught by a nursery instructor who has experience with this age group. The quality of teaching in the nursery is mainly good and children respond well to this. Most children's attainment on entry is very low for their age and emphasis is rightly given to the development of their personal and social ability as well as their literacy skills, including speaking, listening and reading readiness. Staff work hard, successfully, to establish sensible routines within a safe and caring environment. Relationships are good and this helps children feel confident and secure. They enjoy coming to school and greet the teacher each day with obvious pleasure. Activities are chosen well, but there is sometimes not a sharp enough focus on what children are to learn, particularly the older ones.

22. Teaching in the reception class is good and sometimes very good. Children benefit from the small number on roll and receive considerable individual attention. Appropriate emphasis is placed on ensuring continuity from the nursery class and all staff work together well. The high quality teaching stems from:

- the creation of a happy, harmonious atmosphere in which children thrive;
- a good understanding of how young children learn;
- a range of well organised activities that hold children's interest;
- an imaginative approach to the presentation of activities, such as the use of a puppet to explain what the children have to do;

- very good use of praise and encouragement so that children are motivated to work really hard;
- on-going reinforcement of children's knowledge and understanding so that good progress is made in their learning.

23. Many lessons at the infant and junior stages have a clear structure. They are generally planned well and often begin with an explanation of what is to be learned and how this links with previous work. Resources are prepared carefully and are readily available when required. Teachers have an expectation that children will:

- work hard and do their best;
- behave well so that there is a positive working atmosphere;
- listen carefully so that they know what they have to do;
- work together co-operatively.

Most children respond well to these demands and, although progress is often slow, they take a pride in their achievements.

24. The teacher in Year 1 has been in post for only one week. However, lessons for these children are consistently good and, given time, will have a significant impact on helping to raise standards. Features of this good teaching include:

- demanding tasks that challenge children to think hard;
- high expectations of what children can achieve;
- well organised group work that enables children to work together and to learn from one another;
- good questioning to deepen children's knowledge and understanding;
- ongoing feedback to children so that they know how to improve;
- good use of time with tasks often undertaken at a brisk pace.

25. Overall, basic skills in literacy and numeracy are taught soundly. National initiatives in these areas of the curriculum have been introduced satisfactorily, but opportunities are missed to reinforce literacy skills across the curriculum.

26. Teachers make good use of the newly established computer suite. Children often enjoy the lessons very much and are making good progress in their learning. As with literacy, however, children would benefit from increased reinforcement of information and communication technology skills in all subjects.

27. Good science lessons were observed in Years 5 and 6 in which children learned the main parts of a flower and their different functions. The lessons included a good mix of teacher input and practical work for the children to do. Sound questioning drew out the children's ideas and assessed their understanding. An excellent religious education lesson was seen with the older children. A wide and imaginative range of activities were used successfully to help children learn more about 'David' and to begin to develop an understanding of the place of music in religious observance. Children's interest was captured completely, they worked hard and, as a result, made good progress in their understanding.



28. The teaching of children with special educational needs is good at the foundation stage and satisfactory at the infant and junior stages. Some of the teaching is carried out by the special educational needs co-ordinator, but most is undertaken by class teachers who are often helped by learning support assistants. Activities are chosen to reflect the needs of the children and to stimulate learning. This is particularly successful at the foundation stage. Relationships are good and children are usually keen to please and to do their best. Their self-esteem is maintained well and they take part fully in class activities. However, children's learning difficulties and how they might be addressed are not always diagnosed precisely enough.

29. In some lessons, teachers make too much use of worksheets that limit the demands on children. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons seen, weaknesses resulted from:

- tasks not matched appropriately to the needs and interests of the children;
- children occupied, but not learning enough in the time available;
- lack of pace in the activities;
- brighter children not challenged and extended enough;
- difficulties in controlling the children adequately with the result that valuable time is lost.

30. The school has a small number of children for whom English is an additional language. They are taught well and participate fully in all lessons. Records show that their progress is monitored carefully.

31. Teachers try to use homework to enhance children's progress, but the response is variable.

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

32. The children's programme of work covers all the required subjects of the National Curriculum, although it rightly gives priority to literacy and numeracy. It is a suitably broad programme, since it includes additional opportunities for children to develop personally as well as academically. It is enriched by links with the community, visitors, study visits to places of interest and a range of out of school clubs.

33. The national programmes for literacy and numeracy have been introduced effectively, and are helping to raise standards in these vital areas. A vigorous programme for information and communication technology is now in place, supported by very good provision of equipment. The present curriculum was developed to cater for a school in which each class contained children from two different year groups. This year it has been possible to organise classes so that only one year group is in each class. In order for there to be no important gaps in the children's learning, the two-year programme is wisely being run until the end of the current school year. In 2002 a new, one-year programme will be implemented.

34. Lessons are provided in health education and sex education, and children learn about the safe and the unsafe uses of substances. The school is right to give added importance to these areas of learning.

35. The curriculum for children at the foundation stage is planned carefully and takes account of all the areas of learning. It enables children to take part successfully in a wide range of activities in and out of the classroom.

36. Lessons in many subjects are enlivened by visitors to school, and by visits to places of interest. Local clergy, for instance, contribute to lessons in religious education and during the inspection a dental nurse came to help the children understand how important it is to care for their teeth. As well as day visits, there is an annual residential study trip to the Isle of Wight. This deepens older children's understanding of how dissimilar two environments can be and leads to good work in many subjects.

37. Staff are keen to ensure that the different groups of children in the school all benefit fully from what it has to offer. Children's progress is analysed regularly and this has led staff to realise that boys tend to achieve less well than girls. Action is being taken to rectify this and focuses on developing and extending boys' oral contributions to class lessons and discussions. There are several children in the school learning English as a second or additional language. They receive good support and their progress is accurately monitored. The school makes good use of the additional funding it receives for these children and also benefits from specialist advice provided by the local education authority.

38. The school has responded positively to the key issue of its last inspection to improve provision for more able children. New systems for tracking the progress of every child help to ensure that all progress at a satisfactory rate. However, more needs to be done in this area. In particular, able children should be clearly identified and monitored as a group, and lessons checked to ensure they are all sufficiently challenging.

39. There are several children in the school from ethnic minorities. While there is no evidence whatever that these children do not progress as well as others, the school lacks the monitoring systems to ensure that this is the case. These children should be identified as a group and their progress checked regularly. Arrangements should be made to check that they are fully involved in playground and extracurricular activities and that their parents are confident to play a full part in the life of the school. The school should open a racial incidents book to record any instances of unkindness and should provide written guidance to teachers on how to handle any incidents that might arise. The prospectus should provide a clear statement of the school's intolerance of prejudiced language or behaviour. The school curriculum plan should indicate lessons in which children can be taught the importance of tolerance and racial harmony.

40. Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for children with special educational needs. The procedures for identifying such children are sound and comply with the National Code of Practice. The school liaises appropriately with outside agencies and the children benefit from this. Children's individual education plans are generally satisfactory, although there is sometimes a need for more rigorous and precise diagnosis of their learning difficulties and how they might be addressed. This would help them make quicker progress.

41. The school provides a satisfactory range of sports and arts clubs after school. It has developed effective links with its local community and partner schools. Local elderly people, for example, are invited to school concerts and Harvest Festival. Children from the infant stage visit their residential home to sing carols at Christmas. Teachers meet periodically with subject colleagues from the local secondary school to improve the continuity of education for the children, and secondary school pupils visit regularly to help with Sports Day.

42. Many lessons and assemblies promote the children's spiritual and moral development, and provision is good in these areas. In assemblies during the inspection week teachers tackled the theme of love. These were very effective assemblies in which children reflected on examples of how people show care for others. Children were especially moved when teachers spoke of their own experiences and childhoods. Opportunities to experience and express wonder, sorrow and sympathy arose in other areas of work as well. Children were deeply moved by the tragic events that had recently taken place in New York, and in class they became very sharply aware of the difference between right and wrong.

43. Social development is also catered for well. Children are encouraged to act as monitors during the school day. They contribute to discussions about class rules and appreciate that all groups need some degree of self-regulation if they are to function effectively. They responded well when invited to answer a questionnaire about improvements they would like to see in the school. Children accept a wider responsibility for people in need and show this in their contributions to charities such as NSPCC and Blue Peter appeals, as well as supporting a local hospice. The annual residential journey to the Isle of Wight gives older children the important experience of social living outside the home.

44. Satisfactory provision is made for children's cultural development. They learn about important writers and painters, and study their works. Good quality literary texts are often used in literacy lessons. However, at present music does not contribute as much as it should to children's cultural development and it is rare for classes to visit theatres or concerts. Work in the arts in school does not take sufficient account of the multicultural nature of Britain today.

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

45. Teachers and support staff quickly get to know the children well. A safe and caring environment is created successfully and independence is encouraged. Children are supervised effectively and staff know what to do when a child has an accident or is unwell. Personal support and guidance for children is good.

46. There are effective procedures in place to ensure the health, safety and protection of the children. Nominated members of staff co-ordinate the necessary arrangements and there are links with some outside agencies, including the fire service. Formal written risk assessments of potential hazards in and around the school are undertaken, as well as those for school trips.

47. The school has sound procedures in place to promote good discipline and behaviour. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. There is currently no policy on restraining pupils as required under Circular 10/98 and staff training has yet to be undertaken.

48. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. There is a 24 hour telephone answering service to enable parents to report absences promptly and any unexplained ones are quickly followed up by staff on a daily basis. Each individual child's attendance is monitored closely by the headteacher and action taken as appropriate.

49. The school has refined and improved its assessment procedures and record keeping systems since the last inspection, when they were satisfactory. More effective arrangements have been introduced using computer-aided analyses, so that by Year 6 there is a wealth of data about each child in English, mathematics and science. This information enables the school to keep track of individual progress through the National Curriculum levels and to check that children achieve these. The school's attainment has been generally rising as a result of this closer monitoring. If standards do fall, the school is well equipped to find the reasons why and to begin taking appropriate action where necessary in raising attainment. New procedures have been introduced this term that will provide information on the progress made in other subjects.

50. Additionally, there is a range of assessment activities involving the children. Individual targets are pasted in exercise books and presented in ways that are easily understood by the children. In mathematics for instance, lists of what is to be learned are presented as dartboard targets. When these are reached the class teacher signs and dates the sheet so that children know the progress they are making. Whole school writing and mathematics tests are carried out termly and the results of these written in individual records. Planning of work in literacy and numeracy is then adjusted satisfactorily to take these results into account. Teachers also carry out informal assessments often at the end of units of work. This helps them to evaluate their own effectiveness and to make alterations to lesson plans where appropriate.

51. Emphasis is rightly placed on the early identification of children with learning difficulties. The co-ordinator for special educational needs works closely with class teachers to ensure this happens.

52. The marking of work is mainly kept up to date and helpful comments tell children where they have done well and what could be improved.

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

53. Parents view the school as a good school. The only significant issue of concern disclosed in the returned questionnaires was the amount of extra-curricular activity offered by the school. The inspection findings are that these activities are satisfactory both in type and number. They include a Christian club, netball, soccer, badminton and an art club.

54. There are effective induction arrangements that ensure children under five settle well into school routines. This includes visits by staff to the homes of prospective nursery aged children and their parents or carers. Parents are supportive of what the school is trying to achieve in this regard.

55. The quality of information provided for parents is good. There is a noticeboard in the entrance foyer of the school that contains up to date information. This is supplemented by regular newsletters sent home. The school prospectus and annual report from governors to parents both meet statutory requirements. They are comprehensive and informative and the prospectus gives useful curriculum details for the ensuing year. There are formal opportunities for parents to meet with teachers to discuss end of year academic reports concerning their child. The attendance at these meetings is high. The reports, especially

where targets are set in English, mathematics and science, are found useful by the majority of parents. The meetings with parents of children who have special education needs, on the other hand, are not well attended. There are missed opportunities for both staff and parents to discuss the content of individual educational plans and set targets to help the child concerned make progress.

56. The effectiveness of the links with parents and their impact on the work of the school is a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. A small number of parents help in school listening to children read. The vast majority of parents have signed the Home-School Agreement, but a significant number of them provide less support for their children's learning at home than might be expected. This has an adverse impact on the attainment of those children concerned. There is currently no parent teacher association to support the school. The school development plan has identified the fact that a number of parents do not understand the role of the governors and this is currently being addressed through consultation. The school has held theme weeks for parents and children and the one concerning mathematics was particularly well attended by around 70 parents working alongside their child. The sessions provided within the scope of the Education Action Zone, however, such as literacy and parenting skills, had a disappointing response. The school acknowledges it needs to do more to encourage parents to help with their child's education, in support of what the school is trying to achieve.

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

57. The previous inspection found the management of the school to be sound and developing. A calm and encouraging ethos had been established successfully and there was accurate evaluation and planning of the school's development. Since then the situation has improved further. The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and governors are strengths now of the school and enhance its capacity to improve. It is part of the Basildon East Education Action Zone and this has brought benefits, including activities to enhance links with parents.

58. The school has undergone considerable staff changes in the last few months. The headteacher has returned from a four day a week secondment to a nearby school. He feels that he has gained much from the experience. The deputy headteacher has left for promotion and a senior teacher has also moved on. Of the eight classes, five are being taught by newly appointed teachers, including a new senior teacher and a temporary acting deputy headteacher who joined the staff at the beginning of October. The school is coping well with the changes and parents express satisfaction at what is happening. The interests of the children are put first and a calm atmosphere continues to prevail.

59. Staff changes mean the senior management team is in the very early stages of being reformed. However, clear and positive direction is provided by the headteacher and there is a strong commitment to improve the quality of education and to raise standards. The strengths in the leadership stem from an appropriate emphasis on the need for teamwork and a thorough approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning.

60. The previous inspection judged the governance of the school to be weak. This is no longer the case. The governing body is knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and has become increasingly influential in raising standards. Governors appreciate the difficulties facing the school, but targets for improvement are challenging and everyone is prepared to work hard to try and meet them.

61. The governing body has appropriate committees that meet regularly. It is closely involved in the formulation of the school development plan that sets out realistic priorities for the future. Individual governors vary in their availability to visit the school, but each class has an attached governor and this system works reasonably well. Together with the headteacher, governors ensure that the school's resources are applied effectively to help raise standards.

62. Day to day management of the school is good. Staff and governors are proud of the atmosphere and environment in which the children work. The school's ethos of treating children as individuals, nurturing their talents and interests and endeavouring to assist them in any particular areas of difficulty, are reflected successfully in its daily life and good relationships.

63. The headteacher rightly places emphasis on the importance of monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of teaching. He has put in place a good programme of formal observation of lessons with feedback to teachers that includes targets for improvement. This is part of the school's drive to raise standards and quality of education, but it is particularly important because of the recent changes in staff. The programme is proving successful in promoting staff confidence. However, there is still work to do, building on the teachers' determination to do well and increasing their skills so that all teaching is at least good quality.

64. The role of subject co-ordinators has been clarified since the previous inspection and includes well set out responsibilities for assessment and the promotion of high standards. A number of them are new to the post, but all are keen to raise the profile of their particular area of the curriculum. They produce good action plans that identify and prioritise developments. They also support colleagues where they can and monitor standards through looking at teachers' planning and children's work.

65. The school's arrangements for the management and organisation of the special educational needs provision, including children with statements of special education needs, is satisfactory overall and national requirements are met. The special needs co-ordinator liaises closely with the link governor who is one of the school's learning support assistants. The link governor has attended governor training for this area of responsibility. The school's approach to children with English as an additional language is good and enables them to do well.

66. The school has an appropriate complement of teachers, although many of them have not been in post long. Since the previous inspection the number of learning support assistants has been increased. They are shared across all classes and are used to good effect, often in support of children with special educational needs. The learning support assistants make a significant contribution to the general life of the school as well as to children's attainment and progress. Administrative staff welcome visitors in a friendly

manner and help to ensure that the school runs smoothly on a daily basis. The lunchtime supervisors also make an important contribution to the smooth running of the school during the lunch break.

67. There are clear job descriptions and a system of performance management has been introduced successfully. High priority is rightly given to staff training and the induction programme for new teachers is good. This is building their confidence and helping them to settle quickly into the school. Particular importance has also been placed on the effective introduction of the national literacy and numeracy initiatives. As a result, these are having a positive impact on standards.

68. Accommodation is satisfactory and maintained well. However, the open plan nature of classrooms means there are some problems with noise levels and this limits practical activities. Since the previous inspection, a good information and communication technology suite has been established centrally and standards in the subject are beginning to rise quickly.

69. Resources are satisfactory overall. However, provision for the foundation stage is good and for information and communication technology it is very good. The programmes of work for these areas are enhanced because of this.

70. The school's income and expenditure are higher than in most schools, and the budget is managed very effectively on a day-to-day basis. The school makes good use of modern technology in its financial management, and has imaginatively introduced a computerised registration system thereby saving a significant amount of valuable teaching and administration time. There has not been an audit since the last inspection.

71. Last year the school's expenditure was in line with its income. This meant that a large accumulated surplus could be carried forward into the present financial year. The forecast for this year is for a small overspend. This allows the school to enhance its staffing, and will reduce the sum carried forward for unforeseen circumstances to a prudent figure. A carefully produced programme of priorities directs school spending. Recent priorities have included improving security through new fencing, and setting up the new computer facility. The money received for the education of children with special educational needs, and for those learning English as an additional language is correctly applied.

72. The governors allocate the funds available to them with great care, and they make sure the children receive good value. They seek competitive tenders for all major work, and for services such as staff development to ensure they get the best for the money. They approach the task of setting targets for raising standards with energy and commitment. They are sharply aware of how the school performs in comparison with other similar schools and they direct funds in ways which will bring further improvement. Increasing the number of learning support assistants, and accepting the costs of a change to single year group classes are examples of well-directed expenditure. Excellent arrangements have been put in place to enable parents, and children, to contribute their ideas through questionnaires about how the school might be improved.

73. Taking into account the standards achieved by the children, the quality of education provided, the improvements secured since the last inspection, and the school's costs, it gives satisfactory value for money.

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

74. The headteacher, governors and staff should build on the strengths of the school to:
- (1) raise the standards in mathematics further at both the infant and junior stages;  
(Paragraphs: 1,2,3,8,100-104)
  - (2) ensure that children's skills in writing and the use of information and communication technology are reinforced and developed systematically in all subjects;  
(Paragraphs: 7,10,25,26,91,95,107,112,115,123,125,130,131,134)
  - (3) improve the use at the junior stage of the programme of work which accompanies the local syllabus for religious education;  
(Paragraphs: 11,143,145)
  - (4) ensure that all lessons provide enough challenge for the more able children;  
Paragraphs: 2, 21, 29, 38,75, 77, 85, 91, 105,109, 111, 117)



- (5) within the special educational needs provision, ensure a rigorous and more precise diagnosis of individual children's learning difficulties and how they might be addressed.  
(Paragraphs: 12,28,40,51,125)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	3	19	25	3	0	0
Percentage	2%	6%	37%	49%	6%	0%	0%

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR-Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	21	188
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	55

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	8	103

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

### Attendance

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
%	%

School data	7.0
National comparative data	5.2

School data	0.8
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	15	19	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	5	11
	Girls	14	14	17
	Total	23	19	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	68 (63)	56 (52)	82 (81)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	13	9
	Girls	17	17	17
	Total	27	30	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (70)	88 (81)	76 (81)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	20	15	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	12	17
	Girls	11	9	13
	Total	24	21	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (33)	64 (39)	86 (61)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	12	17
	Girls	11	10	13
	Total	25	22	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (33)	63 (36)	86 (67)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	177
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	26.9

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

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	200

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32
Number of pupils per FTE adult	21

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	532,892
Total expenditure	532,924
Expenditure per pupil	2,502
Balance brought forward from previous year	34,922
Balance carried forward to next year	34,890

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	208
Number of questionnaires returned	35

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	37	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	31	6	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	49	3	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	49	34	0	0	17
The teaching is good.	60	29	6	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	37	9	3	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	34	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	37	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	40	37	11	0	9
The school is well led and managed.	54	31	9	3	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	49	3	3	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	11	17	20	6	46

Numbers may not add up to 100 as they have been rounded to the nearest number.

## **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**

75. Provision for children under five is good both in the nursery and reception classes. On entry to the nursery, most children have attainment that is well below that typical for their age. Their personal and social ability is under-developed and most have weak literacy skills, particularly speaking, listening and reading readiness. These aspects of the curriculum are the main focus for teaching in the first few weeks of term. By the time children transfer to reception they are able to express themselves more clearly and have greater confidence in making relationships and thinking for themselves. In the absence of a teacher, the nursery instructor is in charge. She has experience with this age group and children respond well to her and want to come to school. Teaching is mainly good, and children with special needs are well supported by both adults. However, attention needs to be given to providing more suitable activities for the oldest nursery children.

76. The standard of teaching in the reception class is consistently good or better. As a result, children mainly make good progress, are positive about school and behave well. Staff plan effectively together to ensure that there is continuity between the phases. The reception class benefits from the small number on roll and children therefore receive much individual attention. The teacher and her assistant get to know each child well and provide a happy, harmonious environment in which to learn. Those with special needs and English as an additional language do well with the support they receive. The early assessment of children's abilities has been a priority this term in reception. Initial results show that the majority, if not all, will reach the required national levels by the end of the year. Able children are quickly identified and lesson plans include extension activities for them.

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

77. Personal, social and emotional development is very good within a caring and secure environment. Teaching places great emphasis on this aspect of the curriculum and activities are planned thoughtfully. In the nursery, the youngest children need reassurance and sometimes comforting when they first arrive in the mornings, though they are pleased to see their teacher. Some parents stay for a few minutes to help them settle. Children who are more confident get on quietly with the tasks prepared for them, often staying at one activity for a good length of time. Relationships in both classes are very constructive; children respect and rely on the adults who work with them and copy their good example. Planning in the nursery needs to be sharper and to identify more specifically what is to be learnt in each of the planned activities particularly for the older group.

78. In both classes, children show independence in choosing activities and materials they wish to use, for example, when making models or playing with construction toys. They put on aprons when painting and hang them up when finished. In the nursery, children seek help to remove socks and shoes for physical education lessons, while in reception some can do it themselves. In all activities, such as when completing a jigsaw, children show patience and interest.



## **Communication, language and literacy**

79. Good progress is made in language and literacy in the nursery. Within a few weeks children become confident in speaking aloud in a group, listen carefully to instructions and carry these out well. Adults talk to children about school and although restricted in what they can say they are confident to chat. Role-play situations are created for group interaction, but many prefer to play on their own, without interruption from anyone. When it is fine, children share books at the picnic table with the nursery nurse or sit in the book corner in class and 'read' favourite texts with a friend. Stories and rhymes are popular and children join in the class activity when they can. In literacy, children practise tracing or copying their names. The older children look at books only, cannot form their letters properly or write a simple sentence.

80. In reception, progress in language and literacy is good, although attainment remains well below average for at least half the class. Children write their names legibly, link sounds to letters and name objects beginning with S. Most hear, see, and use familiar words and enjoy talking to others about their experiences. They extend their vocabulary by exploring the meanings and sounds of new words, often through story and rhymes. Even the most reluctant speakers thrive in the caring atmosphere and, with support, are beginning to speak aloud in a group. One very able child is confident in her use of language, is a good reader and is well advanced in all aspects of literacy for her age. Others like books too and are beginning to associate pictures and words when retelling or talking about a story.

## **Mathematical development**

81. Progress in the nursery is good in mathematics. Children start with little mathematical knowledge but soon become confident in counting aloud to ten or to themselves in individual work. They sort, group and match different objects and recognise simple numbers on a peg board. A few manage to write numbers correctly. In a game on shape, some were able to recognise and name simple two-dimensional shapes and place these correctly on larger ones, feeling a great sense of achievement when they did so. Number rhymes are an important part of numeracy in both the nursery and reception. Jingles such as 'One finger, one thumb, keep moving' delight the children and make learning fun for them. They like to sing these and join in the actions.

82. Although attainment is below expectations progress in the reception class is good. Sometimes with help, children count to 10 correctly and the most able can add simple numbers together. They can sequence numbers in order, moving backwards and forwards along a line. Resources are made well and used effectively by the teacher to encourage learning. For example, in a very good lesson a 'washing line' was used to help children find missing numbers. Good questioning by the teacher helped children to work out which number had been removed. Two able children explained how they had worked this out. Good praise was given by the teacher and the rest of the class clapped them for their efforts. A puppet is effectively used in mental and oral mathematics to 'help' the children learn. He is very popular and children strive to catch him out when he makes mistakes!

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

83. Children have very little knowledge and understanding of the world around them. In the nursery they learn about plant growth by observing the trees and plants that grow in the school grounds. They practice saying the days of the week and seasons of the year and a child updates a weather chart daily. Through water play in science they find objects which float and sink. Many choose the computer and can click and drag a mouse competently across the screen. In one program they select which room in a house to go to. They then change colours and shapes of objects, spotting differences and saying what they are.

84. In reception, children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developing. A walk around the school produced some interesting sounds which linked effectively with the music topic. In one activity, children began to understand something about the past by looking at the difference between old and new toys. Information on favourite colours was put into the computer and children printed out pictograms using this data. Others use a mouse confidently to select from menus on screen and enjoy repeating the instructions aloud whilst working on a CD-Rom program.

### **Physical development**

85. The nursery garden provides opportunities for the youngest children to develop their skills satisfactorily through creative outdoor activities. They use the wooden frame to climb and explore and throw balls into a net on the wall. In the hall they move parts of their bodies in time to taped music and sing the refrain 'Heads, shoulders, knees and toes'. This is too difficult for some and they stand and watch. The lesson focuses more on the lower age children. The older ones are not challenged sufficiently and make unsatisfactory progress.

86. In reception, children develop their physical skills satisfactorily. They throw and catch balls in physical education lessons and control their bodies in warming up and cooling down activities. In paired activities they work together well showing patience and understanding when their partner misses a catch. Through cutting and pasting activities, for instance, in sequencing 'spot cards' in mathematics, they develop better hand-eye co-ordination and manipulative skills. In handwriting practice they learn to hold a pencil correctly and to draw pictures in art.

### **Creative development**

87. The number of well-planned and wide ranging activities ensures that children in the nursery and reception classes are making good progress towards the nationally expected levels in creative development. They are encouraged to express their ideas through drawing, painting and modelling with a variety of materials. In reception, children design their own pattern and select a paint shade for printing with objects. Their work is highly valued by staff and attractively displayed.

88. In music, all children have free choice of the musical instruments on display and play these when they want to. In one lesson, children explored loud and quiet sounds using their voices, and the instruments well. Older ones from the nursery join reception at hymn practice where they proudly sing aloud to the whole school. Nearly all like joining in with the actions in singing games and well-known rhymes, many having favourites of their own.

## **ENGLISH**

89. The previous inspection found that, from a low base, standards of attainment were rising steadily. Though still below national averages, sound progress was being made. The school has continued to monitor its performance carefully and this is paying dividends,

particularly at the end of the junior stage where results until the year 2000 show a significant rise. Recent results in national tests have shown a slight dip, but the school was predicting this because of the increased number of children with special educational needs and difficulties with staffing in the past. The school expects an improvement during the current year so that results will be nearer the national averages by the time of the tests. Inspection findings agree with this, although the number of children joining and leaving the school may impact upon results.

90. Scrutiny of work available shows children make satisfactory progress from a low base at the infant stage. Older children at the junior stage make better progress. Scrutiny of work and lesson observations together, show that at the end of the infant stage, children's overall attainment is well below average. By the age of eleven, it has improved, but is still below average. Children with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at both the infant and junior stages.

91. The national initiative on literacy has been introduced satisfactorily and teachers feel it is helping to raise standards. Texts are chosen well and generally appeal to the children's interests. However, more could be done to reinforce literacy skills across all subjects. The school does not have many children of high ability and only a few reach the higher levels of attainment in the national tests. The situation would improve if sufficiently challenging work for such children were provided in all English lessons. The school is aware of the difficulty and is trying hard to overcome it.

92. Children are pleased to talk to visitors about their work and matters that interest them. They are polite and respectful. However, they often use only a limited range of vocabulary and their speaking and listening skills are not as well developed as in most other schools. Children begin oral sessions by listening carefully. They respond well to prompts and encouragement, but some quickly become restless and find it difficult to concentrate. By the age of seven, many children are reluctant to offer opinions or to express preferences. They sometimes find it difficult to communicate more than simple meanings clearly and their speaking and listening skills are mostly well below average. By the age of eleven, children's confidence has increased and they are beginning to use their own experiences to develop their answers to questions. Their speaking and listening skills are generally below average, but there are occasions when they contribute to discussions well. For example, during the introduction to a Year 6 literacy lesson some children recalled previous poetry work and made sensible comments about the use of metaphors.

93. Most children enjoy listening to stories, but their interest in reading declines as they get older. Reading at home is irregular and most parents do not complete the home/school reading record book. Infant children make some use of letter sounds to read new words successfully, but many make little attempt to use pictures or the context of the story to help them. At age seven, their reading is often halting and lacking in confidence. However, they are able to identify some books they have read and they know what an author and an

illustrator do. At the junior stage, many children read with growing confidence and fluency, but with little expression. By the age of eleven their reading skills are generally close to the national average, though there is not a great deal of real enthusiasm for the activity. Children show satisfactory understanding of main characters and story lines, but find it difficult to predict story outcomes and reasonable alternatives. More able children have read the work of a range of authors. One Year 6 child could name a number of the plays by William Shakespeare and another referred to the work of Charles Dickens and Lewis Carroll. Many children know about the use of an index and a contents page, but their research skills are often limited.

94. The importance of recognising and using letter sounds in reading development is rightly emphasised for children with special educational needs. For example, the special needs co-ordinator showed good skill in getting a child to relate new words to the sounds in words already known.

95. Many children have considerable difficulty with writing and standards are generally well below those of other children nationally at the end of the infant stage. By age eleven, there is an improvement, but standards remain below average. At the infant stage, children show a growing understanding of how to sequence events in the right order. However, many children's knowledge of basic sentence structure, including the use of capital letters, full stops and question marks, is developing only slowly. There is a heavy use of worksheets and this sometimes hinders children's progress because they do not find the exercises sufficiently interesting. Children use dictionaries and word books, but simple words are often spelt incorrectly. The school is aware of the problem and has introduced focused spellings to try to raise standards. Children use lined books to practice handwriting. They try hard to improve, but often struggle to transfer their skills successfully to other written work.

96. At the junior stage, children write for a range of purposes, such as letters, stories and poetry. They are beginning to think more carefully about the use of language and its meaning. For example, in a Year 3 lesson a child described a conjuror accurately as "a magic person" and another child defined the word 'independently' as meaning "by myself." There is some useful story planning, yet writing often lacks imagination and more could be accomplished in the time available. Teachers give appropriate attention to spelling and grammatical structure, but children often make simple errors. Handwriting is mostly uniform and work is generally presented satisfactorily.

97. Almost all the teaching seen was satisfactory and some of it was good. Most of the good teaching was observed in Year 1 where the teacher has been in post for only one week and has not yet had time to make a significant impact on children's progress.

98. The structure provided by the literacy hour has given teachers clear guidelines about the organisation of lessons and this is proving beneficial. Resources are prepared well and lesson plans are usually clear about what the children are to learn and how. Most children have good attitudes towards the subject and behave really well. The best teaching stems from:

- good relationships and an expectation that children will work hard and do their best throughout the lesson;

- reminders about previous work and how it links with the tasks to be undertaken. An example of this was seen in a Year 3 lesson on the use of prefixes, during which the teacher reminded the children about earlier work on root words;
- good control and management, including the effective use of praise and encouragement that helps build children's confidence;
- skilful use of questions that assess what children understand and challenges them to think hard;
- effective deployment of support staff to help children who need it most;
- a sense of purpose that ensures time is used productively. An example of this was observed in a Year 1 lesson that included a successful quick fire oral session on the identification of letter sounds and simple words.

99. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs when tasks are not matched appropriately to the needs and interests of the children. As a result, they struggle to make progress, are sometimes off task and valuable time is lost in reprimanding them.

## **MATHEMATICS**

100. The previous inspection found that standards were rising steadily from a low base. They were still below the national average but progress was being made. Over the four year period to 2000 the upward trend in performance continued and was particularly significant at the end of the junior stage. Unverified results of the national tests for 2001 show a dip in the junior stage results, but the school monitors its performance carefully and was predicting this because of an increased number of children with special educational needs and past difficulties with staffing. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of children's work show that, at the present time at the age of seven and eleven, attainment is well below that expected nationally. The school is predicting an improvement over the year so that results will be nearer the national average by the time the tests come round. With the help of a grant from the Education Action Zone, a part-time learning support assistant has been appointed to help with mathematics in Years 2 and 6.

101. The school analyses test data to check the progress made in mathematics. The use of this information has improved since the last inspection, although this is too late to have an impact on the present Year 6. Some children have considerable gaps in their knowledge and skills. For instance, in a lesson on symmetry in this class, the majority were working at a level of understanding well below that typical for their age.

102. Year 2 children can count in tens to one hundred and some backwards to zero. They know money values to 20 pence and can calculate simple shopping sums in their head, for example 'if I have 5p how much will I have left if I spend 3p?' The majority can identify plastic coins to £1 but have difficulty adding two small totals together. Scrutiny of earlier work shows that more able children are working at a more advanced level and can add a two digit number to one. Those of lower ability struggle and make slow progress. Too many worksheets are used, many of which are either unfinished or too difficult for children to understand.

103. Overall, teaching is satisfactory at the infant stage, although one good lesson was seen in Year 1. Here, children made good progress in identifying and naming the properties of two-dimensional shapes. The teacher planned the lesson well and helped children to get practical experience using mathematical apparatus in making and building shapes. One able child made a cube and counted the corners, sides and faces correctly. During the lesson, both the class teacher and learning support assistant gave information to individuals on how well they were doing and gave further help as required. Generally, children work well in

lessons and try to do what is required of them. They particularly like practical tasks where they can handle apparatus, but are not so keen on completing worksheets without support.

104. This term in Year 6, children have been consolidating and practising numeracy skills. Their exercise books show work in multiplication and division of two-digit numbers and shopping sums, for instance, costing the price of 3 kilograms of apples. They show some understanding of fractions in ordering and simplifying numbers and using a numerator and denominator in a sum. In a lesson in the same year group, children could distinguish symmetrical shapes from others and find the lines of symmetry in simple two-dimensional shapes. The quality of this work was well below the standard normally expected at this age. In the Year 5 lesson, children were investigating rotational symmetry, which was more advanced than the tasks being done in the older class. An interesting display of work in data handling from the summer term shows how children spend their leisure time. Good use was made of information and communication technology to show the results in graphical form.

105. Teaching in the juniors is satisfactory overall. Two lessons were of a good quality. They were well structured with a proper amount of direct teaching and children make great efforts to complete tasks. Many are keen, want to do well and fulfil the expectations of the class teachers. Planning takes account of different abilities and work is stimulating and appropriately challenging. For instance, in one lesson children were able to explain their methods to others when making mathematical models. Learning objectives are written on the board so that all the class is clear about what is to be taught. Some areas of weakness do exist and are related to the lack of pace, undemanding tasks and the slow progress made by the more able mathematicians.

106. The National Numeracy Strategy has been satisfactorily implemented and newly appointed staff are well supported by their colleagues in lesson planning. The school has recently held a successful curriculum week on mathematics. Photographs show children working together using a range of equipment such as number games. The school encourages parents to take part in mathematical events and many attended a successful evening recently.

## **SCIENCE**

107. Standards in science have continued to rise since the last inspection and children at the end of Year 6 are now working at similar levels to those in other schools. This is a considerable achievement, since many of the children do not find the written aspects of the subject easy. Indeed, standards at the end of Year 2 are well below average because children's very limited speaking, listening and writing skills impede their progress.

108. Results in National Curriculum tests show that the standards children reach by the time they leave have been rising steadily for the last five years. The tests they took in 2000 showed them to be only slightly below average and to be doing better than most children in schools with a similar intake. The most recent tests show that this level has been sustained.

109. There are few children of high ability in the school and this is reflected in the fact that only a small number reach the higher levels of attainment in their tests. This said, more children would reach those higher levels if all their science lessons included some more difficult work to challenge them. Children with special educational needs make good progress, as do those learning English as an additional language because they have very

effective extra help when they need it. Children from ethnic minorities take a full part in all science activities and also do well.

110. The science programme covers all the required areas of work in the National Curriculum. The younger children learn about simple materials in daily use, about how animals and plants live and about the different sources of light in the environment. However, their understanding of their science work is at a low level. One lesson for example, aimed to show how the volume of sounds appears to increase and diminish as they approach and recede. While the children were able to identify different sounds around the school and suggest useful adjectives to describe them, most were quite unable to explain that sounds seemed to get louder as they approached. By the time they leave the school at the end of the junior stage, most children have learned how to set up a simple experiment and to control the factors that might make their results unreliable. They can make a simple electric circuit and, through studying materials, have learned of different ways in which mixtures, such as sand and salt, can be separated. After lessons seen during the inspection, most could explain in broad terms how flowers are pollinated, set seed, and reproduce.

111. The teaching in all the science lessons seen was satisfactory and in several it was good. Teachers often plan interesting practical activities that capture the children's interests. One teacher, for example, had invited a dental nurse to talk to the children as part of their work on food and nutrition. Science lessons often include a good balance of different types of work, including listening, discussing, experimenting, drawing and writing. This helps the children sustain their concentration. When they concentrate well, they usually learn well. In one good Year 6 lesson, children talked with their teacher about the function of different parts of a flower in the process of pollination. Each child then had a flower to dissect. They identified the different parts and mounted and labelled them on card. The children worked hard and with enjoyment. By the end of the lesson, most of them could give an accurate account of pollination from the arrival of a bee to the setting of seed. A few children understood the process quite quickly and would have benefited from moving on to a more challenging science task.

112. A particular strength in the infant classes is the teachers' insistence that the children speak clearly and give adequate detail orally in their answers. This is very important, because well below average speaking and listening skills are a major reason for low attainment in the infants. In some classes at both the infant and junior stages there is an overuse of worksheets, and these hamper children's learning. Occasionally also, teachers in the juniors do not remind children that their science writing must be no less accurate and neat than in literacy lessons. Teachers are still at an early stage in making full use of the school's information and communication technology resources in their science teaching, although some good practice was seen in the juniors where children used an excellent programme to research the structure of teeth.

113. In all classes, children like science and look forward to their lessons. They participate eagerly and work hard. When they undertake activities in pairs they work well together and learn from each other. Their interest, combined with effective teaching, has raised standards sharply in the juniors. The challenge for the school now is to seek a similar advance in the infants.

## **ART AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

114. Only two lessons were seen during the period of the inspection, one in each of the infant and junior stages. Judgements were informed by interviews with children, an examination of teachers' planning and scrutiny of children's work and displays around the school. Sufficient time is given to this area of the curriculum and teachers' records and

planning show a programme of activities that is sometimes lively and interesting. Overall, the children are achieving as well as other children, nationally, at ages seven and eleven.

115. Children's learning over time, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory at both the infant and junior stages. Their work shows increasing confidence in handling equipment and trying out different materials and media. They generate some interesting ideas and think carefully about what could be included in models they make. For example, infant children talked enthusiastically about a model park they had made previously. They identified the materials involved and described sensibly how they had used scissors and glue. They explained that the park had included swings, slides and a roundabout and that some of these had moving parts. In another example, the older junior children successfully designed and made simple musical instruments using card, paper, foil and elastic bands. They thought about the order of their work and evaluated the results by considering what had worked well and what had not. However, children's efforts to record the way they have designed and made products and their evaluation of the outcomes, are often hindered because of their lack of writing skills.

116. Infant and junior children show satisfactory skills in drawing, painting and colouring. This often helps them illustrate work across the curriculum, for example in their history studies on Ancient Egypt. During discussions about their work, infant children were pleased to explain how they mix different paints to form dark and light colours. Older junior children talked sensibly about the need for shading and how this can be achieved. As they move up through the school, children's observational skills improve satisfactorily and they show growing confidence in the ability to represent what they have seen through pictures. For example, Year 2 children described how they had drawn the shapes and lines they had seen on shells and fir cones. In another example, Year 6 children made good quality charcoal drawings of facial expressions. Children also show an increasing ability to use their imagination when making pictures. For example, Year 3 children discussed dreams and made drawings of them. They then chose from a range of materials to create a collage of part of their dream. In the process, they explored ideas with one another and successfully advanced their understanding of how mental images can be represented in different ways. Appropriate attention is given to the work of well-known artists such as Picasso, Monet and Van Gough. Older children were able to describe accurately Van Gough's paintings of sunflowers and of a chair. These studies help children to be more aware of the ways in which different artists represent what they see and feel.

117. The teaching observed ranged from satisfactory in the juniors to unsatisfactory in the infants. Where teaching is satisfactory, tasks build effectively on children's previous experiences. There are clear explanations of what is to be done and resources are organised well. This enables children to feel confident and has a positive impact on their progress. Appropriate opportunities are provided for them to make their own choices about materials to use and this helps build their sense of responsibility. Children are sometimes noisy, but overall, they have satisfactory attitudes to their work and behave well. In the unsatisfactory teaching, children are kept busy, but already know much of what is being taught. As a result, their learning is not carried forward enough in the time available. In particular, the brighter children are not sufficiently challenged.

118. Displays around the school are variable, but many are of a good standard. This helps build children's visual awareness and encourages their creative development.



## **Geography**

119. Children at age seven do not meet the national level expected in geography. Their progress is slow at the junior stage so that by age 11 achievement levels are well below that typical for their age. Not all find writing easy and this is reflected in the quality and depth of work that is produced. Although there is an overall curriculum plan, children's knowledge and understanding are not always built on systematically from year to year.

120. A small number of lessons were seen and other evidence was taken from topic books, teachers' plans and displays. One piece of work by Year 2 showed a road map of the area around the school with the child's home marked on it. Discussion with older children showed gaps both in their learning and in the development of enquiry skills. They found it difficult to recall topics studied in the past and there were some misunderstandings about where to locate different countries, rivers and towns in the world. Knowledge of the geography of the local area was restricted and only one child knew the name of the nearby river. Children were uncertain how to use keys in map reading or how to find places using co-ordinates.

121. In the scrutiny of this term's work no difference was seen between the Year 5 and 6 work. In samples examined, little allowance was made for age and ability. However, a small amount of independent research using information books and CD-Roms has been undertaken on different rivers such as the Amazon and Danube. Recent events in America have stimulated interest in the country and children have coloured the flag and accompanied this by writing about New York.

122. In the good infant lesson the teacher had taken time to prepare resources that were interesting and matched different abilities within the class. With the aid of a simple plan and photographs, the class were able to find where Barnaby Bear' had hidden in the school. Additional adult support enabled children with very limited skills to take part. Children concentrated well and enjoyed the practical task they were given.

123. In the junior lesson, a video was used satisfactorily to stimulate work on rivers and dams. Children made notes in preparation for discussion, but this evidence was not used effectively in later written work as a worksheet replaced it. Several struggled to complete this task because of their limited reading and writing skills. Although the attitudes and behaviour of the majority were satisfactory, those who found the task difficult were unsettled and did not complete very much work.

124. The annual school journey to the Isle of Wight provides a great opportunity for older children to observe a different geographical area to their own through orienteering, beach combing, and fossil hunting. A visit to Sandown beach last year stimulated one child to write 'I found it extremely exhilarating. The dinosaur bone was very small of course, but I didn't care, it might have even been an Iguanodon bone!'

## **HISTORY**

125. The levels achieved by children at age seven and 11 are below what is expected nationally. Some make satisfactory progress in the subject but others experience difficulties in writing, particularly younger children and those with special educational needs. No history lessons were seen at the infant stage. Evidence shows that much of the work is oral and teaching is through discussion. On a worksheet, children made comparisons between old and new toys and answered questions on these when asked by the class teacher.

126. In a group discussion with Year 6 children, they were able to recall work in depth on the Victorians as it had been made very meaningful for them. A visit to a museum where they had dressed up and attended 'school' jogged their memories. Here, they had written on slates and were made to keep quiet or 'else you got the cane'. Victorians had lots of babies, they remembered, and dressed in different costumes and wore 'funny hats, long dresses and suits'. Asked about research, one mentioned information books, the Internet and an 'encyclopaedia on the computer' but was not really certain of what to do.

127. Two satisfactory lessons were seen at the junior stage, both on Egypt. In one, children satisfactorily drew Egyptian objects and recalled information about them. Most showed great interest, behaved very well and worked at a reasonable pace. The teacher was supported well by the learning support assistant. In the other lesson, some children were not as well focused and did not finish their writing. In conversation, a number of them could talk about the importance of the River Nile in Ancient Egypt and they had recorded this information briefly in their books. The special needs group were ably supported by the assistant who wrote down their ideas for use later in the lesson. Interesting displays show masks of the Pharaoh Tutenkhamun and children's own names that were written in hieroglyphics.

128. Older children visit Osborne House on the Isle of Wight as part of the study of Victorians. Last year they also wrote letters to the Essex Record Office, the local council and other informative sources to find out why the population of Vange had doubled between 1801 and 1901 before reaching a conclusion themselves. This investigation helped them to become more interested in the history of their local area.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

129. The school was still at an early stage in developing its information and communication technology programme when last inspected. The intervening period has seen a very marked acceleration in standards of work and a steady improvement in the skill of the teachers. The zest of the programme now is evident in the enthusiasm of the children, and in the excellent website the school has developed. A large central space has been equipped with 17 computers. This means that whole classes of children, working in pairs, can be taught together. In addition, there are nests of computers in other parts of the school which children use to boost their literacy, numeracy and study skills. These are often used particularly well to help children with special educational needs with their reading and writing. The school follows a nationally recommended programme of work and this is enabling children to build up their skills in a systematic way.

130. As a result of this improved provision, levels of children's achievements are rising quickly. By the time they reach the end of the infant stage most children are confident in

using the keyboard and mouse. They know how to open a programme and, where their reading skills allow, they follow on-screen instructions well. Most can save their work. At present, however, they do not make much use of computers to enrich work in other subjects. This said, their level of achievement is in line with that expected for children of this age.

131. By the age of eleven children have built substantially on these early skills. Most can confidently load, open and run CD-ROM programmes, following instructions well, although limited reading and writing skills mean they cannot always make the best use of the information they locate. They can use data handling programmes to produce graphs and charts based on information gained from questionnaires, such as a study of their immediate locality. They have learned how to create and print their own designs from graphics programmes and have used digital cameras. They are skilled in the use of word processing facilities and can select print fonts, sizes, text colours and layouts as they need them. As yet, they have little experience of some other applications, such as using computers to control external devices, desktop publishing, email and the use of the internet. Since the school's information and communication technology resources have only recently allowed the children to make full progress in the programme of work, their level of attainment is below that expected for eleven year olds.

132. All the children are making good progress in their information and communication technology learning and they enjoy the work very much. They show confidence in the use of the equipment, collaborate very well in pairs as they work, and are pleased with their results. Those learning English as an additional language, those from ethnic minority groups and those with special educational needs all receive the support they need to be successful in this subject.

133. Information and communication technology lessons are taught satisfactorily, although some teachers still lack confidence in the subject and have difficulty in coping with the technical problems which sometimes arise. Where teachers themselves have skills in information and communication technology, lessons proceed at a lively pace, using good programmes. The teachers and learning support assistants move around the class very well to help children with difficulties and to challenge others with harder questions. In one such lesson at the junior stage, the teacher used an excellent science programme to develop children's understanding of teeth. She used the school's interactive whiteboard to demonstrate clearly how to navigate the programme and had provided children with some precise questions to be answered. She ensured that the children worked hard throughout. The lesson successfully extended children's skills and confidence in the use of computers, while simultaneously adding to their knowledge of science.

134. Overall however, teachers do not yet make as full use as they might of the school's facilities for information and communication technology to enrich other subjects, and they do not always notice when children make mistakes in their work. This is largely because not all teachers are yet fully skilled and confident in the subject. The school will be engaged in a major staff training exercise next term to address this need. The governors are looking to

appoint a new member of staff with specialist information and communication technology skills to take over the role of co-ordinator for the subject.

## **MUSIC**

135. Very little class music teaching was observed. Judgements were informed by interviews with children and by an examination of teachers' planning. The two infant classes are taught by the newly appointed co-ordinator for music who is also the Year 2 class teacher. At the junior stage all teachers take their own class for music. Most class lessons take place in the temporary classroom because the open plan nature of the main building means there are difficulties with noise levels when children are singing or playing musical instruments. This means that opportunities are sometimes missed for children to participate in musical activities across the curriculum. One exception to this was a very imaginative Year 6 religious education lesson in which the children successfully considered how music is a way of expressing depth of feeling in religion. Children enjoy music, particularly singing, but achievements at the end of both the infant and junior stages are below those found in most other schools nationally.

136. In assemblies and hymn practice most children sing energetically. They recall tunes and the words of choruses reasonably accurately. However, limited reading skills mean that many children have difficulty with verses and, as a result, their timing and diction are sometimes unsatisfactory. Recorded music is played on entry and exit to assemblies. This helps to set a calm atmosphere, but there is not always a reference to the music in the assembly. Consequently, children are often unaware of what it is and how it might be linked to a particular theme.

137. Children at both the infant and junior stages are able to identify a range of percussion instruments they have used at school. Some children are able to play these satisfactorily so as to represent particular moods or feelings. However, their knowledge of wind and stringed instruments in general is thin. They have little experience of how to compose and perform their own music and their ability to appraise what they hear is limited. Older junior children recently compared music of the 1950s with music of today, but beyond this they have little experience and knowledge of music from different times and cultures.

138. No overall judgement can be made about the quality of teaching. In the infant lesson seen, strenuous efforts were made to make the work meaningful to the children, for example clapping and clicking fingers to help create a rhythm. There was a satisfactory mix of activities, including singing and listening to music. The behaviour and attitudes of the children were mostly good, but progress was slow because many children have limited musical experience and understanding upon which to build. They also found it difficult to learn the words of a new song.

139. Children enjoy taking part in annual productions that include singing. Currently, however, there are no recorder groups, choirs, orchestras or specialist teaching of instruments to help enrich the curriculum. The co-ordinator is keen to initiate significant developments, but has only recently joined the school and has not yet had time to do so.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

140. Only three lessons were seen during the inspection and these were all in gymnastics. By age seven, standards are average and children make satisfactory progress in their learning. No lessons were seen in the Year 6 class due to timetable changes so standards cannot be evaluated. Junior children go to the local community centre for swimming lessons

and by the time they leave most can swim the recommended minimum distance of 25 metres.

141. Teaching is satisfactory overall with particular strengths in the Year 2 class. In a good lesson with this year group, children were kept on the move and shown how to do things well using apparatus. They were challenged to improve their performance by finding different ways of moving across the hall floor and did this enthusiastically. All were able to devise a sequence of movements using just hands and feet to hop, jump and climb over benches and stools. When invited by the teacher to make comments on how to improve, several suggested interesting ideas. In another infant lesson, children described effectively how others had travelled in different ways around the room using long strides and a 'caterpillar walk'. A Year 3 lesson was unsatisfactory because the class was not kept active enough. This led to restlessness and some noisy behaviour so that insufficient progress was made. Earlier in this lesson, children created spiky, curved and linear shapes satisfactorily with a partner.

142. The annual school's sports day is well attended by parents and friends. Secondary pupils from the local comprehensive schools assist with its running and help to make it successful. A team competes in the swimming gala held each year for schools in the district and has a good record. A satisfactory number of extra-curricular activities support the physical education curriculum, including netball, cricket, badminton and dance. Representatives from a professional football club help to run the school club which is supported well. During a residential activity week, Year 6 children take part in problem solving activities to improve their orienteering skills.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

143. Although some lively religious education lessons were observed during the inspection, the standards reached at the end of both the infant and junior stages are below those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. There are two main reasons for this. In the first place, while children remember some of the factual information they meet in lessons, they have great difficulty in dealing with the more abstract ideas often met in this subject. Many lack the language skills they need to discuss these issues effectively. Secondly, not all teachers are confident in their use of the programme of work that accompanies the local syllabus. As a result, work is sometimes superficial and there is not enough progression from week to week. The school recognises, through its development plan, that more needs to be done in this area and will rightly focus on improving the implementation of the work programme at the junior stage.

144. By the end of the infant stage, most children know that some people call themselves Christians and that Jesus has a special importance for such people. They cannot recall any other religions people might belong to and have only a very shaky idea of who Jesus was, and what he did. They know that the Bible is "a book about God", but few understand that God/Jesus is a father/son relationship for Christians. They also know a little about Guru

Nanak the founding figure of Sikhism, but their overall understanding in religious education is behind that usually found in children of this age.

145. By the end of the junior stage, children have a wider factual knowledge of religious education issues, but little grasp of more abstract ideas. They have studied Hinduism and can describe the Festival of Lights, but they do not know how, or where, Hindu people conduct their worship. They know why Christmas is important to Christians, but have only a sketchy idea of what happened during Holy Week and Easter. They can relate some parables of Jesus, but find it hard to articulate the principles lying behind the stories. Their knowledge of Judaism, which is a required area of study in the syllabus, is minimal. They know a little about Moses' leadership of the Israelites, but do not realize the shared history of Judaism and Christianity.

146. The quality of religious education teaching seen during the inspection was good overall. All the lessons were satisfactory, some were good, and one was excellent. In the good and excellent lessons, the achievements of the children were wholly in line with those expected from the local syllabus. This indicates that where teaching is of a high quality and lessons build up knowledge rigorously from week to week, sound standards can be achieved.

147. The excellent lesson was with a Year 6 class. Its success was based on the confident subject knowledge of the teacher, the imaginative range of activities she had planned, her high expectations and excellent relationships with the children. The lesson had two themes, learning more about 'David' and developing understanding of the place of music in religious observance. Throughout the lesson the teacher reminded the children of the importance of close listening and questioned them well to ensure their concentration. After a brief reminder of previous work on 'David', she skilfully used modern songs to show how people today use music to express their feelings. She then sang the children part of David's 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. Taking the twin ideas of "pastures green" and "quiet waters" the children drew images of scenes that made them feel calm and at peace. They wrote short descriptions of their chosen scenes. A child was then chosen to read the Biblical passage in which David, the harpist, is called to service by Saul. The lesson closed with another modern musical extract. Children were wholly engrossed by the lesson, reflective and reverent in discussion and very hardworking throughout.

148. In all the lessons seen, the children were keen to join in discussion despite their limited oral skills. They settled to work well and listened respectfully when matters of belief and faith were discussed.