

INSPECTION REPORT

Arthur Bugler Infant School

Stanford Le Hope, Essex

LEA area: Thurrock

Unique reference number: 114850

Headteacher: Mr E Salmon

Reporting inspector: Kath Beck
10090

Dates of inspection: 19th – 21st May 2003

Inspection number: 247499

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 7 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: St. James Avenue East
Stanford-le-Hope
Essex

Postcode: SS17 7BQ

Telephone number: 01375 677079

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: David Oram

Date of previous inspection: January 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10090	Kath Beck	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Geography History Music	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?
13481	Doug Binfield	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?
32162	Adrienne Beavis	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?
6436	Alan Andrews	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs	

7694	Martyn Richards	Team inspector	Educational Inclusion English as an additional language Religious education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Arthur Bugler Infants is smaller than other primary schools. There are 182 children on roll, aged from four to seven years, all of whom attend full time. There is an equal number of boys and girls. The surrounding area consists mostly of owner-occupied housing, mainly low cost, and rented accommodation. Some children travel to the school from nearby towns. The majority of children are White UK heritage. The percentage of children whose mother tongue is not English is low. Three children speak English as an additional language, but none are at an early stage of language acquisition. The languages spoken are Bengali and Nigerian. Some children come from Black African Heritage and Black other minority ethnic groups. There are 21 children on the register for special educational needs, two of which have statements. Five children have moderate learning difficulties and three speech and communication problems. Children's attainments when they first start school is typical of that expected for children aged four. At the time of the inspection, two teachers were very new to the school and 21 children had been in the reception class for 12 days.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Arthur Bugler is a very good school. The interests of the children are put first. Attainments are very good in speaking and listening, design and technology and art and design. They are good in most other subjects. Children with special educational needs make very good progress. There is a high level of excellent and very good teaching, especially in Year 2. This enables children to make very good progress in relation to their prior learning. Assessment of children's progress is thorough so that teachers know what children need to learn next. Leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are of high quality and are helping to drive up standards. The excellent partnership with parents and the vibrant, practical curriculum contribute significantly to standards. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Children's very good attainments in speaking and listening, design and technology and in art and design.
- Very good leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff.
- Very good teaching, including the deployment of highly skilled teaching assistants.
- Children's excellent attitudes, very good behaviour and personal development.
- Very good provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Relationships between everyone in the school are excellent.
- The broad, vibrant curriculum that includes many practical and exciting activities.
- Excellent partnership with parents and very good care and welfare of the children.

What could be improved

- Challenge for the brighter children in mathematics*.
- Computer resources.*

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

* In the school development plan

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards of attainment have improved significantly in mathematics and writing, especially the number of children reaching the higher Level 3 in recent years. There is a clear overview of the curriculum and each subject has a policy statement and programme of work to ensure children make good progress year on year. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is planned appropriately and is coordinated well. Parents are now informed really well about their child's progress and the needs of the brighter children are met well, especially in writing, but there is still some work to do in mathematics. There has been a significant reduction in the substantial carry forward of funds. This has been spent wisely on increasing staffing and resources and has had a significant impact on standards. There have been other important improvements with regard to school security, communications with staff and governors, links with other schools, long term strategic planning, an increase in the number of children on roll and teamwork between all involved in the school.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			*similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
reading	B	A	B	C
writing	C	A	A	A
mathematics	A	A	C	C

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

* Schools with children from similar backgrounds

The school's performance, in comparison to all schools nationally, in national tests in 2002 was good in reading, very good in writing and average in mathematics. When compared to similar schools, its performance was much better in writing and similar in reading and mathematics. During the past five years, results in mathematics and writing have risen far more quickly than in all other schools. This high level of performance resulted in two School Achievement Awards, presented by the Department for Education and Skills. In 2001, results were exceptional. Between 2000 and 2002, girls did better than boys in reading. Over a similar period of time, children have been performing at a rate of one year ahead of their peers. Almost all of the children taking the tests reach the expected Level 2. In 2002, attainments in science were excellent with all children reaching the nationally expected level of attainment. In the aspects of science, life and living process and materials and their properties, the school was in the top five percent nationally.

When starting school, children's attainments are typical of those normally found. They make good progress and exceed the early learning goals² in all the areas of learning at the end of the reception year, especially in personal, social and emotional development and knowledge and understanding of the world. This means they are prepared well for learning in Years 1 and 2. Teachers are challenging the children so that those who are new to the school are working at the higher levels of the stepping-stones³. Children who have been in school two or three terms are also challenged well and are working within the early stages of the National Curriculum.

Lesson observations and scrutiny of work indicate that, children's attainments at the end of Year 2 are good in most subjects. They are very good in speaking and listening, design and technology and art and design. In religious education, children's attainments are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. There are more children with special educational needs in the current Year 2 than in other year groups. These children make very good progress. Higher attaining children do very well in reading and writing. Children who speak English as an additional language also make very good progress.

The school sets itself challenging targets for the children to achieve, although it is not required to do so. This means children achieve really well in relation to their prior attainment.

¹ Level 2 is the expected level at age seven. It is divided into 2C, 2B and 2A and 2A is the highest.

² Early learning goals are the attainment expected at the end of the reception year in personal, social and emotional development; communications, language and literacy, mathematical, physical and creative development; knowledge and understanding of the world.

³ These are the levels that guide teachers' planning to help children progress at an appropriate rate.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Children really enjoy being at school and are often totally absorbed in the wide range of activities offered.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in lessons and outstanding in the dining room and assemblies.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent relationships and very good personal development helps children to develop mature attitudes to work and life in school.
Attendance	Good. This is a real improvement over previous years.

The children's attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development contribute significantly to the community life of the school and rising standards. The children's high level of confidence and the value placed on them as individuals means many show maturity in their behaviour and attitudes that are beyond their years. They are not distracted by noise or movement caused by the open nature of the building.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good

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

Overall, teaching is very good and particularly strong in Year 2. Basic skills are taught very well in English. They are taught well in mathematics. Teachers consistently use really imaginative and effective teaching methods to promote high standards and children's learning across all areas of the curriculum. In particular, teachers often take on the roles of characters in history or books. This allows children to develop their speaking and listening skills really well as they learn a lot by interviewing the personalities. Learning also becomes real and purposeful and is centred in the children's experiences. In many lessons, but especially literacy, science and art and design, teachers build in tasks or activities that give children a very strong sense of awe and wonder. This makes learning fun for the children so that they sustain their interest and concentration completing a lot of work each day. Teachers' expectations of what children can achieve are very high and place demands on children's intellectual, physical and creative efforts. Teachers do their best to help the children to succeed, whatever their capabilities, by raising their self-esteem and confidence. Highly skilled teaching assistants support children with special educational needs very well.

Teachers in the Foundation Stage make very good use of time, support staff and resources. Some teachers are new and their knowledge of the curriculum for children of this age is good. Planning is linked to the areas of experience and tasks are different according to the children's abilities. It does not contain sufficient links to the stepping-stones and learning outside the classroom.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
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The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in the Foundation Stage. The curriculum is particularly vibrant in Years 1 and 2. It allows children to link learning to their everyday life.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Targets in children's individual education plans are given careful attention, so that work meets needs. This is very successful for children with a statement of special educational need.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The progress these children make is tracked carefully to ensure they do as well as the other children. Their attainment, at the time of the inspection was above the average for their classes.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision for all aspects of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In lessons, there is a strong sense of awe and wonder. Assemblies are engaging and promote opportunities for children to reflect on values and beliefs that enhance community life.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The care and welfare of the children is of paramount importance. Staff have very good knowledge of children's abilities and needs.

The parents hold the school in very high regard and there is an excellent partnership with them. Parental support contributes significantly to standards and the varied curriculum. The school is innovative in its approach to the curriculum. It places strong emphasis on children's interests and the acquisition of skills. Early morning and afternoon activities are linked to a variety of subjects. These are followed by literacy, numeracy or lessons in other subjects. This organisation means children learn a lot each day, covering a broad range of subjects in depth. The school always puts the children's welfare first. It has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and tracking children's progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Leadership provides a very clear educational direction with an emphasis on teamwork and raising standards. The school's aims and values are reflected fully in all areas of its work.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are long serving and know the school well. Their annual report to parents does not contain all the required information.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school analyses data and checks the quality of teaching frequently to enable children to reach high standards.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The high carry forward budget noted in the last inspection has been spent wisely to raise standards.

Overall, staffing and accommodation are good. Learning resources are also good, although there is a need to increase the number of computers for children to use. Some staff are new, but many are long serving and this has contributed to continuity in the school's ethos of putting the children first. All staff share an enthusiasm for teaching, working together as a team, really supporting each other and evaluating new initiatives and adapting them to meet the children's needs. The headteacher has a strong philosophy of what is important in teaching and learning. Good practice, based on a new teaching and learning policy pervades the school. Many governors are also long serving. Together with the headteacher and staff, they are very clear about the educational direction of the school and deploy resources effectively. They apply the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • Children work hard, behave well and make good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework that is set. • More activities outside lessons.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The teaching is good.• The school is well led and managed.• Parents are well informed about their child's progress and find the school approachable and friendly.	
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Inspectors fully agree with parents' positive views. Homework arrangements work well and make a helpful contribution to learning. Although the school does not provide after school clubs, it makes good arrangements for children to enjoy a wide range of experiences outside of lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children's attainments at the end of Year 2 are very good and much better than at the time of the last inspection when they were judged to be similar to those found in all schools nationally. Children's attainments in writing are good having improved significantly since 1998, when they were judged to be unsatisfactory. Children achieve really well in relation to their capabilities, as they thrive in an atmosphere that acknowledges different aptitudes and abilities. Strong emphasis is placed on the creative arts, practical work, and tasks that demand intellectual challenge in mathematics and science.

2. The number of children reaching the nationally expected level of attainment, especially in writing and mathematics has risen much faster than in other schools. The school's success has been recognised by two School Achievement Awards presented by the Department for Education and Skills. National test results for children aged seven, in 2001, indicate that the school did exceptionally well and much better than most schools nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2002, results dipped slightly in reading and mathematics and this was due to the number of children with special educational needs in the group taking the tests. The school tracks children's progress very carefully and had predicted this. The number of children on roll is increasing as children from a wider area come to the school. This is impacting the results as many have particular special educational needs.

3. The picture in 2002, when the school's performance is compared to schools with children from similar backgrounds, is that the children did very well in writing. It's performance in reading and mathematics was average. Each child represents two percentage points in the tests and almost all reach the nationally expected levels at age seven. Higher attaining children did very well in reading and writing.

4. In science, many children now reach the higher Level 3, when no child achieved it in 1997. Results in the aspects of life processes and living things, materials and their properties placed the school in the top five percent nationally.

5. The school is strongly self-evaluative and rightly identified and inspection evidence confirmed that success in raising children's attainments is linked to the:

- very good leadership of the headteacher and ability to get the best out of the teachers;
- determination of all staff to raise standards;
- introduction of a wide range of teaching strategies and procedures for teachers to follow consistently;
- very effective deployment of highly trained teaching assistants
- implementation of national initiatives in literacy and numeracy;
- creation of a classroom environment that promotes children's confidence and raises their self-esteem so that they make good decisions about their work and present it well;
- strong emphasis teachers place on the development of basic skills in literacy and numeracy;
- detailed assessment of children's progress;
- discussions with children about their progress;
- frequent discussions with parents about their child's progress;
- strong emphasis on children's personal development;
- the effective use of practical activities that deepen children's understanding in mathematics and science;
- children's attitudes and behaviour;
- single age year groups and small classes in the current Year 2,
- very good resources;
- clear identification of priorities for development, such as writing and working hard at them;
- attractive displays that value all children's efforts;
- flexibility of organisation, so that teachers' expertise is used to benefit many children, not just their own class;
- teamwork;

and making life at school enjoyable so that the children give of their best.

6. Over the last few years, girls' attainments in reading and writing have been higher than that of boys. The school has responded positively to this disparity, and the gender gap in attainment is narrowing. The school has taken determined action to present male role-models, with the headteacher and governors involved in teaching groups. More able, and talented children are better challenged by their work programme than at the time of the last inspection, and this is reflected in the greater numbers of children reaching above average levels in the national tests and assessments. However, some more able children do not always reach the levels they are capable of in mathematics. In Year 2, the school sets children by ability for one lesson of mathematics a week. This enables the children to be challenged more. The school has rightly seen its priority to work on literacy and has identified this area of mathematics for development in the next year. Children from ethnic minority groups, for whom English is an additional language, make good progress in their learning. Their levels of achievement are similar to, and in some instances better than, those of other children of the same age.

7. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work, show that children's attainments are very good in speaking and listening, design and technology, art and design. They are good in reading, writing, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, history, and geography. Children's attainments in music and physical education are similar to the national picture, while in religious education they are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Children's literacy, numeracy and information and communication skills are developed well across all the areas of the curriculum.

8. Children are exceeding the early learning goals in all the areas of experience at the end of the reception year, particularly in personal, social and emotional development and knowledge and understanding of the world. This is because teaching is good and children are prepared very well for school in the pre-school group held each week. As a result, children are confident and unafraid to try out their own ideas.

9. The percentage of children on the school's register for special educational needs is lower than in most schools. It includes two children with statements of special educational needs. The system of support relies heavily on the programmes of work provided by class teachers, although the special needs coordinator is available for guidance. Children's learning difficulties are identified carefully and targets within their individual education plans are matched precisely to their needs. Considerable use is made of teaching assistants to help deliver the programmes of work. They do this successfully and children make very good progress in relation to their ability.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Attitudes to learning in all classes are excellent. This is an improvement on the very positive attitudes identified in the previous report. Children are absorbed in their tasks and such an approach is sustained throughout the day. They show an outstanding eagerness and willingness to learn. During lessons they listen attentively and show a growing confidence when answering questions and expressing views. Written and practical tasks are carried out with enthusiasm and children take real pride in the presentation of their work. Such a positive response by children of all ability levels makes an outstanding contribution towards the standards achieved.

11. Behaviour is very good from reception to Year 2. It is exemplary during lessons, assemblies and in the dining area. Children are familiar with the behaviour rules and co-operate fully with teachers and teaching assistants during lessons. They are not distracted by the noise from the open plan layout of the buildings. This means that effective learning takes place. There were no exclusions last year. Serious misbehaviour and bullying is rare. However, despite the efforts of midday assistants, such instances do occur occasionally in the playgrounds during the lengthy, 75 minutes, lunch break. Parents are extremely pleased indeed with the high standards of behaviour, although a few expressed concerns about incidents at lunchtime. This factor means that overall behaviour is slightly below the excellent level mentioned in the previous report. The three children from minority ethnic backgrounds integrate fully into the life and work of the school.

12. Relationships between all members of the school community are excellent maintaining the position at the last inspection. The provision for children's personal development is very good and has improved since the last report. These factors are strong features of the school that contribute significantly to the thriving atmosphere and to the raising of standards. Children are given many opportunities to undertake responsibilities and to make decisions for themselves, especially during lessons so that they show mature attitudes, beyond their years. This helps them to have a mature attitude to their work and life within the school. Children are active in supporting curriculum and community events and this helps to broaden experience. They participate in the Orsett Show and Festivals for arts, music and country dancing. Children support fund raising for charities and this helps them to understand the needs of others. For instance, the collection at the Christmas concert was donated to help children with diabetes. There is a well-planned programme of visits to museums, country parks and the seaside. Visiting speakers from diverse backgrounds, including the local clergy, give talks at assemblies to broaden children's experiences.

13. Attendance is now good. In the present school year to date, attendance is 95.3%, with virtually no unauthorised absence. This compares with satisfactory attendance at the time of the last inspection. It represents a significant improvement over last year when the overall attendance level of 92.1% was poor and well below the national average for primary schools. Punctuality is now good, reflecting a noteworthy improvement that has been sustained over the last six months. Lessons and other activities start and finish promptly and teachers consistently make the maximum use of time during lessons. All these factors are making a really valuable contribution to children's learning and rising standards.

14. Children are respectful of each other's feelings and beliefs. They respond seriously and sensitively when lessons involve reflection on issues of right and wrong. They are truthful and unselfish in their dealings with each other, and work well together on shared tasks. They undertake simple responsibilities reliably, and help each other without being asked. Most are beginning to understand something of our cultural traditions in art, music, literature and dance.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and very good in Years 1 and 2. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when teaching was judged to be good. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching is higher than in 1998.

16. Two of the teachers in the reception classes joined the school in January and April, prior to the inspection. The third is long serving at the school. Strengths in the teaching include, high expectations of what children know and can do, very good and effective teaching methods, very good management of children and good use of time, support staff and resources. Teachers' knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and the way children of this age think and learn is good. Basic skills are taught well and assessment is also used well to match work to children's needs. Teachers' planning is good. It sets out clearly the activities children are to encounter in all the areas of learning over time. More links could be made to the stepping-stones, outside activities and National Curriculum levels. The teachers plan together so that there is consistency in work coverage. They rightly vary activities and their presentation according to the length of time the children have been in school and their learning styles.

17. Tasks are demanding and challenge children's intellectual and creative efforts so that they become absorbed in their work. Teachers ensure that activities provide a strong sense of awe and wonder. For example, the teachers and teaching assistants have prepared a *Bear Cave* as part of their topic on *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Children enter the *cave* through a small curtain carrying a torch. Once inside they can shine the torch and find all kinds of different reflective materials in the shapes of creatures that may be found in a cave. In addition, they can feel their way about touching all kinds of textures. The cave has sufficient light to prevent the children from being frightened, but promotes considerable discussion, extending their vocabulary. The provision of the cave gave children a strong sense of awe and wonder in learning. It captured their interest, so that it was sustained for a considerable period of time and they remembered what they had learned.

18. All children in the reception class learn well and are clear about how well they are learning. They are pleased to tell visitors what they are good at. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together so that they are clear about what and how children are to learn. They make good use of questioning and value children's responses highly. Children respond very well to the high expectations of the staff that children can work sensibly without the supervision of an adult. All these features illustrate that the school has made good progress in overcoming the criticisms of reception class teaching at the time of the previous inspection.

19. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is very good. The features of this high quality teaching include:

- imaginative and creative teaching strategies that capture children's interest and inspire them to learn. For example, teachers often dress up as historical characters, such as Guy Fawkes. In taking on the role, it enables children to ask questions, develop their speaking and listening skills as well historical enquiry skills in a way that makes learning fun;
- very good knowledge of the different ways children think and learn;
- very effective practical tasks that develop children's knowledge, skills and understanding;
- effective teaching of basic skills in most subjects and very effective teaching in speaking and listening, design and technology and art and design;
- tasks that are based on secure assessments of what children need to learn next and meet their differing needs;
- highly trained and effective teaching assistants, who are deployed well, that support individual learning needs;
- determination to find ways to improve children's learning, such as the *gym trail* to improve children's coordination and thinking skills, especially if they have special educational needs;
- the consistent application of the school's teaching and learning policy;
- effective questioning;
- teachers' planning that ensures children in the same year group receive similar experiences;
- teachers' expertise is used flexibly. For example, particular expertise in religious education, music, and country dancing is used to benefit all children in Year 2;
- very good use of time;
- teachers who are really interested in the children and they know it. This gives children real confidence to do their best and that it is fun to learn and that a lot is learned from making errors;
- a shared sense of humour.

20. Children have individual targets that they try to achieve quickly. These give them a very good view of how well they are learning. The organisation of the school day allows the children to participate in a wide range of learning activities and work really productively throughout the day. Their interest and concentration is sustained, as they know there is always something to inspire them.

21. In the current Year 2, there is a significant number of children with special educational needs, many of whom are achieving at the lower levels of the nationally expected Level 2⁴ as a result of this high standard of teaching and the provision made for them. The teaching of these children is good and sometimes very good. It is undertaken by class teachers, although teaching assistants help deliver much of the work. Activities are chosen to reflect the needs of the children and to stimulate learning. Careful attention is given to targets set in the children's individual education plans and tasks are linked to these when appropriate. This is particularly successful for children with a statement of special educational needs.

22. Throughout the school, children with special educational needs are keen to please and to do their best. Their self-esteem is maintained and they are enabled to experience success. This has much to do with the sensitive and caring approach adopted by teachers and teaching assistants. Particularly noteworthy is the provision of *gym trails* for children who lack coordination and confidence in physical education. These excellent sessions are taken by teaching assistants and provide opportunities for children to practise a range of skills in gymnastics. This is also having a really positive impact on children's learning in literacy and numeracy. The activity calms the children, gives them immediate success and develops more control over their body actions. A calm, supportive atmosphere is created and this helps children to tackle new and challenging tasks.

23. While most lessons are carefully planned to make sure that there is sufficient challenge for more able and talented children, work in mathematics does not always extend them sufficiently. Teachers make sure that children from ethnic minority groups learning English as an additional language participate fully and achieve success.

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

24. The school provides a vibrant, rich curriculum enabling children to learn about many subjects in depth through a wide range of spoken, visual, practical and written activities. The programme of work covers all the required subjects of the National Curriculum. Health and sex education are taught through the planned curriculum and during class discussions. The school is currently researching the requirements to take part in the *Healthy Schools* programme to enrich its curriculum further.

25. The key issue at the time of the last inspection, *to provide a clear overview of the curriculum to be taught* has been dealt with very well. The school is now working with the nationally recommended programmes of study for all subjects and has a clear overview of what children will learn in each year group.

26. Most subjects are taught through a series of topics that promote the use of cross-curricular skills, such as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Teachers ensure that this approach to curriculum planning also covers the effective development of subject specific skills and knowledge. It is particularly strong in English, science, design and technology, art and design, and music.

⁴ Level 2 is the nationally expected level of attainment at age seven. Level 2 is divided into Level 2C (lowest) 2B and 2A (highest)

27. Time in the school day is used very effectively. The day starts with productive activities linked to the current topic or skills in English, mathematics design and technology, art and design and information and communication technology, and then moves to longer learning sessions in literacy and numeracy. The afternoon session starts with reading activities and moves on to other learning. The pace of the day is fast and this innovative approach means children get a lot done. The national programmes for literacy and numeracy have been introduced effectively. Planning and teaching take appropriate account of their recommendations and they are adapted to meet the needs of the children.

28. The school does not have any after school clubs but provides a good programme of extra curricular activities appropriate to infant children through participation in a range of local events and festivals, visits to art galleries, theatres, country parks and the seaside. The school day is full of interesting things to do that are often included in after school clubs in other schools. Thus the school has good links with the local community. Homework is effectively used to link learning in school and at home, children often find out information at home, sometimes searching the Internet and bring their results to school.

29. Lessons in many subjects are brought to life in different ways, including teachers dressing up on 'Character Days' to excite and capture children's imaginations. During inspection week visiting musicians enthralled the children, playing familiar tunes on a variety of instruments.

30. The Foundation Stage curriculum is rich and often practical covering all the areas of experience. It is particularly strong in promoting children's personal, social and emotional development and challenges the more able children to work at the early stages of the National Curriculum. Teachers promote children's learning, especially speaking and listening well, through taking the children out on visits in the locality and further away, growing plants, posing problems for them to solve, involving them in imaginative play, painting, printing, writing and construction tasks. The outside area has been improved since the last inspection. It is small and there is no direct access from the classrooms to the outside. The number and range of outside activities depend on the weather and the availability of adults to supervise the children.

31. Since its last inspection, the school has given priority to setting up arrangements to make certain all the different groups of children it serves are able to take full advantage of what it offers. At the heart of this process is the careful checking of the progress each group makes through the school, and the levels of achievement it reaches.

32. Each year, teachers check the progress boys are making, and compare it with that of the girls. Over the last five years, girls have progressed faster in reading and writing than boys, and the school has taken action to try to close the gap. New materials have been bought, staff training and research undertaken, and a programme focussing on writing introduced. There is evidence that these good initiatives are bearing fruit because, while the attainment of both genders is improving overall, boys are beginning to catch up.

33. In a similar way, staff have tried to make sure their programmes of work are challenging enough for more able children. Talented and gifted children have been identified, and their progress is checked regularly. Most lessons now include planned elements to challenge the brightest children in the class. This was a key issue at the time of the last inspection, and the school's response has been a good one, although more needs to be done if the more able children are to achieve their capabilities in mathematics.

34. Governors and staff know that the school is not yet fully accessible to disabled children and adults. Some work to improve facilities has already been undertaken, and the issue is rightly being given priority in the current school improvement plan. Tenders are being invited for the building of ramps to aid wheelchair access to some parts of the site, and staff are aware of further work needing to be undertaken in the future.

35. There is only a very small number of children from ethnic minority groups in the school. These children are learning English as an additional language, and all have reached good levels of fluency. The progress they make is checked carefully and regularly to ensure they do as well as others. In fact their attainment is, in most respects, above the average for their classes. The school is a happy and harmonious community without a hint of racial prejudice. Its race equality policy is thorough and detailed. It specifies the training teachers undergo in this area of work, the targets set for the children, and how their progress is to be assessed. It also details the help available for parents who may need school documentation translated. However, the school does not yet monitor sufficiently thoroughly the extent to which ethnic minority children and their parents participate in school life beyond attendance and academic progress. There is a need to monitor systematically such factors as

- take-up of responsibility roles in school
- whether they have friends to play with at playtimes and lunchtimes
- whether parents understand, and are happy about, school arrangements for lunches, assemblies, school and sports dress
- whether parents understand how to help their children with homework
- parental involvement in the parent-teacher organisation, the governing body, or helping in the classroom
- whether the school does enough to acknowledge and celebrate the bilingualism of these children, and the cultural richness they bring to school

36. While there is no evidence that any child faces disadvantage in these areas, such monitoring is essential to ensure that this remains the case.

37. At the time of its last inspection, the school's provision for children's spiritual, moral and social development was found to be very good. While provision for cultural development was good, the arts programme provided too few opportunities to appreciate the diversity of cultures contributing to our national culture.

38. The school has sustained the very good standards of provision noted previously, and has also improved the arrangements it makes for children to learn about cultural diversity. As a result, it now caters very well for children's cultural development.

39. Assemblies and lessons in religious education provide many good opportunities for children to reflect on their own beliefs and religious practice, and on those of others. They reflect quietly and sincerely on issues of faith and belief, and are tolerant of those who take a different view. Lessons in many subjects elicit in the children feelings of wonder, surprise, or empathy with others. For example, real suspense and excitement was created by a fine telling of the story of *Moses parting the waters of the Red Sea* in a religious education lesson. Again, children responded with surprise and delight when, in a science lesson, unexpected colours emerged from a felt tip pen used on moist paper. A *Bear's Cave*, based on stories in the reception classes, is a blacked out space, with iridescent decorations, reflective spiders, and pairs of haunting bears' eyes. It enchants the children when they enter with a small torch. Assemblies are imaginative and very engaging, well-planned and presented with flair and enthusiasm.

40. Children are helped to refine their understanding of right and wrong, and to extend their system of moral values. In addition to assemblies and religious education lessons,

other lessons frequently present them with examples of moral dilemmas. Most of the stories they meet in literacy lessons, for example, include villains and heroes, or illustrate conflicts between good and bad. Throughout the school day teachers use whatever opportunities are available to reinforce the importance of truthfulness, fairness, and unselfishness.

41. Teachers encourage children to take responsibility for their own behaviour, and to be attentive to the needs of others. They are trusted to carry out simple classroom tasks such as returning registers to the office, and the school's codes of behaviour are known and understood. Children are taught about their social responsibility to a wider community through school involvement in local and community events, such as the annual invitation issued to local elderly people to tea at school. On a still wider scale, the school supports a range of local and national charities.

42. The school puts a strong emphasis on children's development through the creative arts. Children participate in local dance and music festivals, and there are opportunities for visits to theatres, museums and galleries. Visitors to school have also enriched the arts programme, in music for example. The school curriculum now makes better provision for children to appreciate cultural breadth and diversity. Stories and folk tales from other cultures feature regularly in the work programme, and the school has a very good range of dual language story books. Teachers use a collection of costumes and artefacts to help broaden children's understanding of the cultural world beyond the school.

43. The provision for children with special educational needs is good and they are enabled to take a full part in the life of the school. Parents are rightly pleased about this. Children's individual education plans are written well. They include the precise diagnosis of learning difficulties and how they might be addressed. This assists teachers in the planning of appropriate programmes of work and helps ensure children make good progress, which they do.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. Very good support is provided for children's welfare and guidance. Staff have a caring and understanding approach that is much appreciated by the children and their parents. This promotes self-esteem and has a very positive impact on the children's academic work and personal development. The arrangements for the induction of children into the reception classes and for the transfer of Year 2 children to the junior school work well. The overall quality of care is a strong feature of the daily life of the school and it maintains the impressive provision identified in the previous report.

45. Effective arrangements are in place for health and safety. Governors and staff have attended training courses and regular safety inspections are undertaken. Improvements have been made to the school buildings, for example the refurbishment of toilets and a fenced play area for children in the reception classes. There is a well-equipped medical room and staff with first aid training deal competently with accidents and illness. Appropriate arrangements are in place for child protection.

46. Arrangements for promoting high standards of behaviour are good. Children are familiar with the school rules and respond in a positive and co-operative manner to the

consistent approach adopted by all staff. The school's expectations are carefully explained to parents who receive a copy of the behaviour and bullying policies. The rewards system for good behaviour and sanctions for occasional misbehaviour work well. Several improvements have been introduced to provide improved play and recreational facilities at lunch times. Nevertheless, and despite conscientious supervision, isolated incidents of serious misbehaviour do occur during the lengthy lunch break period.

47. Very good systems are in place for promoting attendance and punctuality. Parents are fully advised about the importance of regular attendance and the benefits this brings to their child's learning. Registration and the follow-up of any unexplained absences are undertaken efficiently. The school works very closely with the education welfare officer who visits fortnightly. The headteacher has worked hard to ensure that attendance considerations have a very high profile. Parents have collaborated well and as a result both attendance and punctuality have improved significantly in this school year.

48. The monitoring of children's personal development is very good. Class teachers know the children well and work in close co-operation with parents on any individual issues that arise. Records are maintained in the achievement folders and this enables well-informed comments about personal characteristics to be made when reporting to parents.

49. The school checks the progress of all the different groups of children regularly. This ensures that boys, girls, and those learning English as an additional language all make sound progress within the curriculum. At present, there is a lack of systematic checks on the extent to which ethnic minority children are fully involved in the wider social and community life of the school.

50. The school has refined and improved its assessment and record keeping procedures since the last inspection when they were satisfactory. An effective policy and overview of assessments to be made throughout the year has been introduced. Record keeping is detailed and well organised. The school monitors how children are progressing, their strengths and weaknesses and what they have achieved in all subjects. The Records of Achievement, with samples of work and assessments, give valuable evidence of children's work and progress. They are a treasure for children to keep for the future.

51. Individual targets that help children know what the next step is in their learning are being introduced for writing and mathematics, but their use is not yet consistently developed.

52. The school is developing the use of computer-based systems to monitor progress and set targets in English, mathematics, and science. These systems enable the school to keep track of children's progress through the National Curriculum levels and to check that children achieve these and adapt work to meet their needs. The school makes good use of data to compare children's attainment from the start of school with results in national tests. It is well equipped to begin taking appropriate action where necessary to maintain standards.

53. As a result of careful assessment the staff have a thorough knowledge of children's abilities and this helps them plan work that meets their needs. Teachers plan and work together in year groups, this brings continuity to children's learning and lets teachers review children's progress and plan the next steps.

54. The marking of work is mainly kept up to date and helpful comments tell children what they have done well and what could be improved. However, not all work is dated and this makes it more difficult to judge progress over time.

55. The school has good plans to improve assessment and planning further with the introduction of a common method of planning in Years 1 and 2 and giving all teachers training in the use of computer based systems.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. Parents hold the school in high esteem. The partnership arrangements with parents are excellent and this represents an improvement compared with the last inspection. The school has successfully addressed a key issue from the previous report and now provides comprehensive information to parents about their child's progress.

57. Parents indicate their child likes school, behaves well, works hard and makes good progress. They feel that the teaching is good and that the school is well led and managed. Parents say that it is easy to approach the school, communications are helpful and that there is a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. A minority of parents did not think the right amount of homework was set whilst others would like to see more activities outside lessons.

58. Inspectors fully agree with parents' positive views. They feel that homework arrangements work well and make a helpful contribution to learning. An adequate range of activities is provided outside lessons. These include outdoor play facilities and indoor games for use at lunch-times. Occasional visits, for example, to theatres and to Clacton-on-Sea involve an extension to the normal school day.

59. The high level of support provided by parents has a very good impact on the work of the school. Many parents and sometimes grandparents, provide much valued voluntary support that helps children's learning. This includes assisting with art, sewing, food technology, swimming and in the library. The vast majority of parents give helpful support to the reading and other work that children undertake under the successful homework arrangements. Very high parental attendance levels are seen at consultation meetings, school concerts and at social events organised by the parents' association, Arthur Bugler Carers. The association's full programme of fund raising events has resulted in substantial funds being donated to help improve facilities. A notable example is the donation of £1,000 that enabled the school to secure further funding so that an attractive pergola could be built to provide a shaded area in the playground in the summer.

60. Parents are advised well, at special meetings about the induction of children into the school and the transfer to the adjoining junior school after the end of Year 2. The youngest children attend a pre-school group once a week, held in the school hall for a term before they start school. Newsletters are issued regularly and deal with issues in user-friendly terms. The school prospectus gives full details about the school's activities and procedures. The governors' annual report provides an account of the work of the governing body and the school's achievements. However, this report does not fully comply with legal requirements, as there is no reference to:

- national data for test results at age seven;
- progress in implementing the action plan drawn up following the last inspection;
- information relating to pupils' disabilities, namely admission arrangements; fair treatment; existing facilities and the accessibility plan detailing the school's future policies;

and the financial statement should include the actual results for the previous year, rather than the approved budget, and the level of fund balances at the start and end of the year.

61. Parents are given very good information about children's progress. The annual written reports are of a high quality and parents are well informed by teachers at termly consultation meetings and informal discussions that take place each Wednesday after school. The headteacher sees children in and out each day and often picks up questions or issues arising from discussions with parents. This gives parents immense confidence in the school.

62. The school maintains effective relations with parents of ethnic minority children and can make translation facilities available if needed.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

63. Leadership and management are very good and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. The current headteacher, who is very experienced in senior management, has been in post for four terms. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very effectively together and they constitute a high quality team supported very well by subject coordinators.

64. The school's aims are implemented fully. In particular, adults and children have a sense of belonging to a family where trust, understanding and genuine caring are evident. Everyone is valued for the contribution they make to the whole school community. Children's progress is significantly enhanced by the confidence they draw from being part of a calm, caring environment in which they can learn effectively from their mistakes. High standards of behaviour and a concern for others are the core values that are central to the school's ethos. These enable the staff to value the uniqueness of the individual, recognise diversity and ensure the school is an inclusive society. Children's needs are at the centre of the school's work. There is a strong emphasis on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development so that children learn to think hard, work together very well and have a strong sense of right and wrong.

65. The school has recently carried out a self-evaluation programme. This identified, and inspection evidence confirmed that, strengths within the leadership and management include:

- a rigorous, yet sympathetic approach to continual school improvement;
- the determination to develop the school into a centre of excellence for the children;
- very good long term strategic planning;
- strong emphasis on teamwork and the principles of Investors in People;
- the implementation of policies and procedures that promote consistency in the quality of teaching and provision across the school;
- the very good working relationships between parents, the headteacher, staff and governors;
- the ability to attract high quality staff;
- very good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development;
- contribution of all staff to decision making;
- the use of the school development plan to guide developments;
- regular evaluation of the school's progress in meetings with parents, staff and governors;

and the deputy headteacher sets very high standards and promotes spiritual development throughout the school in all aspects of its work.

66. The parents, staff and governing body report that there has been significant improvement in the communications between them and the headteacher. This has brought about high levels of confidence in the school from the parents and a boost of self-esteem among the staff.

67. Governors are more involved in the work of the school than they were at the time of the last inspection. They use their expertise well to benefit the children. They are fully involved in the formulation of the school's improvement plans, so that the action taken to meet the school's targets is supported very effectively through appropriate financial resources. The school analyses its performance in national tests and the progress of the children very carefully. This enables governors to direct resources effectively. The school sets itself challenging targets for improvement, although it is not required to do so. Everyone

does their best to achieve them. Governors are also fully involved in the evaluation and monitoring of standards and teaching and that is an improvement since the last inspection. They ensure the school meets its statutory responsibilities, although there are some minor omissions in their annual report to parents.

68. The quality of teaching is evaluated thoroughly. The school is open plan and issues arising are often picked up by the headteacher as he works in the classes. Some subject coordinators and the headteacher observe lessons more formally each term. Strengths and areas for development are identified. Staff are proud of their high expectations of children's abilities and their improved knowledge and understanding of different subjects. The strong teamwork in each year group, where teachers plan and prepare lessons together also supports high quality teaching.

69. The school's arrangements for the management and organisation of the special educational needs provision, including children with a statement of special educational needs, is good overall and national requirements are met. The deputy headteacher is the coordinator for this area of the school's work and has attended considerable in-service training related to it. She has a Year 2 class responsibility, but works successfully with teachers and support staff to ensure that children's needs are met. She liaises with outside agencies and the children benefit from this. The link governor visits the school for discussions with the coordinator. This helps to ensure that governors and teachers work closely together.

70. The school has an appropriate complement of teachers and together they have sufficient experience and expertise to successfully deliver all areas of the curriculum. There have been some new appointments recently, but essentially it is a long serving staff and this has helped to ensure the continuity of children's learning experiences. Strong emphasis is given to in-service training and opportunities are provided for feedback to staff. This is good practice because it assists the sharing of new ideas and thinking. The school has prioritised rightly the need to develop further the support programme for new members of staff. A system of performance management is in place for teachers and there are plans to extend this to support staff shortly. All staff have job descriptions except the caretaker who is a joint appointment with the junior school.

71. Since the previous inspection, the number of teaching assistants has been increased. They are shared across all classes and make a very valuable contribution to the general life of the school as well as to children's attainment and progress. In particular, their work with children with special educational needs is of a high quality. 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 lunch breaks.

72. Accommodation overall is good and maintained well. It is clean, bright and cared for. The open plan nature of the classrooms means that there is often a background noise during lessons, but children appear to ignore this so that it does not interfere with what they are doing. Displays of work are frequently of a very high quality and this enhances the children's learning environment. The displays value children's efforts and also provide models of high quality work for all children to strive for. The central library is of good size. However, there are some limitations at the Foundation Stage in terms of space, particularly at this time of year when there are three reception classes.

73. Resources are good overall. They are good for mathematics, science, music, religious education, art and design, design and technology and for special educational needs. The school's stock of books is very good and this is of considerable benefit to children's learning. Resources for history, geography and for the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. They are also satisfactory overall for physical education, although the lack of fixed apparatus in the hall limits opportunities for children to undertake climbing activities. In information and communication technology, the number of computers is not sufficient for the school's programme of work.

74. Governors and staff are fully aware of the importance of identifying and meeting the particular needs of groups of children in the school. The current improvement plan addresses important issues in improving access for the disabled, and there has been substantial staff training to support the effective teaching of more able children, and of those from ethnic minority groups. Although only a few children are learning English as an additional language, governors have allocated specific responsibility for this to a subject leader, indicating the importance they attach to this area of work.

75. The school has addressed the key issue from the last inspection when carry forward balances were too high. The substantial carry forward funds shown in previous years have been reduced through wise spending. The school has increased the number of non-teaching staff, developed a suite for information and communication technology, improved learning resources and provided a new photocopier to support teaching and administration. These factors have had a significant impact on raising standards.

76. The school has acted on the latest auditor's report and uses the principles of best value well. Procurement of goods and services are subject to the principles set out in the school's best value statement including consultation with others. The governors with the head teacher are linking the school improvement plan to the financial year to improve financial management and allow the school to better judge its performance against national and local benchmarks.

77. The school makes good use of modern technology in its financial management and has effective financial controls and administration. Systems and procedures are effective with clearly defined responsibilities and this allows everyone to get on with their work.

78. The governors allocate the funds available to them with care and audit needs to ensure that monies are directed to support teaching and learning and school improvement. Funds allocated to meet the needs of particular groups of children are correctly applied.

79. Taking into account the standards achieved by the children, the quality of education provided, the improvements secured since the last inspection and the schools costs, the school gives very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

80. To raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should build on the school's many strengths to:

- (1) Challenge the brighter children more in mathematics.

Paragraphs: 6, 33, 111 – 117;

(2) Increase the number of computers available for children to use.

Paragraphs:73, 142 – 147.

Minor issue:

Governors should ensure their report to parents contains all the relevant information.

Paragraph: 60.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	36
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	7	14	9	6	0	0	0
Percentage	19%	39%	25%	17%	0%	0%	0%

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	161
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	11

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	21

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002]	28	26	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	26	26
	Girls	22	24	25
	Total	43	50	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (100)	93 (98)	94 (97)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	26	26
	Girls	24	22	25
	Total	48	48	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (95)	89 (92)	94 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	117	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	23

Education support staff: YR– Y2

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	190

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A
Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A
Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

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.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	468,091
Total expenditure	457,469
Expenditure per pupil	2,447.32
Balance brought forward from previous year	77,050
Balance carried forward to next year	49,814

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	161
Number of questionnaires returned	50

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	80	16	2	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	70	30	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	48	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	48	20	2	8
The teaching is good.	66	32	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	38	4	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	22	4	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	30	4	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	44	48	2	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	66	28	4	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	34	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	28	26	6	20

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

81. The Foundation Stage consists of three reception classes. The school admits children at the beginning of the term in which they become five. At the time of the inspection, some children had been in school for almost three terms, two terms and twelve days. Children attend a pre-school group, run by the school for a term before they start school to get them familiar with the buildings and activities that they may be involved in.

82. At the time of the last inspection, there was a 'free choosing period' at the beginning of the school day. It was under resourced and the time was too short to allow the children the opportunity for extended quality play. This is no longer the case. Activities at the beginning of the day are well-structured and do much to enhance the rate of children's progress and attainment.

83. National guidelines for the Foundation Stage have been implemented satisfactorily. The school uses the stepping-stones and early learning goals, as well as the relevant parts of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies to promote children's learning effectively.

84. The Foundation Stage coordinator provides good leadership so that staff work well together. Learning activities are planned effectively to meet the needs of the children. Each task has a clear purpose and outcome. This allows all the adults to challenge and support the children well.

85. The accommodation is spacious early in the school year, but it is cramped for the youngest children in the year group. The school has done its best to provide for the children so that they do not lose out in any way.

Personal, social and emotional development

86. Teaching, learning and attainments are very good in this area of learning so the children exceed the early learning goals. In part, this is due to the provision of very good induction procedures that allow the children to become familiar with the routines, other children and staff. The school places very strong emphasis on providing activities that promote children's personal, social and emotional development. These capture children's interest, excite them and motivate them to learn as much as they can. At the time of the inspection, some children who had been in school just 12 days were already working really well as part of the class, in groups or on their own. They took turns, shared fairly and behaved very well. Children who had been in school for almost three terms are confident to try new activities, initiate ideas and collaborate well in small groups.

87. The children have a strong sense of fairness and know right from wrong. This is often taught through stories, such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Staff discuss with the children the moral issues in the story. In one session, the children were remembering that Goldilocks broke baby bears' chair. One child said, *I bet that didn't impress baby bear much*. This was sensitively managed and the feelings of baby bear, when he found his chair broken, were fully explored. Relationships between the adults and the children and between the children are very good, as they know that everyone is treated with respect. As a result, their self-esteem and confidence is high enabling them to make the most of each activity and their

day-to-day learning. They know that their ideas are valued and display work that they have done independently on a noticeboard for all to see.

88. The school provides many opportunities for children to learn about the beauty of the world. The observation of ducklings and goslings, as they grew, fascinated them. The *Bear Cave*, based on an imaginary home for the bears in *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, with its iridescent decorations and tactile models enchants the children as they enter carrying a torch. Assemblies, stories and celebrations, such as *Christingle* or those from different faiths do much to enhance children's understanding and respect for the beliefs of others.

Communication, language and literacy

89. Good teaching enables children to communicate well in speaking and listening and writing and exceed the early learning goals at the end of the reception year. Many children read well and are achieving the early levels of the National Curriculum.

90. Teachers place strong emphasis on promoting children's speaking and listening skills, so they quickly become confident in speaking in small groups and in class. Children show a lot of respect for each other and listen politely and wait for their turns. Role plays, puppets, exciting and practical activities that require children to cooperate and discuss their ideas in all subjects and teachers' effective questioning are successful in promoting and extending children's vocabulary.

91. Children learn to read quickly. They read and recall stories confidently, sharing books with each other and adults frequently. This has a significant impact on their progress. Teachers use the National Literacy Strategy, adapting it to meet the needs of the children. They share their enthusiasm for books and that motivates the children to want to read. By planning work that links many subjects, children often come across familiar words, giving them the confidence to develop and use their reading skills. Resources in the library mean children have access to a wide range of up to date books that capture their interest. Parents support children's progress in reading at home and make a significant contribution to their attainment.

92. The support and guidance children receive gives them confidence to try their best at all times. They are not afraid to have a go at writing new words using their knowledge of the sounds letters make, simple dictionaries and words that are displayed around the room. Often children are invited to talk over their ideas with a partner first so that they have a good idea about what they want to write. In doing this children write in a way that makes the reader smile. For example, one child wrote a description of an imaginary bear that had got lost. *Where is my teddy? He is small and has a bee on his nose. He is small and has his football kit on. He is missing in the bush.* The illustration matched the description exactly. Teachers provide many opportunities for children to use their initiative in writing to practise their fast developing skills to write for different purposes. They have made their own story books about teddy bears,

Mathematical development

93. Good teaching and children's very good attitudes mean their attainments exceed the early learning goals at the end of the reception year. The oldest children are working at early levels of the National Curriculum. All teachers plan their lessons together and make sure that the work and strategies from the National Numeracy strategy are adapted to meet the needs of the children. During the inspection, the work was based on the story of *Goldilocks and The Three Bears*. Some younger children used small cubes to construct different sized beds for each of the bears and counted accurately the number of cubes they had used.

Others set the *Three Bears'* breakfast table with plates, bowls, knives, forks and spoons gaining an understanding of grouping numbers of things and calculating the total by multiplication quickly.

94. Older children were challenged to place a variety of items in order of size, also estimating the weight and in some cases actually weighing them. Some small items weighed more than larger items and this provoked much discussion. In a plenary session, a teacher demonstrated, with the help of a puppet, correct number formation on a marker board. Activities, such as these capture children's enthusiasm so that they sustain their concentration and learn a lot. Their very good attitudes means that they are confident to count to 100 or more, add, subtract, multiply and divide small numbers.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

95. Children's attainments are very good and exceed the early learning goals at the end of the reception year. This is because there is often good, very good or excellent teaching that promotes children's knowledge and skills. Often children work together in small groups to solve problems. For example, when learning about things that float and sink, children had to solve the problem, *How many people can our boat hold before it capsizes?* This stimulated children to ask many questions and discuss their ideas, listening to each other respectfully. Placing daffodils in red or blue water and watching the effect on the flowers provoked awe, wonder, surprise and delight. Using an electronic microscope, children were fascinated to see the details of a tadpole.

96. Children know how to operate simple programmes on the computer to draw pictures and word process short stories. They can type their names, using full stops and capital letters. In one excellent lesson, children were captivated by a programmable toy that had been disguised as *Baby Bear*. In small groups, they learned very quickly how to programme the bear to move around to different places on a grid to get to *The Three Bears Cottage* and to different events in the story. This was enabled by very clear explanation and demonstration by the teacher who invited the children to programme her first! As a result children saw the purpose of the task and became totally absorbed. Other children used a digital camera expertly to record their friends' efforts. Photographic evidence shows children operating remote controlled cars and investigating the properties of magnets so that children learn much from exciting, practical activities.

97. Activities such as:

- designing and making seed packets;
- learning about the people who help us;
- thinking about events in the past;
- visits to other places;
- caring for the environment;

also contribute effectively to children's knowledge and understanding of the world. High standards of behaviour and eagerness to learn support children's achievements very well.

Physical development

98. Children's attainments are good at the end of the reception year as they are taught well. In the hall, children use a range of equipment to travel around, under, over and thorough balancing and climbing equipment in a controlled way. Children have a good sense of space and work without bumping into each other. There is little equipment in the hall or outside to really challenge children's physical skills. However, they enjoy riding tricycles and scooters confidently. In lessons, children often handle tools, objects, construction and malleable material safely and with good control so that the work they produce, especially when making the seed packets, is high quality.

Creative development

99. Children's attainments exceed the early learning goals at the end of the reception year, as teaching is good. Children enjoy role-plays, such as *The Three Bears' House*, making up plays in the puppet theatre and exploring the *Bear Cave*. As part of a fund raising day for *Jeans for Genes Day*, children designed their own jeans and evaluated them. Other activities promote skills in:

- exploring colour mixing;
- painting, where children express their own ideas;
- printing;
- designing and making beds, tables and homes for different size bears from construction toys;
- exploring the workings of cogs and wheels;
- cooking, devising their own biscuits, such as gingerbread men;
- drama and playing musical instruments.

Children's artwork, especially demonstrates their confidence, imagination and pride in their work. Teachers use creative development well to promote skills in other areas of learning and to promote children's speaking and listening skills.

ENGLISH

100. Attainments in English have risen significantly since the last inspection when, overall, they were judged to be in line with most schools. Currently, at age seven, attainments in speaking and listening are very good. Attainments in reading and writing are not quite as high, but are still good. The school monitors its performance carefully and this is paying dividends in terms of identifying areas for development. Priority has successfully been given to improvements in writing, particularly that of the boys. At the last inspection writing skills were judged to be below national expectations. The school's improvements in this area of the curriculum are commendable and the result of a well directed and systematic approach to raising standards.

101. The school's performance in national tests reflects the improvements since the last inspection. In 2002, the results in reading were above the national average and in writing they were well above the average. The percentage of children reaching the higher levels in both the reading and writing tests were also above the national average. There has been an upward trend in the writing results over the last four years. Reading results have been consistently above average and were well above average in 2001.

102. Scrutiny of work and lesson observations together shows children make good progress after leaving the Foundation Stage. Progress is sometimes very good in Year 2, particularly in the development of speaking and listening skills. Brighter children are challenged and extended well in all aspects of the subject. A new system of individual targets for all children has recently been introduced and teachers are pleased with initial results. Children with special educational needs receive very good support from teaching assistants and make good progress in relation to their ability. They participate fully in lessons and enjoy the tasks set for them.

103. The national initiative on literacy is firmly established and helping to raise standards. Class texts are chosen well and appeal to children's interests. Homework is used effectively to extend and enrich children's learning. Teachers ensure that literacy skills are reinforced in other subjects and in assemblies. An example of this was seen in a Year 2 assembly in

which children composed and led their own prayers. They spoke clearly and confidently using good vocabulary.

104. Many children are articulate. They listen attentively, answer questions sensibly and contribute well to class discussions, often using their own experiences to illustrate a point they want to make. For example, Year 1 children were observed updating a class weather chart. They did this accurately explaining their judgements about the weather as they had experienced it. Children's very good listening skills do much to enhance their learning in all subjects. They listen carefully to the introduction of lessons and know what they have to do. This means time is used productively and work moves forward at a good pace. Children are polite and respectful to visitors. They are pleased to talk about what they are doing and show pride in their achievements. By the age of seven, many are able to use a wide range of vocabulary well. They offer opinions and express preferences. This is clear when they are explaining why they like particular stories and characters in books they have read.

105. Children enjoy reading and listening to stories. They read regularly at home and at school. There is a very good system of home school reading records used effectively as a means of dialogue between parent, teacher and child. This encourages children to read and helps them to know how to improve. Teachers give appropriate emphasis to the use of letter sounds to tackle new or difficult words and this is clearly paying dividends because children make good progress. By the age of seven, most children read confidently and with an increasing emphasis on expression. They benefit from the good example set by teachers in the way they read to the class. Children often have favourite stories and authors and they show good understanding of main characters and story lines. Brighter children predict story outcomes and can sometimes suggest alternatives. Children's research skills are developing well and many use an index and contents page with increasing confidence to find information. The school gives a strong emphasis successfully to literature. It has a very good collection of books and this encourages children to read.

106. Children write for an impressive range of purposes and often show good skills when doing so. Standards have improved considerably since the last inspection and there is now

107. no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Children know how to sequence events in the right order and, by age seven, their understanding of basic sentence structure, including the use of capital letters and full stops is developing well. Spelling is usually correct and most work is presented neatly. There are examples of creative thinking and imaginative use of vocabulary in some written work. For example, in a poem about winter a Year 2 child wrote,

*"The trees are frosty and brown
The grass crackles and crunches."*

107. The structure provided by the literacy hour has given teachers clear guidelines about the organisation of lessons and this is proving beneficial. The quality of teaching seen was never less than satisfactory. It was particularly strong in Year 2 where all the teaching observed was very good and one lesson was excellent. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use this effectively to enhance children's learning. Lessons are prepared carefully and teachers are clear about what children are to learn and how. Children have very good attitudes towards the subject and their behaviour is often excellent. This helps their progress. The very good teaching stems from:

- very positive relationships and an expectation that children will try hard to do their best;
- very good class control and management, including the successful use of praise and encouragement to motivate children and ensure they stay on task. This is particularly effective with children with special educational needs because it helps build their self-esteem and confidence;
- reminders about previous work and how it links to what is to be done next. This helps ensure that skills, knowledge and understanding are built up in a systematic way;
- well organised group work that takes account of children's differing needs, including the brighter ones;
- effective questioning that assesses what children know and challenges them to think hard;
- very good use of support staff, particularly for children with special educational needs;
- a sense of purpose that ensures time is used productively.

108. In the excellent lesson, the Year 2 teachers linked together to present the story *Where The Wild Things Are*. They used puppets and a video to really inspire the children and prepare them for writing. They then dressed up as characters in the story and answered questions in role-play. This thrilled the children and a real sense of awe and wonder was engendered. Children were immediately responsive to instructions through the characters and this benefited their speaking and listening skills considerably. The whole lesson brought learning alive and was a memorable experience for the children.

109. The coordinator for the subject has held the responsibility for some three years since starting at the school. She has a very clear understanding of how well the school is doing and the priorities for the future. She does not formally monitor lessons, but provides high quality leadership that helps raise standards. Samples of children's work are collected each term and checked against teachers' planning. The coordinator has attended a range of literacy courses and given feedback to staff. This is beneficial because it helps share new ideas.

110. High quality displays of work around the school, regular Book Fayres, theatre visits and occasional visits by theatre groups help to enrich children's learning experiences.

MATHEMATICS

111. Children's attainments in mathematics at age seven are good. At the time of the last inspection, they were typical of those found in all schools nationally. The school's results have risen much faster than in other schools since 1998, contributing to the two achievement awards given by the Department for Education and Skills to reward schools that improved their results at a good rate.

112. In 2001, results were very good in comparison to all schools. They dipped slightly in 2002, as the number of children with special educational needs in the year group was higher than before. This year, there is also a significant number of children with special educational needs who have achieved well in relation to their prior attainment. Brighter children do not do quite as well, as fewer children are currently reaching the higher Level 3, than in schools nationally. The school has organised the children in Year 2, so that they are taught in groups according to their ability during the week. It was anticipated that the number of children capable of reaching the higher Level 3 would rise. This has not had the impact the school was hoping for and it has rightly identified it as a priority for development in the next year.

113. Children cover a substantial amount of work. Tasks develop children's thinking skills, as they are involved in solving problems and investigating numbers. All aspects of the mathematics curriculum are covered in depth so they know how to add, subtract, multiply and divide up to 100. To help the children do this accurately, teachers give them situations that are within their experience, sometimes from well-known stories. For example, *The Giant is twice Jack's size. Jack isso the Giant is.....* Activities to learn about money, measurements, time, the seasons, challenge children to achieve well according to their capabilities. Mathematics is included in other subjects, such as music, science, design and technology and information and communication technology. For example, in Year 1, children made graphs about *People who help us*. Children across the school have a good grasp of mathematical vocabulary, use it correctly and understand that the words, such as add, more, less, minus or subtract may be represented by symbols

114. Excellent attitudes and behaviour mean children listen really carefully to their teachers blotting out any noise from the open areas of the school so that they soak up new learning. Children with special educational needs are supported very well by teaching assistants and do their best and make very good progress in relation to their prior learning. All children are good at taking turns and helping each other to learn, sharing their ideas. Children respect each other so that there is an atmosphere in which children can learn free from fear of making a mistake.

115. An excellent lesson in Year 2 consisted of many activities that inspired children of all abilities to learn new skills and apply them to games and practical situations linked to two-dimensional shapes, shopping and finding change from £1, addition and subtraction to 100 and other calculations carried out using a computer programme. Learning is fun, centred in the children's interests with a strong sense of purpose.

116. Teaching is often good or very good in other classes. This is because teachers plan thoroughly, use the strategies from the National Numeracy Strategy well adapting them to meet children's needs. Progress that children make is checked regularly and they know how well they are doing. Feedback from teachers gives children confidence so that they are willing to try new ideas and think things through independently. Often children are involved in demonstrating their skills in whole class sessions and their friends are keen to see them do well, praise their successes and help them to correct errors. This keeps their concentration and they are all eager to participate. Teachers give children clues and *tips* to help them to do well. For example, children know a rhyme that helps them to remember number bonds to 10. It starts, *ten and zero, hero; one and nine, fine*. The work scrutiny indicates that teachers do their best to challenge children to the higher levels of attainment, but this is not always reflected in the test results.

117. The coordinator is long serving at the school, but has only recently taken on the role of mathematics coordinator. She has a very clear idea about the strengths and areas for development, including raising the number of children reaching Level 3. She has been successfully involved in inducting new teachers, so that there has been no interruption to children's learning.

SCIENCE

118. Standards in science have improved since the last inspection when few children reached higher levels of attainment in science in national tests. Results in National Curriculum tests, for 2002, show that children are achieving very well at higher levels in comparison with schools with a similar intake and this has been supported by inspection evidence.

119. Standards in the work seen are good. In Year 1, children learn about mini-beasts and are beginning to understand about habitats, to say where creatures are found and to recognise how they are affected by the weather. In Year 2, children are learning about how materials behave for example, they find out what happens to flour, sugar, powder paint and salt when they are placed in water. They are learning how to set up a fair test and many can explain how to control factors that might make an experiment unreliable. Standards in presentation are good and the children record their findings in a variety of ways, for example making diaries of observations of a growing bean and drawing mini-beasts on the computer.

120. Most children are making satisfactory progress in science lessons and some make very good progress including those with special educational needs and those from ethnic minority groups. Children's enthusiasm in some lessons is palpable, they are excited and surprised by events, they are so keen to learn and are responsive to adults. Children speak confidently and show understanding. They listen to each other and work together well.

121. Teaching in all the science lessons seen was satisfactory; there was some good, very good and excellent teaching, especially in Year 2. In the best lessons, teachers are well prepared and plan activities that capture the children's interest. Lessons have a good pace and time and resources are used well. A well-planned introduction sets the learning in context and questions are used effectively to link the lesson with the homework carried out in preparation. Teaching assistants and adult helpers are effective in their support, using questions, challenging children to think and letting them find out for themselves. A good plenary session lets the children discuss their findings and show what they have learned. Where teaching is not so effective the pace of lessons is slower, more able children are not

sufficiently challenged and adult helpers do the experiments and offer solutions rather than letting the children take part and find out.

122. The science programme covers all the required areas of work in the National Curriculum. Children are offered a wide range of experiences including at the time of the inspection, growing a bean, finding out about simple materials in every day use, learning about the seasons, the weather and the water cycle, about forces, pushes and pulls, and about mini-beasts. Year groups plan together so that teachers can draw on each other's strengths; this is particularly effective in Year 2. The science curriculum is well planned and linked to other subjects in a series of topics. Information and communication technology is used effectively and children carry out research on the Internet, use graphics programs, and the digital camera in their science work. Good use is made of the school building and grounds. At the time of the inspection Year 2 children were identifying water systems around the school. Children' learning is assessed at the end of each topic and there are opportunities for children to investigate and experiment.

123. There has lately been a change of staff and the coordinator has taken the subject on a temporary basis. Resources have recently been replenished and remain good, they are organised and used well. The coordinator's subject knowledge is good and is shared with others. The next development for the school is to improve children's investigative work.

ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

124. Lessons were observed in all three Year 2 classes. Judgements were also informed by an examination of teachers' planning and records, interviews with coordinators and a review of children's previous work. In addition, Year 1 children were observed taking part enthusiastically and successfully in a session called morning activities. These sessions take place on three days each week and include a range of activities such as weaving, modelling, bead threading and work with construction kits. Particularly pleasing were their efforts at stick weaving in which they designed and made minibeasts by winding wool around sticks in a figure of eight.

125. The school's overall programme of work is lively and interesting. It provides really good opportunities for children's creative development and ensures skills, knowledge and understanding are built up systematically. Work is frequently of a high standard and, by age seven, children are achieving well above the level expected for their age. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when attainment in both subjects was judged to be good.

126. Children's learning is very good in lessons and over time. They generate a range of ideas and successfully plan the design and making of various products. For example, Year 1 children have made pop-up cards and moving pictures. They have also considered the design of different structures using rolled newspaper. Children's work shows increasing confidence in handling equipment and selecting different materials. Examples of this were seen in the design and construction of simple hand puppets and in the making of party hats by Year 2 children. Their manipulative and control skills are often very good, for example when using scissors and glue to cut and join materials together. In food technology, children show the ability to follow instructions carefully, as in the making of pizzas. They are also prepared to make decisions for themselves, for example deciding on the contents of the pizzas. Appropriate attention is given to health and safety and children take note of this, as when they are using scissors or washing their hands before handling food. Many children understand the importance of refining what they make in order to bring about improvements. They think carefully about the order of their work and what tools will be needed, making

sensible choices. For example, when designing and making model rockets, Year 2 children began by looking at different pictures of rockets and fireworks. They completed evaluation sheets that included identification of materials required and the making skills involved. They wrote down what they had trouble with and how they could make the rocket better next time.

127. Children often show very good skills in drawing, painting and colouring. This helps them to illustrate work in other subjects, for example, high quality drawings of bicycles linked to history work on transport. Children's use of colour is very good and records of their work shows they have a growing awareness of pattern, texture, shape and size. Their observational skills are very good and they have an increasing understanding of proportion. Examples of this were seen in fabric crayon prints by Year 1 children and in paintings of trees and flowers by children in Year 2. Good links are made with information and communication technology and children have produced a range of pleasing computerised pictures. Appropriate attention is given to the work of well-known artists. Children study and use their styles effectively such as when Year 2 children produced some delightful still life pictures of fruit using pastels and when they considered the work of Georges Seurat to make pictures with a series of dots. These studies help children to begin to appreciate the wide variety of ways different artists represent their feelings and experiences. It also contributes effectively to their spiritual development, because teachers sometimes engender a real sense of awe and wonder when they show children pictures and prints of famous works of art.

128. Teaching overall is very good. Lessons are prepared and organised thoroughly with appropriate resources easily to hand. This helps ensure that time is used productively because children can get on quickly with their tasks. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and an enthusiastic approach. This motivates children effectively and has a really good impact on their progress. An example of this was observed when a teacher demonstrated screen printing to Year 2 children who applauded spontaneously when the print was revealed. Lessons begin with reminders about previous work and questions are used skilfully to draw out what children know and understand. Good opportunities are provided for them to work together and this helps build their social skills. All children are enabled to make choices and this develops their sense of responsibility. Teaching assistants and other adult helpers are deployed effectively so children know what to do next and how to improve. There is considerable use of praise and encouragement and this is good practice because it helps children to feel that their efforts are valued. Children have excellent attitudes towards their work and behave really well. They enjoy the tasks and consistently do their best.

129. The coordinators do not formally monitor lessons, but are fully aware of programmes of work and provide very good direction for both subjects. Year 2 children visit the National Gallery and this helps to enrich their learning experiences. Displays of work around the school are of a very high standard indeed. They celebrate children's achievements and contribute effectively to the development of their visual awareness.

GEOGRAPHY

130. Children's attainments are good as they were at the time of the last inspection. This judgement is supported by scrutiny of previous work, discussions with children and teachers' planning.

131. Children in Year 2 know about the characteristics of seaside towns and how these compare to Stanford-le-Hope. Their mapping skills are good, as they draw accurate maps of their route to school by hand or on the computer. Some children have chosen to draw maps of their homes in their own time. The children know about the contrasts of life in their home to town life in Africa. They also know about the water cycle, names of different countries and where they are in the world and how to identify features of the local environment on a map or photographs. They can identify, the hospital, country park and the major road, the A13. In addition, children know a lot about people who help us, such as fire fighters, school crossing patrols, the police and postal delivery people. Children's stories, such as *Rosie's Walk and Percy the Park Keeper* are also used effectively to develop children's geographical skills.

132. Children's knowledge and skills are developed well through visits to the seaside. Teachers place stress on the development of children's geographical vocabulary. In their diaries of the visit to the seaside, children used words, such as *promenade* and *pier* accurately. Children know about the different kinds of home people live in according to whether the climate is hot or cold. Children know about stories from around the world and have used the Internet to find out more.

133. Information and communication technology skills are used effectively to enhance standards. Children used an *Autoroute programme* to plot journeys from home to school. They also used digital cameras to take pictures of the local environment to explore its main characteristics.

134. The coordinator has been at the school for a long time. Resources have been improved and monitoring of teaching has been established so that it is better than it was at the time of the last inspection. National guidance is followed so that children increase their knowledge and skills year on year in imaginative ways.

HISTORY

135. No lessons were observed, as history was not taught during the inspection. Judgements are based on discussions with children, teachers' planning, displays and scrutiny of previous work. Children's attainments are good at the age of seven. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when attainment was judged to be satisfactory.

136. Children in Year 2 know a lot about famous people, such as Drake, Nelson, Columbus, Grace Darling, Mary Seacole and Guy Fawkes. Parents reported and staff explained that they often dress up in role and teach the children in an innovative way. As a result of role-play, where the teacher dressed as Guy Fawkes, to talk about the *Gunpowder Plot*, one child wrote:

To Dear Lord Montague,

Do not go to the Houses of Parliament. Make an excuse, pretend you are ill or something. Go to the country. We've made a plot to kill the king. Don't show anyone this letter. Guy Fawkes.

137. The child had written on paper made to look like old parchment and in a handwriting style similar to that found at the time of James 1st. As a result the children have remembered a lot of detailed facts.

138. Children's historical enquiry skills are developed well through the role-plays and by looking at old things, such as toys from the past and photographs. Children are encouraged to ask questions and think hard about how and why things have changed. Visits to museums, local places of interest and visitors from the community make the history realistic and meaningful. For example, children have recently experienced what it was like to be a child in a Victorian classroom. Work in history is also linked to other areas of the curriculum. In science, children learn about growing up and this is linked to work on time passing, and clothes and how they have changed over time. In mathematics, they learn to sort old and new birthday cards. The work on transport, famous sailors and Grace Darling is also linked to work in geography. The school also made very good use of the Queen's Golden Jubilee to help children understand how things have changed over several generations in recent memory. The children's grandparents wrote letters to the children to describe their memories of when they went to school.

139. Visits to Clacton on Sea and Plotlands in Basildon do much to enhance standards and increase the rate of progress. Teachers use the opportunities to develop geographical knowledge and skills as well as historical ones. Staff help the children to plot the routes to the places they are to visit. One innovative strategy was to trace the route of a bird on its migratory flight to Africa.

140. Over time, the children complete a great deal of work that covers historical knowledge and skills. There is a clear programme of work that enhances children's knowledge and skills year on year. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers assess their progress regularly and check that they are reaching the appropriate or higher national curriculum levels.

141. The coordinator is long serving at the school and provides very good leadership of the subject. Resources have been improved to ensure that more difficult areas of the curriculum can be brought alive through video and artefacts. Information and communication technology is used effectively to enhance standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

142. Since the school was last inspected a computer suite has been added to the library with four computers linked to the Internet. There is at least one other computer in each teaching area and two more in the technology area. However, the number of computers is not yet sufficient for the school's work programme and is less than that recommended for children of this age. Nevertheless the school makes very effective use of the resources it has. This coupled with the appointment of a technician means that children are offered a wide variety of experiences and make good progress. Computers are used well to boost literacy, numeracy and work in other subjects.

143. Standards in the work seen are good and sometimes very good; this is an improvement on the last inspection. By the time they reach the end of the infant stage, most children are confident in their use of the mouse and keyboard, they can load, save and print their work. They follow on screen instructions well, and can use the Internet and CD ROMs to search for information and cut and paste pictures to put in their work. In Year 2, children have written reports on the seaside illustrated with small pictures. Children are confident in their use of word processing skills and can select and change fonts, sizes and colours. Children in Year 1 have written letters based on the *Jolly Postman* story. Paint and graphics packages are used effectively in other subjects. In Year 1, children are making labelled pictures of mini-beasts and inserting text boxes. In Year 2, children have made effective undersea postcards. Children are learning how to control external devices using programmable toys and they have used digital cameras. They can use data handling programs to produce graphs and charts based on information collected in other lessons.

144. All children are making good progress in their learning and clearly enjoy the work very much, showing a great deal of enthusiasm. They are confident to demonstrate their skills to others, helping each other with problems and cooperating well when working together. Those learning English as an additional language, those from ethnic minority groups and those with special educational needs all receive good support and are successful in the subject.

145. Lessons are taught well. There is a very good balance between demonstration and direction, with good use of questioning that helps children to think. Children are given clues to remember instructions such as, *enter means that's what I want* and questioning is used effectively to help children learn. Learning about computers and control of external devices is related to everyday life, for example the television remote handset. Most lessons move at a good pace. Teachers' good subject knowledge and willingness to let children have a go, extends the children's confidence and skills in the use of computers.

146. The school follows a nationally recommended programme of work and has its own overview that shows what children are expected to learn in each term. This is an improvement on the last inspection. Work is well planned and linked to other subjects. Children are offered a wide range of experiences and access to equipment including the use of a digital microscope. In Year 2, a scanner is used to upload images of children's hand made puppets, they then add a speech bubble to their pictures showing what their puppets are saying. Children's attainment is assessed regularly and links are made to their computer experience at home.

147. The subject coordinator has a very good level of expertise and manages the equipment in the computer suite and in the classrooms. She gives very good leadership and direction and works very hard. The coordinator plans to include an increased number of computers, the purchase of an interactive whiteboard and improvements to the computer suite in future developments.

MUSIC

148. Children's attainments at age seven are typical of those expected nationally and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Music has a much higher priority in the curriculum and the children gain benefit from the many additional musical experiences the school provides. Often music is linked to other subjects of the curriculum. For example, children in Year 1 are preparing an *Ugly Bug Ball* as part of their project on mini beasts.

149. Children sing songs tunefully and with expression and feeling, especially in assemblies. In the only lesson observed, in Year 2, during the inspection, children knew about beat, rhythm and melody and played a variety of instruments according to a simple score. This enabled them to reflect the sounds of raindrops and waves well, as part of the accompaniment. Children's attitudes and behaviour were very good so that they made the most of their lesson, eager to do their best. Teaching was good as the teacher's subject knowledge was secure, resources were used very well and learning built well on children's prior attainment. The variety of activities, during the lesson, meant children covered all the main elements of the music curriculum. Children composed, performed and appraised their music with confidence.

150. Often, teachers make the most of children's spontaneous work in music. For example, one class composed music to go with their play about *The Owl and the Pussycat*. The children were keen to perform this to their parents and everyone applauded their achievement. Over the year, the school takes part in local music festivals and performs musical plays, such as *Rumplestiltskin and Rock the Baby*. Carols, nativity plays and musical accompaniments are performed in the local church. Professional musicians share their skills with the children and provoke awe, wonder and joy at discovering how a musical instrument works. This does much to motivate children to want to know more and enhance their knowledge and understanding of different instruments of the orchestra.

151. Children's progress is tracked each term through assessments that check their knowledge and understanding. These help teachers to ensure they cover the appropriate curriculum. The skills of the specialist music teacher are used well to enable all children in Year 2 reach the expected standard. National guidance is followed, but strong emphasis is also placed on enabling children to experience music from other cultures and valuing the place of music within the dramatic arts. This is a real improvement since the last inspection.

152. The music coordinator has good skills in music and these are used well to make sure that children in Year 2, receive consistent teaching. She organises many additional musical experiences for children to enjoy over time.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

153. Teachers' records show that the school's programme of work covers all the appropriate areas of the National Curriculum for children of infant age. In addition, Year 1 children have swimming lessons once a week at a nearby pool. During the period of the inspection, children were observed taking part in gymnastics and country dance activities. They build up skills systematically and, by the age of seven, their attainment in these aspects of the subject is in line with most schools nationally. A similar picture was found at the time of the last inspection.

154. Children behave really well and often have very good attitudes towards physical education. All are appropriately dressed for lessons. They enjoy the activities and consistently do their best. Progress in the lessons seen was mainly good. It was particularly good in the gym trail sessions for Year 1 children who have special educational needs or who lack confidence in gymnastics. All the children involved were encouraged sensitively to undertake a range of activities, such as rolling, skipping and hopping. They did so successfully so that their self-esteem was enhanced.

155. In lessons, children use space carefully and learn to move their bodies in a controlled manner. Appropriate attention is given to safety factors and children are mindful of this. They undertake warm-up activities sensibly and show increasing control and coordination when carrying out movements on the floor. They are beginning to link one movement to another and to balance successfully using various parts of the body. Year 2 children enjoy country dancing. They work together enthusiastically in sets and this is good social development. They follow instructions carefully and listen to the rhythm of the music so that movements, such as swinging partners, are carried out with correct timing. Many children are becoming aware of the importance of evaluating their efforts and that of others to find ways of improving.

156. The teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. Changing for lessons and movement to and from the hall is managed well. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and demonstrate particular skills to the children effectively. They ensure that appropriate resources are to hand and good use is made of teaching assistants to allow children with special educational needs to take part fully in the activities. In the best teaching there are high expectations of what children can achieve in the time available. All teachers use lots of praise and encouragement, but tasks do not always challenge the children enough.

157. The coordinator is a long standing member of staff who has held the responsibility for some ten years. She has considerable experience and interest in this area of the curriculum and wrote the school's policy statement for the subject. She undertakes little formal monitoring, but is available to give guidance and provides satisfactory leadership. There are no extra-curricular activities linked to the subject, but Year 2 children take part in a local country dance festival.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

158. At its last inspection children's attainment in religious education was felt to be in line with the expectations of the local syllabus of work. They made sound progress as they moved through the school, getting to know some Bible stories and the significance of certain religious festivals. Lessons were satisfactorily taught, with children interested and well behaved.

159. Only one lesson was seen during this inspection, so it is not possible to come to an overall judgement about the quality of teaching of religious education. However, the school keeps good samples of children's work. These, together with discussion with the children, show that overall attainment at the age of seven is still in line with that expected for children of that age in the syllabus. However, they also indicate some areas of the subject where standards are lower than expected.

160. Most seven years olds can explain the main festivals of the Christian calendar, and have learned some elements of the life and ministry of Christ. They rightly volunteer the parable of the good Samaritan as illustrative of Christ's injunction to care for others. They know that the Bible is a repository of stories of importance to Christians. They retell the Old Testament story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt with gusto. After a visit to the school by the local vicar, the children can give a sound account of what a vicar's job involves. Some can name some of the objects they might find in a church, but others cannot. The children have only a slight awareness of other faiths, their main practices or beliefs, places of worship or sacred books, and in these areas of work attainment is below expectations. The attainment of children with special educational needs is in line with their abilities, while those from ethnic minority groups take a full part in lessons and their attainment is similar to that of the rest of their class.

161. The one lesson seen was excellent. The teacher used her very strong knowledge of the subject, and her expressive teaching style, to engross the children in the story of Moses. The lesson asked a lot of children's concentration, and the teacher's excellent questioning challenged them to think deeply about the meaning of the story. They behaved exceptionally well, and their high levels of application contributed to the very good learning that took place.

162. The subject leader for religious education is experienced and suitably qualified in the subject. She has ensured a good range of resources for her colleagues, and can offer advice and support when necessary. While she has a sound general awareness of the work being undertaken in other classes, she has not been able to undertake any systematic monitoring of curriculum coverage or teaching standards.