

INSPECTION REPORT

WICKFORD CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED INFANTS SCHOOL

Wickford

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115089

Headteacher: Mrs S Patmore

Reporting inspector: Peter Sudworth
2700

Dates of inspection: December 2nd - 4th, 2002

Inspection number: 247531

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infants
School category:	Church of England Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4-7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Mount Road, Wickford Essex
Postcode:	SS11 8HE
Telephone number:	01268 733297
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Christine Winfield
Date of previous inspection:	March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2700	Peter Sudworth	Registered inspector	Mathematics; Science; Information and communication technology; Physical education; Special educational needs.	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? 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 its parents?
6436	Alan Andrews	Team inspector	English; Religious education; Education Inclusion; Art and design; Design and technology.	How well is the school led and managed?
32393	Wendy Thomas	Team inspector	Foundation Stage; History; Geography; Music; English as an additional language.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wickford Church of England Infants School is situated a short distance from the centre of Wickford. It educates boys and girls aged four to seven years. At the time of the inspection, there were 83 pupils on roll. Most classes are organised so that pupils are taught in their age group. One class contains Year 1 pupils and the eight youngest from Year 2. This ensures no class has more than 30 pupils. The majority of pupils are of white British origin but a small number are from other ethnic backgrounds. One pupil has English as an additional language but speaks English competently. Seven pupils are on the school's 'action list' because they have learning difficulties and one other pupil has more severe learning problems and is at the 'action plus' stage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average. Eleven pupils are entitled to free school meals, a proportion of the school's population that is below the national average. Pupils commence school part-time the term before that in which they will become five. They then start full-time education. Attainment on entry to the reception class is about average in most years but in some years it is above. The total number of pupils who either leave or join the school during an academic year can be high. During the last such year, 21 pupils either left or joined the school. This is a high proportion compared with other schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wickford Church of England Infants School has some good features, such as the pupils' good attitudes, good teaching in parts of the school and the very good care the staff take of the pupils. It provides a sound education for its pupils. Results in national tests have improved since the last inspection. They were well above average in 2002. They are likely to fall this year due to the large proportion of Year 2 pupils with special educational needs. Currently, standards are at expected levels in the main and pupils make satisfactory progress. Sound improvements have been made overall since the last inspection. Leadership is satisfactory. The school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- The good quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage, Year 2 and in music;
- The very good care and concern the staff have for all pupils' welfare and the good all-round relationships in the school;
- Pupils' good behaviour and interest in all that the school provides;
- The very good provision for pupils' social development and the good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development;
- The good links with the church, parents, the community and partner institutions;
- The good range of extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Consistency in the quality of teachers' planning over time;
- Curriculum balance and use of time so that appropriate amounts of time are given to each subject;
- Consistency in the quality of individual education plans for pupils who have special educational needs and reference to these when lessons are planned and taught;
- More effective use of information and communication technology in different subjects and in the work with pupils who have special educational needs.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made sound progress since its last inspection in March 1997. The quality of the curriculum for design and technology is better and pupils' attainment has risen in the subject. Standards of work in art and design are not as high as previously. Pupils who show good ability in mathematics are fulfilling their potential more frequently by the end of Year 2. Schemes of work have been put in place but there is a need to use these more effectively when planning work in the medium-term. The quality of planning, including school development planning, remains an issue in general as the school improvement plan still lacks some sharpness. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is better.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
Reading	C	C	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Writing	C	B	A	A	
Mathematics	A	B	A	A	

The autumn term entrants who formed the reception class at the time of the inspection are making good progress in most aspects of their work and sound progress in their physical development. They are in line to achieve beyond the expectations of the early learning goals for their age in most aspects of work by the end of the reception year. Over the past few years, results in nationally tested subjects at the end of Year 2 have never fallen below average and in some years have been well above average. The school exceeded its targets in 2002 and its national test results were well above the national average. The current group of Year 2 pupils contains several who have special educational needs and overall attainment levels are not as high. The attainments of most Year 2 pupils in reading and writing are in line with expectations, but they could take more care with spelling. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are good and they contribute well to discussion. In mathematics, most pupils are working at an appropriate level for their age. They are achieving well, but progress is more rapid in the reception class and Year 2. Pupils' attainment in science is in line with expectations and they make satisfactory progress. In most other subjects, pupils attain in line with expectations and above expectations in music. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Pupils who are more capable are challenged well in English and mathematics.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy school and all the activities provided. They participate fully in extra-curricular opportunities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in class, around the school and at play.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good between staff and children and amongst the children. Pupils are given responsibilities that they enjoy and these help the school's routines run smoothly.

Attendance	Satisfactory. .
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall the quality of teaching, including that of pupils with special educational needs, is satisfactory. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and in Year 2. The teaching of numeracy is generally good and it is satisfactory for literacy. Teachers take good account of the different needs of pupils in these lessons but nevertheless sometimes do not refer to the individual education plans enough for pupils who have special educational needs. Teaching is good in music. All teachers have good relationships with their pupils who become confident to try their best. Pupils contribute well in lessons. Teachers deal sensitively with any mistakes that they make. Teachers plan individual lessons well and build well on previous learning. Teachers make suitable, and sometimes good, use of resources in lessons. They monitor the activity session well and often probe pupils' thinking to increase their rate of learning. Overall, they make satisfactory use of the teaching assistants. Whilst the pace of teaching is good in Year 2, it sometimes lacks pace in lessons in Year 1. Lessons sometimes do not begin quickly enough. Too much time is wasted in toilet arrangements towards the end of sessions throughout the school and this can affect the amount of work done. The general quality of explanations is satisfactory but on occasion pupils are not sufficiently clear what they have to do.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. The school does not have precise enough systems to ensure that enough time is given to each subject. There is good provision for extra-curricular activities. Care for the environment and an awakening of pupils' interest in natural life are key features of the broader curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The individual education plans are of variable quality. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	One pupil has English as an additional language and has made good progress in speaking English and does not need additional help.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils make good progress in their personal development. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good in all these aspects. It is very good for pupils' social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A strength of the school. There is a high level of pastoral care and concern for pupils. All pupils are known individually. There are good arrangements for health and safety. Good records are kept of pupils' progress in key subjects.

The school has a good partnership with its parents. There is a strong Parents and Friends of the School Association, known as 'F.A.C.E.S', that is well supported and raises much money for the school. Parents receive good communications about the life of the school and about their children's progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides sound leadership and manages the school compassionately on a day-to-day basis establishing a good sense of harmony. There is a satisfactory distribution of curriculum responsibilities and these are soundly managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body has a good committee structure that helps in the management of its affairs. It fulfils most of its statutory responsibilities but does not report in sufficient detail on the progress made since the last inspection in its annual report to parents.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school analyses its test results to good effect. It reviews progress towards the priorities on the school improvement plan at governing body meetings.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school has saved a large amount of money that it is hoping to use for a new building. Members of staff are matched well to the age groups they teach. Learning resources are deployed soundly in lessons.

The school is staffed well with a good pupil:teacher ratio. The accommodation is satisfactory overall with a mixture of old and newer buildings. The range and quality of learning resources are satisfactory. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily when making purchases.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school, are making good progress and work hard; • The teaching is good; • Behaviour is good; • The school is helping their children become mature and responsible; • Their children get the right amount of homework; • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school; • The school is well led and managed. 	<p>A small minority of parents state that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are not kept well informed about their children's progress; • there is not an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

The inspection team agrees with most of the positive views of parents. The teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and Year 2 and satisfactory overall. The school is soundly led and managed with a very good concern for pupils' welfare. There is little evidence that parents are not suitably informed about their children's progress. In addition to formal parents' evenings, there is an open invitation to discuss matters with teachers at mutually agreed times. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, given the pupils' ages.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The autumn term entrants who formed the reception class at the time of the inspection are making good progress in most aspects of their work and sound progress in their physical development. They are in line to achieve beyond the expectations of the early learning goals for their age in their personal, social and emotional development, in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and in their creative development. They collaborate well together, tidy up and are well versed in the school's routines. They think of others. Their speaking and listening skills are good. They know a number of letter sounds and some have commenced reading. They count to ten from different starting points. They form shapes from plasticine and predict with some accuracy whether they will float. They acquire fine physical control of different hand tools, such as brushes and pencils. They design and make imaginative models using glue and recyclable materials. They print attractive designs and make imaginative patterns with a range of objects.

2. Over the past few years results in nationally tested subjects at the end of Year 2 have never fallen below average and in some years have been well above average, as in 2002. Girls have been achieving more highly than the boys in reading and writing and the gap between their respective performance is larger than that found nationally. The average performance of boys in the reading and writing tests over the past three years is above that of boys nationally. However, their writing is not as strong as their reading. The gap between the performance of the school's girls and its boys is much bigger than nationally in reading and writing. The inspection team did not find any particular reasons why this should be so. The boys, in 2002, made up much ground and narrowed the gap. Year 2 boys have been doing better than the school's girls in mathematics by almost a term's progress and also do significantly better than boys nationally by two terms' progress.

3. Overall, pupils' current attainment in English is in line with expectations. The present cohort of Year 2 pupils contains several pupils who have special educational needs and this is affecting the overall level of attainment that is currently in line with that reported at the time of the last inspection, but lower than in the last academic year. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are good and better than those found in most schools. Many use a good range of vocabulary and can communicate meaning clearly and with confidence. They contribute well to discussion. Their attainments in reading and writing are broadly in line with expectations. They show a satisfactory understanding of the story line and read with suitable fluency. More capable pupils read aloud with a good level of expression. Their knowledge of punctuation and basic sentence structure develops satisfactorily, but they could take more care with their spelling.

4. In mathematics, most pupils are working at an appropriate level for their age, as at the last inspection, and by the end of Year 2, are likely to achieve the expectations for their age. However, a significant minority will not because of their learning difficulties. Pupils make good progress in mathematics overall, but it is inconsistent as it is more rapid in the reception class and Year 2. Investigative activities feature strongly in the curriculum in some classes and these contribute well to the good progress made. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good understanding of two-digit numbers and some have begun to understand three-digit place value. They know what happens when combinations of even and odd numbers are added together and have a good appreciation of comparative language. They can interpret the sequence in simple mathematical patterns and make some of their own.

5. Pupils' attainment in science is in line with expectations and pupils make satisfactory progress, similar to the last inspection. Pupils know how to make a simple electric circuit. They name some sources of light. They know that 'pull' and 'push' are forces. They name the major parts of a plant correctly. They appreciate that it is important to consider the element of fairness when conducting investigations.

6. There has been an improvement in the planning and teachers' expectations of what pupils can do in design and technology since the last inspection, when standards were below expectations. This improvement has resulted in a better quality of work by age seven, and pupils now reach the expected standard. In art and design, pupils' attainments are not as high as previously reported because of staff changes and changes in the balance of the curriculum, but pupils still reach the expected level. In most other subjects, pupils reach the expected level for their age and they make sound progress. However, their attainment in music is above expectations and progress is good due to the good quality teaching in the subject that results in spirited singing and tuneful performance. Pupils are developing appropriate skills in information and communication technology. They log on, scroll pages up and down, have sound keyboard skills and use the shift key and space bar effectively. They can change the colour of the text and the font and size of the letters. Pupils do not use their developing information and communication technology skills enough across the curriculum. Satisfactory use is made of mathematics and English skills in other subjects.

7. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The individual education plans are of variable quality, but sound overall. They are not referred to enough during the course of lessons to inform the pupils' learning and progress. Not enough use is made of information and communication technology to help them make progress at a faster rate. The pupil for whom English is an additional language has made good progress and has acquired a good command of the language. All pupils are included fully in lessons. Pupils who are more capable are challenged well in English and mathematics through the carefully arranged groups that allow pupils to be challenged. In some other lessons, they are given good scope, such as in a geography lesson on co-ordinates, where all were catered for well according to their previous knowledge. At other times there is a lack of challenge when all pupils do the same thing and are told exactly what to do so they do not think for themselves.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. As at the time of the last inspection, all pupils, including the children in the Foundation Stage, have good attitudes to learning and this makes a positive contribution to standards. During lessons, they listen attentively and show growing confidence in answering questions and contributing to discussions. Written and practical tasks are undertaken in an enthusiastic and conscientious manner. Pupils co-operate well with one another when working together in small groups. A very good example of this was seen in a Year 1 and 2 lesson, when pupils undertook activities associated with the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. Nevertheless, limited opportunities are provided for pupils to research and develop their own ideas. Pupils take pride in their work and this is illustrated in displays, including some noteworthy examples in art.

9. Behaviour is very good. High standards of behaviour are seen in nearly all lessons. Pupils are polite and helpful to others and this contributes to the orderly and friendly atmosphere in the school. Such characteristics are seen during assemblies, in the dining hall and in the playground. Serious misbehaviour, including bullying, is very rare and any such incidents are dealt with quickly and fairly. There were no exclusions last year. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are integrated fully into the life and work of the school. Parents are rightly pleased with behaviour standards and the contribution that this is making to their children's progress.

10. Good provision is made for pupils' personal development. Many opportunities are provided for them to develop their social skills and this promotes their self-esteem

successfully. This is helped by the well-planned programme of educational visits to support learning. Visitors from a variety of backgrounds talk about their special interests at assemblies. There is close contact with the church and local clergy visit the school regularly. Pupils enjoy taking part in school concerts and social functions that are supported by the 'Parents' and Friends' Association.' There are several school clubs, for example French, hand-bells and gardening. Pupils learn to appreciate the needs of others through events to support the work of charities at home and overseas. Pupils are encouraged to undertake minor responsibilities, such as caring for younger pupils, and Year 2 pupils help organise the Friendship Stop scheme in the playground at lunch-times. A strong feature of the school is the very good relationships. Pupils respond well to the role models and high expectations set by all members of staff.

11. Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average for primary schools. Unauthorised absence was higher than usual last year due to particular special problems with one pupil. However, this difficulty has been resolved and is reflected in the very low rate of unauthorised absence in the current term. Punctuality is good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

12. During the course of the inspection 26 lessons were observed. Of these, three were very good, ten were good, 11 were satisfactory and two were unsatisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is good in the Foundation Stage and in Year 2 and accounts for the good progress pupils make in these parts of the school. Overall the teaching of numeracy is good and results in good progress. It is satisfactory for literacy in which pupils are making steady progress. There is no significant difference, in the main, in the quality of teaching of other subjects except music, taught by a specialist, which is good. Pupils learn well in music as a result and enjoy their lessons. The quality of teaching is very similar to that reported at the last inspection.

13. All teachers have good relationships with their pupils. There is good level of harmony in lessons and all pupils are fully included. Teachers retain a pleasant manner with the pupils and show a calm approach. They praise the pupils' efforts so that they develop self-esteem and are motivated to try their best. This results in a confidence to answer questions thoughtfully and to contribute to general discussion sensibly. In most lessons, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and give prompt attention to any calling out so that pupils are reminded of the accepted routines. Teachers deal sensitively with mistakes that the pupils make, such as reversals in letters and numbers, and use such errors constructively to facilitate learning.

14. Teachers plan individual lessons well, although medium-term planning is much weaker. Individual lesson plans are usually clear. Teachers revise well previous learning at the start of lessons and this ensures pupils build on their previous work. In literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers take good account of the different needs of pupils and match the work well to pupils' prior attainment, although the individual education plans are not always referred to enough. In these particular lessons, more capable pupils are catered for well and build on their previous experiences but this does not always extend to other lessons. An exception was a Year 2 geography lesson about map co-ordinates. This lesson was very carefully structured to match different pupils' capabilities.

15. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and occasionally well considered. In the Year 2 geography lesson referred to above, the teacher had a pictorial

card game that was played on a board of squares to form a grid. This helped the pupils to understand how to read two-figure map references in an interesting way. In withdrawal sessions, the group work is quite traditional, confined to literacy and does not make enough use of computer facilities and visual methods to help pupils grasp the sound of letters and letter blends. The individual education plans are of variable quality. The best have clear measurable targets but some are vague and not specific enough to measure whether the objectives have been met. All pupils are included fully in lessons and there is good racial harmony as pupils work together in groups.

16. Teachers make suitable, and sometimes good, use of resources in lessons. The use of Christmas cards and instruments from around the world excited the pupils in the music lessons and attracted the pupils' interest from the outset. They sang enthusiastically and joined in well as a result. In a religious education lesson about the Jewish festival of Hannukah, pupils played the dreidle game and lit candles and learned much about the Jewish festival. A good range of resources stimulated pupils' thinking in a Year 1 design and technology lesson when they made vehicles to carry a teddy bear.

17. The teaching of music is good. The specialist teacher has good subject knowledge. She ensures that pupils adopt the correct posture that helps them to sing well. She ensures that they pronounce words correctly which assists with the pupils' articulation of the songs. She enthuses the pupils with a range of good musical instruments and these keep the pupils active and interested. Good subject knowledge was also clearly evident in some mathematics, design and technology and religious education lessons observed and enabled the pupils to make good progress. Some good use was made of technical vocabulary in geography and mathematics lessons, such as 'co-ordinates' and 'grid references'. In other lessons, as in English, there were missed opportunities to introduce terms, such as 'upper case', 'lower case' and 'adjectives'.

18. Teachers monitor the activity sessions well or engage with groups of pupils in a focused way. Such approaches ensure that, if any pupils have difficulties, these are discussed at the point of need. Furthermore questioning at these times challenges the pupils' thinking further, particularly in practical activities. In the lesson when pupils were making trolleys to carry a teddy bear, good questioning such as 'How will you fit the wheel to the back of the trolley?' resulted in good quality outcomes. Reminders about the nature of the task focused their thinking; 'Are the trolleys to be pulled or pushed?' 'If pulled, how is this to be done?' This good lesson kept the pupils interested and challenged. By contrast, a design and technology lesson in a different class did not challenge the pupils well enough and all pupils made the same object in the same way under the explicit direction of the teacher. They were not given enough opportunity to think for themselves. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, the teacher's monitoring of a weighing activity helped in the accuracy of the pupils' work.

19. The teaching assistants are used well on some occasions but at other times they are inactive and the purpose of their role is unclear. They worked effectively with separate groups in a measuring activity in a Year 1 lesson, as pupils used non-standard measures, such as cubes, to estimate and measure short distances. They were deployed well in a religious education lesson in the mixed Year 1 and 2 class and the questioning was good with clear explanations given to the pupils. The purpose of the assistance in a reception physical education lesson was unclear. Similarly in a Year 1 English lesson, the teaching assistant contributed little to the lesson. Teaching assistants often sit passively during the first part of lessons.

20. The pace of teaching is good in Year 2 but it occasionally lacks pace in lessons lower down the school. Lessons sometimes do not begin quickly enough after breaks.

Furthermore, too much time is wasted in toilet arrangements towards the end of sessions throughout the school. A drama lesson did not begin until 23 minutes after the children had entered school for the afternoon. Fifteen minutes were wasted in toilet arrangements in another lesson during which time the pupils undertook fill-in activities such as 'hangman'. In another lesson, it took ten minutes to settle the pupils and distribute individual whiteboards. Occasionally in Year 1 mathematics lessons, pupils have to wait until the teacher has explained all the different group activities before they commence their work. These arrangements slow down the pace and the rigour of work and reduce the opportunities pupils have to learn and make progress.

21. The general quality of explanations is satisfactory but on occasion pupils are not sufficiently clear what they have to do, as in a comparative measuring activity in Year 1. By contrast, good explanation and demonstration were given in a Year 2 mathematics lesson on weighing before the pupils began their work.

22. The teaching of the children in the Foundation Stage is good. The teacher has good awareness of the needs of young children, manages them well and has high expectations of what they can achieve. She has good relationships with the pupils and uses praise effectively. Good use is made of the opening and concluding parts to lessons.

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

23. The previous inspection found that the school offered a broad and balanced curriculum and met statutory requirements. The programme of work continues to cover all the required subjects of the National Curriculum and of the local education authority agreed syllabus for religious education. The work in music is a strength because of the specialist teaching provision. Suitable provision is made for personal, social and health education. Issues relating to sex education and drugs awareness are dealt with appropriately and with due sensitivity to the pupils' ages. However, teachers' medium-term planning is variable in quality. It does not map out the content sufficiently thoroughly in advance to ensure that statutory curriculum requirements are met well and with due attention to balance. Evidence from discussion with pupils and teachers' planning suggests that not enough attention is given to physical education, for example. Current curriculum planning and time-table arrangements do not ensure that subjects receive appropriate amounts of taught time. In the best example of medium-term planning, learning aims are clear and an appropriate time scale is evident. Weekly planning is also variable in quality and there is evidence that indicates some of the planned work is not carried through. In the reception class, the curriculum breadth, balance and relevance of learning are good.

24. The curriculum is enriched by good links with the community, visitors and study trips to places of interest. The school provides a good range of after school clubs that includes French, handbells, gardening and re-cycling initiatives. The school is also involved in the 'Out of Hours' initiative using the facilities at the local library. Most parents express satisfaction with the range of activities outside lessons and the amount of homework given to their children. The school has developed effective links with local schools and this facilitates a smooth transition for pupils when they move from the infant to the junior schools.

25. The school has very good links with other schools in the area and it is a member of different groupings, such as those with other schools in the diocese, a separate small schools group and the more local consortium of schools. The headteacher and staff find

much support from these associated groups in sharing problems and issues and in finding solutions and exchanging ideas. It offers places to student teachers and others for training purposes.

26. The school has implemented the numeracy strategy well and the literacy strategy satisfactorily. The good attention to practical activity in mathematics is helping the pupils to apply their numeracy skills effectively. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The individual education plans are reviewed sufficiently regularly but they vary in quality. The best contain clear learning objectives in manageable steps but others can be rather vague and as a result the success difficult to measure.

27. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now good overall and very good for pupils' social development. Lessons and assemblies promote the pupils' spiritual and moral development well. The school has strong links with the church and pupils know the difference between right and wrong. During the week of the inspection, the assembly theme was Advent. In each assembly, pupils were given opportunities for moments of reflection. The lighting of the candle on the Advent wreath acted as a focus for pupils' attention at the start of the worship. Another successful use of candles to promote reflection was seen in a religious education lesson when pupils were learning about the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. There is a good awareness of environmental issues in the school. The gardening club provides pupils with the opportunity to care for plants and watch them grow. Pupils demonstrated their ability to do close observational drawings of cacti using oil pastels. The results were impressive and showed good attention to detail. Pupils have nurtured tadpoles before returning them as young frogs to the pond where they came from. They have also taken care of caterpillars, observed their emergence as butterflies before releasing them in the school grounds. Such activities contribute significantly to the good provision for pupils' spiritual development.

28. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development. Relationships among pupils and between staff and pupils are based upon mutual respect and are very caring. Children act as monitors during the school day and take registers to the office and escort younger pupils to their classrooms. In a Year 1 design and technology lesson, pupils worked collaboratively and shared ideas and resources well. The school has made a strong commitment to taking care of the environment with a strong commitment to re-cycling. This is alerting the pupils to the part they can play in the re-use of materials and conservation.

29. All children are encouraged to accept a wider responsibility for people in need through their support of an extensive range of charities such as UNICEF, Christian Aid, The British Legion, Mencap, and Marie Curie. Activities in which pupils have participated and raised funds include a 'spellathon', a 'non-uniform day' and a coffee afternoon. The school's links with a partner school in Nicaragua provide many opportunities for the children to consider the needs of others. They talk sensitively about their reasons for choosing each of the gift items in the friendship boxes they have sent to that country.

30. The school makes good provision for pupils' cultural development. Good quality texts are used in literacy lessons and the school has a small library that provides a range of books that promote cultural awareness among pupils. At the time of the inspection, pupils had learned

about the works of Van Gogh and Monet and had painted pictures in these styles. Music makes a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development. They enjoy listening to and learning songs from around the world. Drama also has a high profile in the school. These lessons provide regular opportunities for pupils to work both collaboratively and individually on a variety of themes.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. Very good provision is made for pupils' care, guidance and general welfare, continuing the very good quality reported previously. The high quality of pastoral care helps to provide a happy and secure learning environment. This is a strong feature of the school that is much appreciated by parents.

32. Effective arrangements are in place for health and safety. Governors receive regular reports on such matters. A well-planned programme for the inspection of buildings and equipment is undertaken together with risk assessment procedures. Members of staff with appropriate first-aid qualifications ensure that any accidents and illness are dealt with efficiently. There is close liaison with parents on such matters, as well as special health issues affecting any individual child. Appropriate procedures are in place to deal with any child protection issues that arise.

33. Health education and pupils' personal safety are promoted effectively. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about these aspects in science and in the personal, social and health education programme in which each class has a weekly lesson. This often includes opportunities for pupils to share views about acting on advice from parents and teachers. Such work is also re-enforced by topical themes in some of the school assemblies.

34. There are good procedures for promoting high standards of behaviour. Pupils are familiar with the school rules and these are re-enforced by the consistent approach of teachers and staff, including the midday assistants. The main emphasis is on promoting good behaviour through the popular and effective rewards system. Appropriate arrangements are in place for dealing with any serious misbehaviour, including bullying. In the few instances when concerns arise, the school works closely with parents to resolve the problem.

35. Arrangements for promoting attendance and punctuality are good. Parents are aware of the importance of regular attendance and normally co-operate fully by notifying reasons for absence. Registration work is undertaken carefully. The office staff maintains attendance records well and also follow up unexplained absences. The educational welfare officer visits regularly and works closely with the headteacher on any issues that arise.

36. Good systems are used to monitor pupils' personal development and aspects of their academic achievement. Careful records are maintained of pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science as previously reported and these have now been extended to information and communication technology and the Foundation Stage. These particular records are used well in planning future work and as a basis for the annual written reports and for the termly meeting with parents. Good quality, detailed records are kept of pupils' reading progress and knowledge of letter sounds and blends. Individual education plans are of variable quality. The best provide clear objectives for pupils' next steps in learning but others are too vague to be of great value.

Satisfactory records are kept of pupils' progress in other subjects. Marking of work is up to date and of satisfactory quality, though not often developmental, with reminders of how the work could be improved.

37. The school predicts future performance and tracks pupils' progress carefully against the predictions. It analyses test results by gender and by questions which helps the school to ensure all pupils are being challenged appropriately and weaker aspects of subjects are given more attention in future work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. Most parents are pleased with what the school provides and the education their children receive and this is similar to the last inspection. They indicate that their children enjoy school and behave well. Parents state that pupils work hard and make good progress. They feel that teaching is good and that the school is well led and managed. The homework arrangements are commended. Most parents find it easy to approach the school and are pleased with the information provided about their children's progress. However, a small minority say they are not well informed about progress and that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

39. The inspection team agrees with most of the positive views expressed by parents. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and in Year 2 and satisfactory overall. The school is soundly led and managed with a very good concern for pupils' welfare. There is very little evidence that parents are not suitably informed about their child's progress. In addition to formal parents' evenings, there is an open invitation to discuss matters with the class teacher or headteacher. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, given the pupils' ages.

40. The school has good links with parents. Helpful information about the school is given in the prospectus. This is supplemented by extensive written advice given about induction into the reception class and on how parents can help with their children's learning at home. The governors' annual report provides a full account of the work of the governing body and highlights the school's activities and achievements. Newsletters keep parents well informed about school events. Good quality information about pupils' academic progress and personal development is provided at the termly meetings with class teachers and in the annual written reports.

41. The good partnership arrangements between parents and the school are having a positive effect on pupils' learning. Several parents help in classes, for example by hearing pupils read, whilst others assist with school visits. Parents are invited to school assemblies each Friday and there is a good attendance at events such as school concerts. An impressive feature is the support given by hearing their children read at home and recording progress in the homework diaries. Parents are very supportive of the many social and fund-raising events organised by the Parents' and Friends' Association. The proceeds from such events are used to provide educational resources and equipment, as well as to enrich pupils' social life by visits from a drama company presenting a pantomime each year and the arrangement of special parties.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. The leadership provided by the headteacher and key staff is satisfactory and reflects the comments made at the previous inspection. Leadership remains calm and secures an orderly school but does not ensure consistent practice in the planning of the curriculum. The school development plan retains some of the weaknesses previously identified, such as the lack of sharpness in the success criteria. The school's ethos of a caring community is reflected well in its daily life. It has worked hard, with some success, to overcome the issues for improvement identified in the last report. It analyses its results in national tests carefully so as to inform decision making about how to bring improvements in standards. The relatively small size of some cohorts of pupils taking the tests mean that results fluctuate from year to year, but in 2002 they were well above the national average and the best achieved by the school. Good use is made of arrangements for clusters of schools to work together and the school has recently gained the Investors in People Award.

43. The governing body has appropriate committees that meet regularly. It is closely involved in the formulation of the school improvement plan that sets out realistic priorities for the future. The school consults parents through the use of questionnaires and care is taken to incorporate their views into the plan. Individual governors vary in their availability to visit the school, but there are link governors for all subjects and this helps them to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Overall, the governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities satisfactorily, although its annual report to parents does not include:

- a progress report on the action plan arising from the last inspection;
- the percentage of authorised and unauthorised absence by pupils;
- the revenue balance at the start and end of the financial year.

44. The senior management team meets weekly and this helps to give direction to the school's work. The headteacher rightly places emphasis on the importance of monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of teaching. She has put in place a good programme of formal observation of lessons with verbal and written feedback. This is part of the school's efforts to raise standards and quality of education, but the written feedback sometimes lacks rigour and is less effective than it should be. As a result, there is still work to do, building on the teachers' determination to do well and increasing their skills so that all teaching is at least good.

45. Subject co-ordinators are keen to help raise standards. Their role has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. The school is smaller than most schools and in some subjects, such as art and design, there is a collegiate approach to its development as well as a nominated co-ordinator. This is to ensure that some teachers are not over burdened by subject responsibilities. All co-ordinators support colleagues where they can and monitor standards through looking at planning and pupils' work. A number of them produce action plans that identify and prioritise developments. This is good practice because it helps to focus resources on the areas of most need.

46. The school has maintained the effective financial management noted in the last inspection. Suitable arrangements are made to secure best value when making purchases. It functions in a well-organised manner on a day-to-day basis. Administration is good and enables every one to get on with their tasks. The school improvement plan targets each year's spending carefully towards raising standards. Governors are involved in the analysis of the school's performance to identify strengths and weaknesses and these are used to help determine priorities in the development plan.

47. Governors allocate the funds available to them with care. They seek competitive tenders for work and services to ensure they get best value for money. Within the budget, recent priorities have included the improvement of resources for information and communication technology. Funds the school receives for special purposes, such as for the education of pupils with special educational needs, is used properly. The current carry forward figure is high, but is earmarked for essential repairs to the older part of the school's premises that include toilet refurbishment and ongoing roof repairs and possibly resourcing a new building project. Taking into account the standards achieved, the high level of income per pupil, the quality of the education provided and the school's costs, it gives satisfactory value for money.

48. The school is well staffed with a good adult:pupil ratio. Members of staff have good opportunities for in-service training. Teachers are suitably experienced to fulfil their roles in the school.

49. The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall. Favourable features include the good size hall, the well-equipped computer suite and a generous sized playground that has good facilities for informal play. The internal layout and furnishing of the main building provides comfortable learning and working conditions. The older building is less attractive and has no direct internal access to facilities in the main building. It also lacks a separate outdoor area in which to teach some aspects of the curriculum to children in the Reception class and has been identified as an area for improvement. The school has recently invested in a small adventure playground that is very popular among pupils. The school improvement plan includes a phased programme of major works, such as re-roofing and the refurbishment of the old building.

50. Resources are satisfactory overall and good in music and physical education. The programmes of work in these areas are enhanced because of this. The stock of artefacts for religious education should be improved.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. The school has made sound progress overall since the last inspection and its results in national tests have never been less than average and frequently better. In seeking to improve the quality of teaching and learning further the school should:

- **Ensure there is greater consistency in the quality of teachers' planning by;**

- a) Formulating and adopting agreed procedures;
- b) Monitoring its quality more regularly.

(Paragraphs: 14, 23, 42, 97, 104)

- **Review the arrangements for planning the curriculum and the use of taught time so that appropriate amounts of time are given to different subjects and in so doing:**

- a) Ensure that less time is wasted in routine procedures;
- b) Enough coverage is given to all subjects.

(Paragraphs: 14, 20, 23,)

- **Improve the overall quality of individual education plans for pupils who have special educational needs and make more reference to these in planning lessons.**

(Paragraphs: 7, 15, 36)

- **Make more effective use of information and communication technology in different subjects and in the work with pupils with special educational needs by:**

- a) Making use of available software to meet the targets on pupils' individual education plans;
- b) Planning for its use across the curriculum.

Paragraphs: 6, 7, 109)

Minor issue

In considering the issues for the further development of the school, the governing body should ensure that its annual report to the parents includes all reporting requirements

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	3	10	11	2	0	0
Percentage	0	12	38	42	8	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)		83
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		11

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		8

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	16	19	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	13	15
	Girls	18	18	19
	Total	32	31	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 [82]	89 [87]	97 [100]
	National	84 [84]	86 [86]	90 [91]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	15	15
	Girls	16	17	18
	Total	29	32	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 [76]	91 [92]	94 [92]
	National	85 [85]	89 [89]	89 [89]

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
76	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	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)	5.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.4
Average class size	21.5

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	62

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

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

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	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
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	01/02
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	£
Total income	285,972
Total expenditure	295,401
Expenditure per pupil	3,219
Balance brought forward from previous year	46,144.00
Balance carried forward to next year	36,714.47

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	83
Number of questionnaires returned	24

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	33	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	48	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	76	24	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	62	38	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	62	33	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	43	14	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	38	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	38	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	52	43	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	71	24	5	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	33	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	48	9	5	0

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

52. Children are admitted to the reception class on a full-time basis at the beginning of the term in which they will become five. Those who are due to start school at the beginning of the spring and summer terms are admitted part-time during the term preceding full-time attendance. At the time of inspection there were 11 pupils in the reception class, of whom four attended part time.

53. In the previous report, the quality of teaching was mainly sound with good teaching evident in many lessons. The overall standard of teaching has improved. The children make good progress in almost all areas of learning, enjoy school and behave very well. Progress is satisfactory in their physical development in which the teaching is sound. The reception class benefits from the small number on roll and children receive much individual attention. This first cohort of the new school year is expected to attain beyond expectations by the start of Year 1 in most aspects of their work, the exception being in their physical development, which is likely to match expectations. The teacher and her assistant know each child well and provide a happy, harmonious ethos in which to learn. The accommodation for reception pupils is satisfactory overall.

54. Children are assessed upon entry to school and continue to be assessed both formally and informally by the class teacher and teaching assistant throughout the reception year. The members of staff use this information effectively to plan future learning tasks. They meet regularly to discuss children's progress and attainment and use this information to plan future learning opportunities. Overall, the children's levels of attainment are higher than at the time of the previous inspection but this is only the first group of children to be admitted to the school during the course of the year and the comparison should, therefore, be treated with caution.

Personal, social and emotional development

55. The quality of teaching is good, planning is thoughtful and a good emphasis is given to this aspect. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development within a caring and secure environment. They are in line to exceed the expectations at the start of Year 1 in this area of learning. The early morning routines encourage children to select activities and start work independently, which provides the teacher with the opportunity to talk to parents about their children and to reinforce the links with home. Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils are very constructive. Children respect and rely on the adults who work with them and copy their good example.

56. Children are independent when they choose activities and tidy up when they have finished. For example, they worked collaboratively and unsupervised to brush up the sand they had spilt. They change their clothes quickly and mostly independently when getting ready for physical education. They show patience and interest in all activities, such as completing jigsaws and puzzles. They respond well to the teacher's high expectations and, as a result, their attitudes and behaviour during lessons are very good.

57. Children are encouraged to consider the needs of children less fortunate than themselves. In one lesson, the teacher used a video of the partner school in Nicaragua sensitively and successfully. This provided the children with a good stimulus for the main activity in which they drew pictures of Christmas gifts for the children in Nicaragua. They made thoughtful suggestions, such as shoes, clothes and books. All children are encouraged to contribute to discussions and the teacher values their responses.

Communication, language and literacy

58. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is good and children make good progress. Most children within the group are in line to exceed expectations by the end of the reception year. Most are confident in speaking aloud in a group and others are encouraged to contribute through skilful questioning from the teacher. They listen carefully to instructions and carry these out well. Role-play situations are created to encourage group interaction. The children have helped to create an 'airport' which provides further opportunities for them to develop their speaking and listening skills.

59. Children's knowledge of letter sounds is developing well. They know the sounds and names of many letters and identify the initial sounds in many words. Children are taught correct letter formation and most write their names legibly.

60. They enjoy books and make good progress in reading. During one lesson, the teacher used a 'big book' with words covered up to encourage children to predict the missing words. Children made a variety of feasible suggestions. The teacher created suspense and excitement by peeling back the cover slowly and drawing attention to the initial letter of the missing word. Following this a group of children re-ordered a jumbled sentence without adult assistance. A home reading programme is well established and parents are encouraged to make comments in a reading diary. An able child read her home reader confidently and with obvious enjoyment.

Mathematical development

61. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is good. The reception teacher provides the children with many activities and experiences so that they develop their mathematical skills and vocabulary through both formal teaching sessions and play. Children are supported well in learning mathematics with a wide variety of resources and no opportunity is lost to reinforce number work in a variety of ways. Children consolidate their learning well, because the practical activities give them good opportunities. In one good lesson, the children counted to 10 from different starting points and made patterns using colours, shapes and numbers. Children's learning was successfully reinforced during the latter part of the lesson in which they made patterns with physical movements such as clapping and stamping. Most children know the names of common shapes, for example, '*triangle*', '*square*', '*circle*' and '*rectangle*'. They learn to recognise coins and know about weight and time. When supported by an adult, they play interesting number games. They learn to add and subtract mentally and try to explain how they arrived at the answer. The children's knowledge and skills in mathematics are good for their stage of development and they are in line to exceed expectations by the end of the reception year. The activities provided by the teacher are suitably open-ended allowing children to extend their learning beyond what is expected for children of this age. The teacher uses effective questioning throughout their work to assess children's understanding and progress.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

62. No formal observations of lessons were possible in this aspect of work but evidence of the classroom environment suggests that the teaching is good. In their knowledge and understanding of the world, most children's attainment on entry to the reception class is in line with what is expected nationally. Informal observations and interaction with the children in this very brief inspection indicate that they make good progress and are expected to attain beyond expectations by the end of the reception year. The teacher and teaching assistant plan a range of interesting activities for the children in this area of learning that stimulates their interest, curiosity and opportunities for discussion and exchange of views. During the inspection, children tested whether the boats they had made from 'plasticine' would float or sink. This activity provided children with the opportunity to make predictions and observations and promoted much discussion about their findings. They are making good progress in using computers and in becoming familiar with the keyboard.

Physical development

63 The previous inspection report stated that by the time children are five they show satisfactory physical development. Children continue to develop satisfactory skills in this area of learning and the quality of teaching is generally sound. During one lesson, children responded well to recorded music and demonstrated an ability to control their movements. They listened carefully to the teacher's instructions and responded to them. Throughout the lesson, the teacher made the children aware of health and safety issues. Children moved around the hall in a controlled and safe way and were given the opportunity to watch and perform for their peers.

64 The outside area designated for the use of reception children has limited use because of its close proximity to a busy main road. Although the area is enclosed, the noise level from traffic is very high. The teacher has rightly identified this as an area in need of improvement and has some imaginative ideas for reducing the noise level and for increasing its current use. A range of activities promotes the development of more intricate control and movement. Children are taught how to hold pencils and pens correctly and use glue and scissors appropriately. As a result they are confident and successful in these skills.

Creative development

65 Well planned activities ensure that children in the reception class make good progress towards the nationally expected levels in creative development which they are in line to exceed by the end of the year. They are encouraged to express their ideas through drawing, painting and modelling with a variety of materials, for example, salt dough. Children had enjoyed printing with fruit and experimenting with glitter and glue to create firework pictures. In music, all children participate with great enthusiasm and attainment is above what is expected nationally. Children benefit from very good teaching by the music specialist who involves them in a wide range of activities. The teacher encouraged children to listen and respond to Scottish tunes by clapping, marching and skipping in time with the music. Children showed interest in the wide variety of visual aids that the teacher used to enhance the learning. At the end of the lesson, children demonstrated their knowledge by naming percussion instruments, which they played with great effort and enjoyment. The class teacher provides further opportunities for the children to sing their favourite songs and action rhymes, which consolidates their learning in this area.

ENGLISH

66. The previous inspection found pupils' attainment was in line with the national average at the end of Year 2, although their speaking and listening skills and handwriting were good. The school's record in national test results for reading and writing is good, but needs to be treated with some caution because of the relatively small size of some of the cohorts. In 2002 the school achieved its best ever results, being well above average in both reading and writing compared to similar schools as well as the picture nationally.

67 Scrutiny of pupils' work together with lesson observations show that, overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in Year 1, although in one lesson valuable time was lost in getting the activity underway and progress was slow. The pace of work quickens in Year 2 and pupils make better progress. This is because the teaching is good and time is used effectively. At age seven, attainments are broadly in line with the national average. This fall from the previous year is to be expected because the cohort includes a higher than usual number of pupils with special educational needs. Throughout Years 1 and 2, pupils with special educational needs make mainly satisfactory progress. However, their progress is sometimes hindered because teachers do not always make best use of the targets set for such pupils when planning and during lessons.

68. The national initiative on literacy has been introduced satisfactorily and evidence suggests that it is helping to raise standards. Texts are chosen well and appeal to the pupils' interests, although more could be done to reinforce literacy skills across all subjects. The school analyses its results carefully and takes action when there are differences in the performance of groups of pupils. For example, it has worked successfully to close the gap between the performance of boys compared to that of the girls. Appropriate efforts are made to use homework for all pupils that includes reading, writing and spelling as a means of enhancing the work covered in lessons.

69. Pupils are pleased to talk to visitors about their work and matters that interest them. They are polite and respectful. They listen attentively during lessons and respond well to prompts and encouragement. Many use a good range of vocabulary and can communicate meaning clearly. By age seven, most are confident speakers and are sometimes able to use their own experiences to develop answers to questions. For example, in a Year 2 lesson on the identification of settings and main characters in stories, some pupils referred to books they had read previously. Overall, pupils' speaking and listening skills are better than those found in most schools. Pupils contribute to discussions well and often make sensible suggestions about the matter in hand. An example of this was seen in a lesson based on a story about baby owls. Pupils quickly put forward ideas related to how the owls might be feeling at different stages of the story.

70 Pupils enjoy reading and listening to stories. Most of them read regularly at home as well as at school. Home-school reading diaries are used to record the book each child is reading and the progress being made. This is a useful link between parents and teachers and many parents take advantage of it. Written comments from both parents and teachers help to encourage the pupils, but do not often point the way forward so that the child knows what needs to be done to improve. Satisfactory use is made of letter sounds to tackle unfamiliar words and, by the age of seven, current pupils' reading skills are mainly in line with that expected for their age. Many read with growing confidence and are starting to become fluent. Almost all pupils show satisfactory understanding of the plot and main characters in the stories they are reading. Brighter pupils sometimes read with real expression and can name a number of well-known authors. They are beginning to develop simple research skills and to understand the significance of an index and a contents page.

71. Pupils undertake a range of writing activities, including letters, stories and news. They show an increasing understanding of how to sequence events in the right order. Many do not find writing easy, but their knowledge of basic sentence structure, including the use of capital letters and full stops, is developing satisfactorily. By the age of seven, current pupils' writing skills are generally in line with that expected nationally. They are beginning to use their imagination in poetry and stories, but presentation of work is sometimes untidy. Pupils use simple dictionaries and word books, but more care could be taken with spelling. They use lined books to practise handwriting, but do not always transfer their skills successfully to other written work.

72. The quality of teaching observed ranged from unsatisfactory to good, but overall it was satisfactory. The structure provided by the literacy hour has given teachers clear guidelines about the organisation of lessons and this is proving beneficial. Resources are prepared well and teachers are clear about what the pupils are to learn and how. This is often explained to them at the beginning of a lesson so that they know what they are going to do. Most pupils have good attitudes towards the work and behave well. The best teaching stems from:

- detailed lesson plans that ensure pupils build on what they already know and can do;
- high expectations in terms of pupils' behaviour and attainment;
- good control and management that makes sure pupils work hard and time is used productively;
- ongoing reinforcement of basic skills, such as the use of capital letters and full stops;
- skilful use of questions that assess what pupils understand and challenge them to think hard;
- effective deployment of teaching assistants to help pupils who need it most;
- well thought out activities that help to make learning fun.

73. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs when the management and control of pupils are not sufficiently effective and valuable time is lost in lessons. There are times also when not enough attention is paid to the ongoing modelling of good practice in handwriting. When this happens, pupils' understanding of what is acceptable becomes confused.

74. The co-ordinator is a senior member of staff. She has a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject within the school and produces a yearly action plan to help raise standards. Resources are satisfactory and generally maintained well. A pleasant library area has recently been refurbished. Pupils' literacy experiences are broadened successfully through activities such as Christmas productions, book weeks and occasional visits from drama groups.

MATHEMATICS

75. The attainment of most current pupils in Year 2 looks set to meet expectations by the end of the year. However, a significant minority of pupils will not reach the expected standard because of the larger proportion of pupils with learning difficulties than last year when pupils attained particularly well in mathematics. Results have fluctuated over recent years depending on the particular cohort of pupils. Whilst on average, pupils' levels of attainment are above those for boys and girls nationally, current levels of pupils' attainment are similar to those at the previous inspection.

76. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and in numeracy overall but the rate of progress is inconsistent. It is sound in Year 1. The rate of progress picks up in Year 2 and becomes good. Overall pupils achieve well by the end of Year 2. This is due in large measure to the influence of the Year 2 teacher, who is also the mathematics co-ordinator, and who provides a good curriculum for the pupils. This includes investigative type activities that extend the pupils' thinking.

77. By the end of Year 2, pupils name common two- and three-dimensional shapes such as cylinder, cube and cuboid. They read two-digit numbers and they begin to understand three-digit numbers. They investigate odd and even numbers and the results when combinations of these are added together. Pupils can tell the time when the fingers are at o'clock, half-past and quarter to and past. They appreciate the concept of a half and understand, for example, one half of 14 and they colour in one half of different shapes accurately. Pupils make simple block graphs, such as the way in which they travelled to their holiday destination. In their investigational work they make different arrangements of putting five cubes together. They then transfer their ideas into two-dimensional form by drawing the outlines on squared paper. Pupils understand positional language. They begin to measure in centimetres. They can order numbers and create sequences of a pattern using shapes and colour or numbers in two's. They understand comparative mathematical language.

78. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons, show good levels of interest and concentrate on the well thought out activities that appeal to them. This is because the teachers plan carefully to meet individual pupils' needs and there is a good match between the level of challenge and pupils' capabilities. This is a particular strength within the teaching of mathematics, which is good overall with a range from satisfactory to good. Pupils work well when engaged in group activities and share the resources amicably.

79. The opening to lessons is often challenging with mental tasks that make the pupils think hard. In a Year 2 lesson, the pupils had to complete several sections selected from the 100 square which contained only one number. Pupils had to explain their answers orally. In this they were encouraged to use terms such as 'below', 'after' and 'above', 'in the forties line', 'ten less' which made them reason their thinking. Pupils are keen to answer questions because they enjoy the work. Explanations of tasks are usually good so that pupils know what they have to do. In a Year 1 lesson, however, two of the four group tasks were not explained sufficiently well. In these groups pupils did not undertake the task as envisaged. They missed the point in their learning as they compared the lengths of strips of paper. They did not appreciate how to order them by comparative length when sticking them on to a large piece of paper under headings 'short', 'shorter' and 'shortest' and became confused. Occasionally, when directing the mental part of the lesson, teachers do too much of the thinking for the pupils and draw the required answer too obviously to their attention by pointing to a number, word or digit in their anxiety for pupils to obtain the correct answer. The concluding part of the lesson is used with varying degrees of success. At best, the work is taken on further, as when pupils checked their weighing measurement results on more finely graduated scales. On occasion, however, the conclusion to lessons is used as pure description of what has taken place and does not promote further learning.

80. Satisfactory use is made of information and communication technology in some lessons such as its support for mental calculation to insert missing numbers in a sequence but a wider range of application and a greater use in numeracy are possible.

81. Overall, the numeracy strategy has been implemented well but with scope for greater consistency in practice. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and leads the subject well. She monitors planning and makes good suggestions to other staff. Good analysis is made of test results to compare the work of boys and girls and to track pupils' progress. Records of pupils' progress are precise and manageable and kept up to date to inform planning. Resources for the subject are adequate, although some are rather old.

SCIENCE

82. No science teaching was taking place during the short period of the inspection. Evidence was drawn from pupils' workbooks, discussions with pupils and staff, teachers' planning and records of pupils' progress. Pupils' current attainment is broadly in line with expectations and this judgement is similar to that at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils did well in the most recent teacher assessments but the current Year 2 cohort contains several pupils with special educational needs and results are not expected to be as high. No judgements are possible about the quality of teaching.

83. From the evidence in pupils' books and discussions with them, they achieve soundly and make satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 2, pupils know the components of a simple circuit and they can link a buzzer into the circuit. They know some of the sources of light, such as the sun, a candle and batteries, which power headlamps and a torch as such sources. They know the difference between the forces pull and push and demonstrate this with reference to the movement of toys. Pupils undertake investigations, such as finding out who has the best hearing in the class. They are aware of the importance of fairness when undertaking tasks, such as the distance from the source of the sound being the same for each child tested. They begin to appreciate the causes of day and night. Pupils name the major parts of the human body and of plants such as a leaf, stem and root. They show increasing awareness of the importance of care for the environment. They sort materials according to their properties such as magnetic and non-magnetic, and qualities of transparency and opaqueness. They study changes to materials when heat is applied such as to chocolate and clay.

84. Pupils' workbooks indicate that insufficient attention is given to prediction when they investigate. They label their diagrams well but their written work is usually descriptive and they do not always draw reasoned conclusions about their results or interpret their findings. Occasionally too much use is made of worksheets for writing up their work and these do not allow sufficient space for pupils to show what they have learned, neither do they encourage pupils to think about how to set out their work and record their findings.

85. The school occasionally uses visits to the Science Museum profitably in its work such as the recent visit to the space exhibition in connection with the work in Year 2. There is a good awareness of environmental issues in the school. It has a waste management theme, recycling venture and a gardening club where composting is fostered. The school recently took part in a chrysanthemum growing competition which encouraged pupils' care for growing plants. Pupils have nurtured tadpoles before returning them as young frogs to the pond where they came from. They have also taken care of caterpillars and observed their emergence as butterflies before releasing them in the school grounds. Such activities contribute significantly to the good provision for pupils' spiritual development. Occasionally theatre groups visit the school and adopt a scientific theme. The school's seriousness in promoting pupils' interest in nature is evidenced by its membership of the Horticultural Society.

86. The co-ordinator has only recently taken on the role and recognises the need to develop links with information and communication technology. She has looked at teachers' planning to ensure it meets the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and would like to extend this to lesson observations.

ART AND DESIGN

87. No lessons were seen during the period of the inspection and it is, therefore, not possible to make judgements about the quality of teaching. Judgements about attainment were informed by interviews with Year 2 pupils and an examination of teachers' planning. In addition, inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and displays around the school. The evidence shows that pupils' learning over time, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. Attainments at age seven are broadly in line with those found in most schools nationally. This represents a fall in standards since the previous inspection when they were judged to be good. The reasons for the fall are due mainly to changes in staff and in the emphasis given to the school's curriculum overall.

88. Pupils show satisfactory skills in drawing, painting and colouring. This often helps them illustrate work in other subjects, for example in their history studies on flight and their literacy work on 'Apollo Mission Reports'. As they move up through the school, their observational skills improve satisfactorily and they show growing confidence in the ability to represent what they have seen through pictures. An example of this was seen in some Year 2 pastel paintings of cacti plants that showed good attention to colour, shape and form. The results were pleasing. Pupils also show an increasing ability to use their imagination when making pictures. For example, Year 1 pupils have mixed and applied colours effectively to produce paintings about the Gunpowder Plot. In another example, Year 2 pupils made satisfactory drawings using coloured pencils to depict what they might see in a dream about looking through a window. This activity provided an opportunity for them to advance their understanding of how mental images can be represented in different ways. Pupils work with a satisfactory range of media and materials. They can sometimes try out new ideas for themselves, for example when printing with shapes cut from vegetables, but more chances are needed for them to make decisions of their own. Appropriate attention is given to the work of well-known artists and Year 1 pupils have painted some pleasing pictures in the style of Monet. Some pupils have progressed to making computerised pictures of their efforts. These studies help pupils to be more aware of the ways in which different artists represent what they see and feel.

89. Pupils enjoy art and design, but when interviewed had little to say about their work. The co-ordination of the subject is undertaken as a whole staff responsibility, but the co-ordinator for many years provides good leadership and continues to give help and support to colleagues as appropriate. The school's scheme of work was written some four years ago and has not yet been reviewed in terms of recent national recommendations about programmes of work. Learning resources are satisfactory and stored well.

90. Displays around the school are variable, but some are of a good standard. This helps pupils' visual awareness and encourages their creative development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

91. Three lessons were seen during the period of the inspection. Judgements were also informed by an examination of teachers' planning and scrutiny of children's work and displays around the school. This shows a programme of work that is sometimes lively and interesting and at other times is too prescriptive. Overall, pupils' attainment at age seven is in line with most schools nationally. This is an improvement since the last inspection that judged standards in the subject to be below average.

92. Pupils' learning in lessons and over time is mainly satisfactory, including those with special educational needs. This is also an improvement since the previous inspection that found pupils' progress to be unsatisfactory. There are times now when pupils' learning moves forward at a good pace. This is when they are given opportunities to be imaginative and to think for themselves when designing and making products.

93. Pupils show increasing confidence in handling equipment and trying out different materials and media. They generate some interesting ideas and think carefully about what could be included in models they make. For example, Year 2 pupils have constructed imaginative rockets as part of their work about space. They have used a good range of waste materials and the results are pleasing. Teachers sometimes set challenging tasks that make the pupils think really hard. For example, during the inspection period pupils from both Years 1 and 2 were set the task of designing and constructing a model trolley that could carry a teddy bear at least one metre. Year 1 pupils used construction kits, whilst those in Year 2 chose from a range of waste materials. The process involved them in designing, making, testing and then evaluating their models. They did this with great enthusiasm and with success, sharing ideas and applauding the efforts of classmates. Their cutting, folding and gluing skills were satisfactory and most used the correct vocabulary when describing their work, for example axle, wheel and tube. They quickly recognised the need to strengthen parts of the trolleys when they showed signs of weakness and their written evaluations included ways in which the models could be improved. However, there are occasions when pupils are not given sufficient chance to experiment and try out things for themselves. For example, when making a Christmas card with a sliding mechanism pupils in Year 1 all made the same card and there was little opportunity for them to try something different.

94. The teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good, although there were occasions when time was not used productively enough. Resources are prepared well and teaching assistants are usually deployed effectively to support group work. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. Features of the very good teaching include:

- imaginative tasks that capture pupils' interest;
- high expectations of what the pupils could achieve;
- the systematic building up of pupils' skills so that learning progresses well;
- skilful use of questions that challenge pupils to think hard. For example, pupils were asked whether the trolleys would need to be pushed or pulled and what difference this might make;
- a real sense of purpose that motivates pupils to do their best and to take pride in their efforts.

95. The co-ordinator is an established and senior member of staff. She has held the responsibility for some two years and provides effective leadership. The school's policy statement was reviewed in 2000. Its scheme of work was revised in 2001 to include national recommendations. Resources for the subject are satisfactory and stored well.

GEOGRAPHY

96. During the inspection, only one geography lesson was observed. The evidence from this lesson, together with a study of pupils' work and discussions with them indicate that standards in geography are average at the end of Year 2 and similar to judgements made at the last inspection.

97. The medium-term curriculum planning in geography is inconsistent in terms of quality. Some planning lacks clarity regarding what will be taught and how much time will be allocated to the topic. In the best example, learning objectives are clear and an appropriate time scale is evident. Careful monitoring of teachers' planning would ensure better progression and continuity between classes.

98. An insufficient number of lessons was observed during the inspection to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching in geography. However, in the Year 2 lesson observed, teaching was good. During this lesson, pupils made good progress in learning about co-ordinates and worked accurately. Pupils discussed their work eagerly with peers and remained focused on the task. A programmable toy reinforced pupils' learning about co-ordinates as they plotted a route for it round the co-ordinates to avoid obstacles and was an appropriate use of information and communication technology.

99. A recent study trip to the Science Museum in London provided Year 2 pupils with the opportunity to experience, first hand, a contrasting location to Wickford. They recalled with excitement impressive sights, such as Big Ben and the London Eye.

100. Years 1 and 2 pupils share teddy bears, which accompany the children on days out and family holidays. Follow-up work provides pupils with opportunities to compare and contrast various places and to locate them on a map.

101. Subject leadership of geography is currently shared among the teaching staff. As a result, procedures for monitoring the standard of pupils' work are not fully developed. Whilst resources for teaching geography are judged to be satisfactory, teachers have identified this as an area for improvement.

HISTORY

102. At the time of the last inspection, attainment in history was average at the end of Year 2. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in history and are likely to attain standards in line with national expectation by the end of Year 2.

103. During the inspection no history lessons were observed. Evidence was drawn from interviews with pupils and by an examination of teachers' planning and pupils' work. There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching in history.

104. Teachers' medium-term planning for history is satisfactory overall but varies in quality. Closer monitoring of the planning would ensure curriculum coverage and progression and continuity between year groups. In the best example, planning is clear and detailed and contains learning objectives relating to chronological understanding, historical interpretation and historical enquiries.

105. In a group discussion with Year 2 pupils, they were able to recall a recent study of the history of transport. Pupils had learned about Apollo 13, the Wright Brothers and the Montgolfier Brothers. They had used a variety of evidence sources including the Internet. Meaningful cross-curricular links with science and information and communication technology had reinforced the learning for pupils. The samples of work showed that pupils were able to communicate knowledge through stories, poems, drawings and paintings.

106. Subject leadership of history is currently shared among the teaching staff. As a result, procedures for monitoring the standard of pupils' work are not fully developed. Whilst resources for teaching history are judged to be satisfactory, teachers have identified this as an area for improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

107. No information and communication technology lessons were being taught during the inspection and evidence was obtained from observation of groups of pupils engaged in work related to other lessons, discussions with pupils and examining teachers' planning and individual pupils' records in the subject. This evidence suggests that pupils are making expected progress in the subject, similar to the judgement made at the last inspection.

108. By the end of Year 2 pupils can log on, insert and eject a disk and shut down the computer. When in use they are able to scroll up and down, use the title bar to move a window, click on icons to select a process, find and load a saved file and print work. They have suitable knowledge of the keyboard and use this appropriately for letters and numbers and for punctuation. They use the space bar, delete keys and back space. They utilise the shift key for upper case letters. They move around the text to edit it and highlight text to be changed. They change the colour, font, size and position of their work. They enter value in numbers and print graphs. In group work in literacy pupils were able to change capitals for lower case, put in capitals for proper names and use game situations to place letters in alphabetical order. In a Year 2 geography lesson, pupils demonstrated an ability to move an icon to take a particular route to avoid objects using co-ordinates as a guide for this procedure. Pupils in another group could program a moving toy on the floor to negotiate a route to avoid a series of objects that were set out on a grid on the floor.

109. As a result of the good work of the well informed information and communication technology co-ordinator, the staff are knowledgeable in the subject and carries out the requirements of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for the age groups. Most staff are now using information and communication technology confidently to produce plans, schemes of work, teaching materials and other documentation and all have had nationally approved training. Insufficient use is made, however, of information and communication technology in other subjects and for work with pupils who have special educational needs. The co-ordinator has developed a useful comprehensive folder that describes the software, its appropriateness for age group, subject and its ease of use. The scheme of work is a little outdated as it refers to previous computers used but is seen as a priority for development of the subject. The co-ordinator has developed a useful information and communication technology record for individual pupils. The school has a healthy computer to pupil ratio that is at the national average level and also has the use of a digital camera and scanner.

MUSIC

110. At the time of the last inspection, standards of attainment in music at the end of Year 2 were above average compared to national expectations. Pupils continue to attain good standards.

111. The subject benefits from the enthusiastic leadership and expertise of the part-time music specialist who is employed for one day each week. Pupils receive a weekly lesson from the specialist teacher, which is supplemented by other musical activities, provided by the class teacher.

112. The quality of teaching in music is consistently good and sometimes very good. Lessons have a good structure and contain a wide variety of activities in which pupils participate fully. Music resources are good. There is an extensive range of percussion instruments that are in good condition and stored appropriately.

113. Pupils' singing is noted for its spirited and generally tuneful performance. The pupils like singing and respond well when asked to do so in lessons and assemblies. They have learned new songs for the end-of-term Nativity Play, remembering both words and melodies well. The music teacher prepares pupils for singing with breathing and voice exercises that make learning fun. For example, pupils blow-up an imaginary balloon and let it go, imitating the high pitched noise that it makes when released.

114. Music lessons make a significant contribution to pupils' cultural development. During the lessons observed they were introduced to traditional music from other countries. Photographs of their peers dressed up in national costumes fascinated Year 1 pupils. These photographs were displayed with artefacts from around the world and were the subject of much discussion. Pupils enjoyed the African song used for 'warm-up' and listened attentively to recorded music of church bells.

115. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher introduced an African song and traditional African instruments. This captivated pupils' interest and they participated fully by singing well and playing the instruments with a regular beat. An extensive range of resources, that the teacher used skilfully, enhanced the learning.

116. A number of pupils are learning to play hand bells during an after-school activity. These pupils are enthusiastic and recently performed Mendelssohn's Wedding March, which was played on BBC Radio Essex. In assemblies, pupils have further opportunities to sing and listen to recorded music, chosen to create specific moods.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

117. Only one lesson took place during the inspection so it is not possible to make judgements about pupils' attainment, the quality of teaching or to make comparisons with the previous report. Evidence from discussion with pupils and teachers' planning suggests that not enough attention is given to this aspect of work and there is some lack of provision.

118. In the one physical education lesson, which had a dance focus, both the teacher and the pupils were changed appropriately and the bare-footed work added to its overall quality. Pupils responded well to the teachers' instructions and she had a calm manner with them. Pupils made reasonable use of the space. They twirled to represent the wind and swayed their arms. In the warm-up activity, they jumped sensitively using the front part of their feet and their toes for landing. Instructions throughout the lesson were clear and the teacher gave the pupils time to practise their movements. Good use was made of pupil demonstration but the lack of criteria for their evaluations meant that their evaluative comments lacked substance, for example 'I liked the wind'. The teacher chose appropriately calming music for the cool down at the end. Procedures for the close of the lesson and getting dressed were very ordered.

119. The co-ordinator manages the subject soundly. A satisfactory scheme of work has been provided which contains some practical examples of work in dance, games and gymnastics. Resources for the subject are adequate.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

120. Pupils' attainments are the same as those found in most schools at age seven and are in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. This judgement is similar to the findings of the last inspection. The school has close links with the nearby parish church and programmes of work are based mainly on Christianity. Pupils visit the church as part of their studies and celebrate Easter, Christmas and Harvest Festivals there. The programmes of work also take account of the teaching and practices of other religions represented in this country, particularly Judaism. All pupils make satisfactory progress over time, including those with special educational needs.

121. Pupils are beginning to learn that religious faith is a common feature of communities and that people who share a faith express it through religious observance and the way in which they live. They are becoming aware of positive feelings associated with festivals and celebrations, such as Divali. Interviews with pupils show that there is a growing understanding of the importance of prayer and that some people like to have quiet times to think. All pupils show a concern for others less fortunate than themselves. They know that some things can be considered right and some wrong and have thought about the importance of forgiveness. They recognise good and bad examples set by people and characters in stories. Many of them are building up a satisfactory understanding of the use of religious symbols, such as crosses and candles. Scrutiny of work and of teachers' medium-term planning shows that older pupils have discussed religious stories such as The Prodigal Son and The Good Samaritan.

122. Currently, pupils are learning more about the Christmas story and are preparing for a Nativity play. They know that Christmas day is a celebration of Jesus' birthday. Year 1 pupils are considering Advent and, during the inspection period, a whole school assembly reinforced their understanding of its significance. Year 2 pupils are focusing on the journeys made by the characters in the Christmas story. They are considering why and how the people travelled.

123. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teaching over time has been satisfactory. However, the quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good. Pupils considered the Jewish festival of Hannukah and compared it to other religious festivals. They behaved well, worked together sensibly and demonstrated positive attitudes towards the subject. Tasks built effectively on previous learning and the teaching motivated the pupils to work hard and to do their best. A range of artefacts was used skilfully to help explain the festival and this brought a practical element to the lessons that the pupils enjoyed. Good links were made with music and literature. For example, the story The Hannukah Candle and the Christmas Star was read to the pupils and they listened attentively.

124. The co-ordinator has only recently taken on the role. She is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and has the potential to lead effectively. Resources overall are satisfactory, although the range of artefacts to help enrich pupils' learning experiences could be improved.