

INSPECTION REPORT

ABACUS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wickford

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 133312

Headteacher: Gillian Brinded

Lead inspector: Peter Payne

Dates of inspection: 26th – 28th January 2004

Inspection number: 255286

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Community
School category:	Primary
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	158
School address:	Tresco Way The Wick Wickford Essex
Postcode:	SS12 9GJ
Telephone number:	01268 571018
Fax number:	01268 571027
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rod Smith
Date of previous inspection:	This is the first inspection

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Abacus Primary School is a new community school for boys and girls from 4 to 11, situated in Wickford, a rapidly developing community to the north of Basildon. It opened in September 2002 with 86 pupils on roll. This has risen rapidly to the current roll of 158 pupils, organised in seven classes. It is smaller than the average size of primary schools. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is very variable, ranging from some above average entrants in the Reception class to well below the national expectation for some of those pupils that joined the school into the older classes. Attainment on entry is therefore average overall. No pupils speak English as an additional language. One pupil has a statement of special educational need and the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs, at 8.5 per cent, is below the national average. Although the intake is socially mixed, the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
12155	Peter Payne	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Science, information and communication technology, art and design, music, physical education and personal, social and health education.
9619	Bob Miller	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
8696	Abul Maula	<i>Team inspector</i>	English, history and religious education.
19765	Pauleen Shannon	<i>Team inspector</i>	The Foundation Stage, special educational needs, mathematics, design and technology and geography.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school that provides a good standard of education. Leadership and management are good. The organisation and management of classes enable the school to respond to the rapidly changing roll. The curriculum is good. It is broad, well balanced and interesting. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The high quality of teaching and learning.
- The strong leadership and management.
- The very good attitudes, relationships and behaviour.
- The strong philosophy and practice of inclusion and equal opportunity.
- The strong partnership with the parents and the wider community.
- Standards in Years 5 and 6 are below average in English and mathematics.
- Writing standards are below average.
- The unsatisfactory attendance of a small minority of pupils has a negative impact on their learning.

The school opened in September 2002 and, in the five terms of its existence, it has made very rapid progress. This is the school's first inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	n/a	n/a	A*	A*
mathematics	n/a	n/a	A*	A*
science	n/a	n/a	E	E*

Key: A - very good; A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average; E* - very low. Similar schools are those with similar numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

There were only two pupils in Year 6 for the 2003 tests and each represents 50 per cent of the total. Both had been in the school for only two terms and the standards that they achieved cannot be attributed to the quality of the teaching and learning at this school. The achievement of pupils at the end of Year 2 was below average in reading and well below average in writing and mathematics.

The overall achievement of pupils is good. In Reception, the children's achievement is good. In their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world, most are on track to meet the goals that children are expected to reach by the end of Reception. It was not possible to make a secure judgement about their physical and creative development. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' achievement is good. In Year 2 they are now attaining the expected standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Achievement is also good in Years 3 and 4. Standards of attainment in Years 5 and 6 are still below average in English and mathematics, and average in science. Their standards attained in information and communication technology (ICT) are above expectations.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. They show a keen interest in school life and the range of opportunities on offer. Their behaviour and attitudes are very good. Attendance is unsatisfactory because of a small number of pupils taking holidays during term time. The school is making strenuous efforts to discourage this practice.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Teaching is good overall and almost half of it is very good. It is a particularly inclusive school where, because of the good subject knowledge and skilful use by teachers of strategies to question or explain issues in different ways to suit the needs of individuals, pupils' learning is good. There is good provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN). Pupils receive very good support from the learning support assistants who work closely with the class teachers. As a result pupils achieve well with their individual targets.

The curriculum is good. It is broad, well balanced and interesting. The range of learning opportunities and the opportunities for extension and enrichment through visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities are good. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good.

The school cares for its pupils very well and ensures that they work in a healthy and safe environment. They have very good access to well-informed support and guidance.

The school has a strong partnership with parents and the wider community. The school's facilities are used by a growing number of local organisations.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. She has provided the vision and strategies that have enabled the rapid development of the school. She is ably supported by her assistant head and other staff. The governing body is effective. They play an active part in the school life and give strong and highly committed support.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are highly satisfied with what the school provides and the progress that their children are making. They confirm that any worries or concerns are quickly and effectively dealt with. The school recognises that a small number of parents are concerned about bullying and the behaviour policy is currently under review.

The response from pupils revealed a real enthusiasm for their school. In discussion, they are keen to talk about the work that they do and are very proud of their achievements and their school. They say that they love coming to school because it is a very friendly and welcoming place.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Raise the standards and achievement in Years 5 and 6.
- Continue to develop the quality of writing across the school.
- Improve the attendance of a minority of pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards are now at least as expected in all subjects apart from English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6. Most pupils, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 to 4, achieve well. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained in ICT throughout the school are above expectations.
- Attainment in English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6 is below average.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.8	15.7
writing	11.9	14.6
mathematics	14.5	16.3

There were 13 pupils in the year group. Because this is a new school, there is no information from previous years.

1. The standards achieved by pupils in Year 2 in 2003 were below the national average, particularly in writing. However, any analysis of this information must be treated with caution because the tests were held after only two terms of the school's existence, and some of the pupils involved had been in school for a matter of weeks. Although the information might provide a base line, it cannot be directly attributed to the quality of the teaching and learning at this school. No table is included for pupils at the end of Year 6 because there were only two pupils in the group, both in school for only two terms before the tests were taken.
2. The overall achievement of pupils is good. Children entering the Reception class have a broad spread of attainment and their achievement is good. In their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world, most are on track to meet the goals that children are expected to reach by the end of Reception. It was not possible to make secure judgements about their physical and creative development.
3. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' achievement is good. In Year 2 they are now attaining the expected standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Achievement is also good in Years 3 and 4. The achievement of some pupils in Years 5 and 6 are still below average in English and mathematics, partly because these pupils have not been in the school long enough to benefit from the good quality of teaching.
4. Standards in other subjects are above expectations in art and ICT, and as expected in design and technology, history, geography and religious education. Because of the small amount of evidence gathered, it is not possible to make judgements about standards in music and physical education.
5. The pupils' literacy and numeracy skills enhance their work in other subjects, particularly in science, geography, history and religious education. Their developing skills in ICT are used to support work across most subjects. Because of the high expectation of their teachers and their

personal motivation, most pupils, particularly in the younger classes, achieve the standards of which they are capable. Pupils with SEN achieve their targets well. Some pupils with emotional and behavioural needs make very good progress. In Year 2 and Year 6 most pupils with SEN for learning remain below average in their literacy and numeracy skills.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Provision for pupils' personal development is very good. It is very good for the moral and cultural aspects and good for the spiritual and social elements. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good. Attendance is unsatisfactory but most pupils are punctual.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school takes very positive action in an effort to promote good attendance.
- Pupils show a very keen interest in school life and the range of opportunities on offer.
- The school sets very high expectations of behaviour and promotes good relationships very well.
- Pupils are gaining a very good appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions.
- The authorised rate of absence is unsatisfactory.
- The efforts of some parents and carers to ensure the attendance of their children are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

6. Children say that they love coming to school and their parents agree. This is largely because the school is a very friendly and welcoming place. Staff set high expectations of behaviour and act as good role models. They promote good relationships throughout the school. Pupils work productively together and show a very keen interest in their lessons and in activities outside of the school day. They say that adults treat them fairly. Parents say, and inspectors agree, that staff encourage their child to become mature and independent. This produces confident pupils with positive self-esteem. Behaviour is very good and there have been no exclusions.

7. Most pupils with SEN work hard and have positive attitudes to learning. The school works hard to build the confidence of some pupils who have either low self-esteem or behaviour difficulties. Pupils say that adults really help them to learn. A small number of older pupils with behavioural needs occasionally become restless when the lesson is not a practical subject. Staff work very hard to include these pupils, using lots of praise and encouragement.

8. Pupils have a very good appreciation of their own culture as well as a good knowledge and understanding of the cultural traditions of other pupils in the school. For instance, in the Year 1 class, a housing theme includes models of trailers used by Traveller children and their families.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.1	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

9. The vast majority of pupils have very positive attitudes to school and learning. The authorised absence rate is above the national average for similar schools. The main reason for this high figure is the number of families that persist in taking holidays in term time. These prolonged absences have an adverse effect on the attainment and achievement of those children concerned. They place additional demands upon conscientious teachers who strive to cover the work that is missed, and on the working groups of pupils that miss key members of their teams. The school is very rigorous in its effort to reduce the number of these extended family holidays. It promotes the benefits of good attendance very well.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Strengths include the sustained good quality of teaching and learning, the very high expectations of diligence and behaviour and the strong partnerships with the parents and community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment systems are good and are used well to raise standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teachers have good and, in some cases, very good subject knowledge.
- They use open-ended questioning effectively.
- Lessons are well planned and resourced.
- Teachers foster pupils' very positive attitudes to learning.
- They manage pupils and their behaviour very well.
- There is some inconsistency in the use of plenary sessions.
- A lack of confidence in their recording skills impedes learning for a minority of pupils.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 33 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	16 (48%)	17 (52%)	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

10. Teaching is good, with just under half judged to be very good. It is very good in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Teaching in other subjects is consistently good.

11. Effective questioning rooted in teachers' good subject knowledge, thoughtful planning and imaginative use of resources has a positive impact on pupils' learning, though opportunities for them to take initiative are sometimes limited. Where teaching is very good, the pace of work is brisk and pupils of all abilities are kept actively involved in the learning process. This was evident on several occasions including a Year 1 lesson when the use of role-play impacted on pupils' participation and consolidation of their understanding of a character from a story. Teachers maintain an orderly atmosphere, insisting that pupils listen to them and to each other. Learning support assistants, though limited in number, contribute well to this process through their thoughtful interventions. Pupils are well motivated and demonstrate a great deal of enthusiasm and very good standards of behaviour. Most pupils throughout the school work well together, showing well developed co-operative and collaborative skills. They are capable of sustaining concentration and making meaningful contributions to discussion. This is a significant factor in the quality of their learning and achievement. There is no significant gender or ethnic difference in pupils' learning.

12. Well-developed assessment procedures are in place, and an effective tracking system has recently been introduced. These enable teachers to monitor pupils' progress in the core subjects including ICT and to use this information in subsequent planning. Assessment in religious education and the foundation subjects is at an early stage of development. There is emphasis on self-evaluation. The school has started preparing pupils well for national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6.

13. Pupils with SEN are well taught in lessons. Younger pupils have daily support from a learning support assistant and older pupils are taught in small classes. They have additional targeted support

within classes. Teachers know the pupils very well and use assessment information effectively to plan the next steps of their learning. Other adults such as the supply teacher, the assistant special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and learning support assistant give very good support throughout the school. They are particularly skilful at helping pupils with any behavioural needs overcome their difficulties and return to their tasks. Their positive manner encourages pupils to persevere with their learning. They make a significant contribution to the pupils' learning. Pupils with particular gifts or talents are identified. Appropriate provision is made for them and their achievement is good.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. It consists of a broad and well-balanced programme of interesting activities that meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the agreed syllabus for religious education. The curriculum for children under five is good. There are good opportunities for pupils to engage in activities outside the school day. Accommodation is very good. The school is well resourced.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is planned very well.
- It is particularly inclusive.
- Provision for PSHE is good.

Commentary

14. The curriculum is well constructed and balanced. A long-term plan ensures that topics are introduced systematically and a considerable strength is the identification of links and connections made between subjects wherever it is appropriate to do so. Often, a common theme is carried through the work in several subjects. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are firmly established and have already been modified in the light of experience to better suit the needs of pupils.

15. Provision for pupils with SEN is good, ensuring that they achieve well. The school is committed to educational inclusion and ensures that all pupils have equal access to the wide range of opportunities that it provides. A strong feature is the school's imaginative approaches to tailoring different aspects of the curriculum to help individual pupils. For example, the school adapts the personal health programme to help particular children achieve their social and communication targets. Extra activities such as the daily *Gym Trails* help with co-ordination and concentration. They improve these pupils' self-esteem, by giving them a very positive start to the day. Although the provision for gifted and talented pupils is good, the school rightly identifies the need to do more to support them.

16. The programme of PSHE is a growing strength of the curriculum. Many of the issues and structures that underpin the school's objectives are addressed by the programme and are taught at the appropriate point in the pupils' development. Sex and relationships, and alcohol and drug misuse are included. Pupils value the opportunities afforded by circle time to raise concerns and share ideas.

17. The extra-curricular clubs and activities are developing well. Teachers and other adults from the community give freely of their time to enrich the pupils' experiences. The association of the school with the Wick Country Park provides a rich resource for both learning and recreation. There are good links with departments of the neighbouring secondary school.

18. Accommodation is very good and very good use is made of it. Although the hall is spacious, its acoustic quality is poor, and has yet to be remedied. Resources to support learning are good and are very good in the Foundation Stage. Resources are very good in ICT, although lack of

connection to broadband technology restricts development. Resources are very good in mathematics and good in all the other subjects, with the exception of history, where they are satisfactory. The school has made a major investment in ICT equipment and staff training that has underpinned the quality of its contribution to teaching and learning.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, support and health and safety is very good. The school involves pupils well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good procedures in place to ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment.
- Pupils have very good access to well-informed support, advice and guidance.
- Induction arrangements for children starting school are very good.

Commentary

19. Policies and practices relating to health and safety and child protection are very well considered and properly carried out.

20. Staff know their pupils well, and recognise and respond to their individual needs. Close monitoring by staff of pupils' personal and academic achievement ensures that they receive very good support, advice and guidance at appropriate times when passing through the school. Pupils help to set their own targets for improvement. They are able to influence the development and decision-making through the work of the pupil council.

21. The school has a very positive learning environment and great care is taken to ensure that pupils with SEN are fully included in all activities. There are very good arrangements in place when these pupils enter or leave the school. The school has good systems for identifying, assessing and supporting pupils. The targets, in the pupils' education plans, are specific, suitably challenging yet realistic. They include targets for literacy, numeracy and social skills. However, some plans are not reviewed often enough. Staff work very hard to support pupils with emotional and behavioural needs.

22. New pupils are helped to settle in quickly. A very good induction process for parents of pre-school children includes a home-visit by the Reception class teacher and learning support assistant. This is well received by parents and has a positive impact on children's subsequent personal development and achievement. Pupils say there is always someone they can go to for help.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are very good partnerships with parents and neighbouring schools. Links with the community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of information for parents is very good.
- The school is very good at involving parents, seeking their views and valuing them.
- There are very good procedures for dealing with complaints.

Commentary

23. Parents are highly satisfied with what the school provides and the progress their children are making. They say teaching is good and that children behave well. A small number of parents believe their child is bullied or harassed at school. The school has recognised this and the behaviour policy is currently under review. Parents say that the school is well led and managed and that staff expect their child to work hard and to do their best. Most parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem. The headteacher and her staff are highly visible at the beginning and end of the school day. This ensures that any worries or concerns that parents may have can be quickly and effectively dealt with.

24. The school involves parents very well in matters of school improvement. A parent council has been formed which meets at regular intervals to discuss issues such as school uniform and bullying. The *Friends of Abacus Primary School* raise substantial amounts of money to purchase resources such as playground equipment. Consultation has taken place with parents concerning the games children should play indoors during periods of wet weather, the purchasing of books and the types of trees to be planted in and around the school.

25. Parents of pupils with SEN are invited to attend reviews and have regular informal opportunities to talk about their children's learning. They are kept well informed regarding any new targets so that they can help their children at home. Good use is made of homework books to share information on a regular basis.

26. The information provided for parents is of a very high standard. Academic reports concerning pupils' standards and progress are very helpful and supplied to parents twice a year. Information on an outside school notice board and on display in the foyer help to keep parents up-to-date with news of events. A school newsletter supplements this information but there is a lack of regular curriculum information to enable parents to help their child's learning at home. The school prospectus and annual report from governors to parents are both comprehensive documents. Curriculum evenings for parents have been held for literacy, numeracy and ICT. There is a good attendance at these events by interested parents. A well-attended behaviour management course has been organised for parents of children in the Foundation Stage.

27. There are very good links with other schools in the area. Visits to local pre-school groups take place regularly and staff make themselves known to prospective pupils. An invitation is extended to these families to visit school and see the facilities. Many do so.

28. The school and its staff meet regularly with other primary and secondary staff and they share and exchange expertise and best practice. The school makes good use of secondary resources by having planned visits from a science teacher to Year 6 pupils and an ICT technician to help develop the computer suite. These links are helping with school improvement and ensuring a smooth transition to the next stage of education for the older pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school by the senior staff and governors are good. The governors discharge their responsibilities well. The leadership and vision of the headteacher are excellent. She is ably supported by her colleagues.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides particularly strong leadership.
- All who work in the school share the same vision and sense of purpose.
- The governing body is well organised and effective.
- There is commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity by adults and children alike.

Commentary

29. The governing body is effective. Governors play an active part in the school life and they give strong and highly committed support. The committee structure is logical and well organised with clear terms of reference. It has already been modified in the light of experience. The governors receive good quality information about the school's performance and have a clear vision for its strategic development. The minutes of their meetings demonstrate that they fulfil their statutory duties. The educational priorities are established by staff and governors working closely together.

30. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. She provides the vision and leadership that has ensured the rapid development of the school. She is well supported by her assistant headteacher and the other staff and governors, who have a strong commitment to the development of the school and to the raising of standards. They share a clear sense of direction and purpose.

31. The school's aims and values are published widely. The behaviour, diligence and high quality of relationships at all levels around the school demonstrate the commitment of pupils and adults to live up to them. The school is an inclusive community committed to policies and practices that make sure that every pupil is included and able to take part in all of the lessons and other activities. The school is fully accessible for disabled pupils.

32. A comprehensive programme of performance management for teachers is in place. The headteacher, assistant headteacher and some of the subject managers monitor the quality of teaching in classrooms by observing lessons and by evaluating the work of pupils. This supports the less experienced teachers in discussing their progress and developing their skills. Continuing professional development is a strong feature and due consideration is given to the needs of both the individual and the school. There is a very good induction process and programme of support for new staff.

33. The school makes very good use of internal testing and uses the information to establish realistic and challenging performance targets for pupils in all classes.

34. The management of SEN is very good. The headteacher and assistant SENCO work closely together and give clear leadership and support to the rest of the staff. The budget is used effectively. The learning support staff are confident, knowledgeable and a real asset to the school. In the short time the school has been open it has put in place imaginative strategies tailored to support individual children's needs. The school regularly liaises with external agencies. There is a named governor with responsibility for SEN.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	293,615.00
Total expenditure	268,459.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,148.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	10,050.00
Balance carried forward to the next	35,206.00

35. These figures are not a reliable indicator, representing only seven twelfths of the annual budget during the establishment of the new school during a period of very rapidly expanding roll. It includes a substantial element of initial funding. The amount of money carried forward in the accounts is relatively high, but it includes elements of establishment costs which are still to be resolved.

36. The financial management of the school is good. The finance committee of governors is provided with accurate information through analysis of the monthly monitoring statements. Funds are directed to the priority areas and, when necessary, firm action is taken to avoid overspending. The recent appointment of a responsible officer to oversee a broad range of governance issues for compliance and probity is to be applauded. The governors' policy of achieving best value in their transactions is very effective.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation stage is **good** and is a considerable strength of the school. Children are very well taught and, as a result, get off to a flying start.

Overview

37. Admission arrangements are very effective and ensure that children settle quickly. Parents are very pleased with how well their children settle. There are very good links with the local Nursery and Playgroup. Home visits and pre-school sessions also help staff to establish needs before the children start at school.

38. The management of the Foundation Stage is good. The subject leader plans an imaginative curriculum. Interesting topics such as the current theme of *Incy Wincy Spider* link the different areas of learning so that the children are keen to learn. Accommodation, while good, has some shortcomings. The outside area needs further development. It has no large fixed climbing equipment for children to further their physical skills on a daily basis. Plans are in place to address this.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because teaching and learning are focused on promoting children's confidence and independence.

Commentary

39. Teaching is very good, and, as a result, children make very good progress and achieve well in their social development. Most children are on course to exceed their Early Learning Goals by the end of their Reception year.

40. Children enter Reception with a wide range of ability. Most have appropriate social skills. Reception staff establish secure routines so that children feel safe and secure. The staff are very caring and use every opportunity to praise children's independence. Children have frequent opportunities to decide for themselves what activity they will undertake. They sort out the registers and organise snack time. They have their own individual targets and make their own suggestions for how to improve their work. Staff have very high expectations of children's behaviour. Children respond very well to this and their behaviour and attitudes are very good. Older children play with Reception children at lunchtimes; this gives them confidence. Reception children are eager to start the day and to learn.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because teaching and learning are focused on developing children's skills through an interesting curriculum.
- The teacher and learning support assistant take every opportunity to develop the children's language skills.
- The reading area is small, which limits children's opportunity to use it.

Commentary

41. Children enter Reception with a wide range of ability. Most have appropriate skills with a few having underdeveloped skills. Teaching is very good, and, as a result, children make rapid progress and achieve well. Assessment information is used very effectively to take learning forward. Most children are on course to exceed their Early Learning Goals by the end of their Reception year.

42. Daily opportunities are provided to extend children's speaking and listening skills. Children are praised when they listen to each other. Staff encourage less confident children to talk in sentences and more fluent communicators to extend their vocabulary. Children know that the adults are interested in what they say.

43. Both staff consistently establish very good reading habits. Children are helped to learn their words and sounds in an imaginative and lively way. The use of puppets and actions from the *Jolly Phonics* programme helps children remember their sounds. When children write sentences they sing the rhymes and make the actions. While a good range of books is available, the seating area is small. Therefore, there is limited room for children to just sit and read books.

44. Many opportunities are provided for children to write. The imaginative play areas are used well to encourage children's writing skills. During choice times children write food orders in the café area, or post letters to each other. Handwriting skills are well taught and most children form their letters fluently.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because teaching and learning are focused on developing children's skills through a practical curriculum.
- Every opportunity is grasped in all activities to promote children's mathematical development.

Commentary

45. Children enter Reception with a wide range of skills in mathematical development. Most have appropriate skills with a few having underdeveloped skills. Teaching is very good, and, as a result, children make rapid progress and achieve well. This area is very well taught, with a focus on first hand activities. Most children are on course to exceed their Early Learning Goals by the end of their Reception year.

46. Reception staff take every opportunity to reinforce and extend children's mathematical skills and language. Number awareness is often promoted through number rhymes and games. This

engages the interest of boys and girls, most of whom join in enthusiastically. The classroom is often a buzz of activity. Children squealed with delight as they caught and counted *number spiders*. Sand and larger mathematical equipment are in constant use.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well because of very good teaching which is focused on developing children's skills through an imaginative curriculum.
- There is no investigation area set up for children to explore informally.

Commentary

47. Children enter Reception with differing knowledge and understanding of the world. This area is very well taught, with a focus on first hand practical activities. As a result, children make rapid progress and achieve very well. Most children are on course to exceed their Early Learning Goals by the end of their Reception year.

48. Curriculum plans show that staff provide an interesting range of first hand practical experiences through topics. Children learn about themselves, their local area and living things. Parents make a significant contribution to their children's learning, sending in work as part of projects. Within the classroom there is no ongoing investigation table with objects, such as kaleidoscopes or magnifying glasses, for children to explore informally. Staff extend children's knowledge of different cultures very well. They learn about festivals during the year. When they entered an assembly organised under fabric covers as a large Chinese dragon, their delight was evident. Computer skills are well taught, with children learning how to control toys and make them move. Both boys and girls have positive attitudes to computers. They regularly use the laptop computer in the classroom and the equipment in the ICT suite next door.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

There is no judgement about the overall provision in teaching and learning, standards or achievement as no lessons were seen. Planning is good.

Commentary

49. The teacher plans regular sessions to help children to develop their physical skills and to learn to respond to music. The outside area does not have large fixed equipment to help children to extend their physical skills. This is a school priority.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

There is no judgement about the overall provision in teaching and learning, standards or achievement as no lessons were seen. Planning is good.

Commentary

50. There are many opportunities for children to develop their creativity and skills. There are many planned opportunities to paint, draw and make models. Staff develop children's skills and creativity through imaginative play experiences. Children have many opportunities to sing rhymes and explore musical instruments. Regular singing is very much a part of every day and children join in enthusiastically!

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reading standards are good in Years 1 and 2, as are speaking skills throughout the school.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The range and quality of resources are good.
- Leadership and management are effective.
- Standards are below average at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Writing skills are not fully developed.

Commentary

51. Inspection findings suggest that the school's efforts to develop pupils' reading and speaking skills have succeeded. However, standards in writing leave room for improvement. This is consistent with the school's self-evaluation. Effective teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to learning enable many of them in all ability groups to achieve well overall in the subject. There is no significant gender or ethnic difference in their learning or achievement. The key stage variation in standards is considered to be a cohort issue where pupils in the current Year 6 have not had sufficient benefit of the good teaching in this school.

52. Pupils develop their speaking and listening skills in a variety of contexts including presentations in assemblies. Teachers encourage them to share their views with their peers and contribute to discussion. The opportunity to speak to an audience enables most pupils to consolidate their vocabulary, though they have not learnt how to project their voice appropriately. Other opportunities to promote pupils' speaking and listening skills include role-play, drama, circle time and the school council. Teachers' high expectations of pupils and their ability to sustain concentration make a good contribution to the development of listening skills.

53. Reading enjoys a high profile in the school and pupils are provided with good models. Younger pupils benefit from the well-established practice of teaching letter sounds and how they are combined to form words. These skills enable them to read with a fair amount of accuracy and understanding by the end of Year 2. There is room for improvement in the reading standards of some Year 5 and 6 pupils, but many pupils in other year groups demonstrate the ability to read with accuracy and a developing awareness of how authors structure their stories. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to develop their library skills. They read with understanding from an early age and many show an awareness of key features of a text such as 'title' and 'heading'. Pupils benefit from a reading scheme and strategies such as guided reading, though many read with limited expression. Their home reading diaries do not always include comments from an adult.

54. Pupils throughout school write for a variety of purposes including giving instructions and developing stories, though their standards in writing do not match those they have achieved in reading. By the end of Year 2, pupils learn to write an explanation of an activity with higher attainers paying appropriate attention to grammar and punctuation. By the end of Year 6, many develop skills of editing and improving a descriptive passage by using appropriate vocabulary such as adjectives. There is evidence of some older pupils writing and role-playing play-scripts based on parables, and some younger ones re-writing traditional tales. Pupils in Year 5 write a myth plan using structures and themes identified in reading. Those in Years 3 and 4 develop a storyboard and create a fantasy world using similes, though a significant minority has difficulty with spelling and developing description independently. Some pupils' handwriting and presentation leave room for improvement.

55. Teaching is good, and sometimes very good. Lessons are well planned and resourced, reflecting teachers' good subject knowledge and the use of a variety of approaches. Teachers' effective questioning and explanations enhance pupils' response whilst ensuring their understanding of tasks. In very good teaching, tasks are well matched to pupils' ability and activities are varied to sustain their interest and concentration. All of this impacts positively on pupils' learning. They are well motivated, enthusiastic and respond positively to their teachers' high expectations. This was noted on several occasions including a Year 2 lesson where the use of role-play consolidated pupils' understanding of a story. The teacher's careful organisation and use of appropriate resources in another lesson enabled pupils to understand how a text is structured. Most pupils are well behaved and show good co-operative and collaborative skills.

56. The subject benefits from effective leadership and management. The National Literacy Strategy is well established, although, in some lessons, the use of the plenary session could be further developed. It is well resourced, and additional emphasis on literacy involving the use of letter sounds and other support strategies enriches pupils' learning opportunities. These include homework. Good monitoring and assessment procedures are in place including the recently introduced tracking system, and there is evidence of assessment informing planning. The school's action plan reflects a good awareness of the subject's strengths and what needs developing further. Writing and improvement of standards in Years 5 and 6 are both current priorities for development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Stories and topics used in literacy within a word-rich environment make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is emphasis on the use of literacy skills in other subjects, and most pupils are encouraged to use ICT to develop their literacy skills.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching and learning.
- Marking and assessment are detailed and helpful to pupils.
- There is a strong focus on developing pupils' numeracy skills.
- There is insufficient emphasis on problem solving.
- In some lessons there is not enough time to complete the set work.
- Leadership and management are good.

58. Pupils throughout the school achieve well. Pupils with SEN achieve well because adults know their needs and give them very good support in lessons. Boys and girls are making similar progress in lessons. Standards in mathematics in the current Year 2 are average. They are below average in Year 6.

59. Teaching throughout the school is good, and half is very good. The teaching of younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 is consistently very good. Both teachers use adult support very well. All learning starts with practical activities. This particularly helps less confident pupils understand and practise their skills. Pupils enjoy these sessions. Whether weighing items or measuring parts of the furniture, pupils really persevere, work well together and, consequently, achieve well. Occasionally, pupils reverse their numbers and the habit is not always corrected.

60. As a new school, many pupils entered the older classes with different skills and understanding. A strength of the teaching of the older pupils is the way that teachers match the work to the very wide range of ability. Assessment is thorough and used very well to plan challenging work for the different groups. The recently introduced assessment books clearly show

pupils and parents the progress pupils make over time. Marking in books is consistently thorough and helpful. Pupils receive very good ongoing feedback and guidance in lessons, with individual targets to aim for. Consequently, most pupils are clear about what they need to do next to improve their work.

61. The school has recognised, and is responding to, the need to develop the pupils' numeracy skills. For example, its drive to improve pupils' mental computation skills is having a marked impact on their confidence and ability. Throughout the school pupils are encouraged to explain their thinking, using precise mathematical language. In a very well taught lesson, the teacher used an interactive whiteboard most effectively to encourage pupils to explain the properties of three-dimensional shapes.

62. Work scrutiny shows that pupils have had limited practice in applying their skills to solving problems. The school has recently increased these opportunities. This needs further development. The balance in some lessons means that pupils do not always have sufficient time to complete the work given. Although pupils are taught concepts well, this limits their opportunity to consolidate, extend their learning or record all their work.

63. The acting subject leader is enthusiastic and committed. She has identified the improvements needed to raise standards further and is taking appropriate steps to address them. She provides good leadership and support. She guides the staff well in agreeing which aspects to focus on in order to further improve pupils' attainment.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. Pupils use their mathematical skills in other subjects to measure and calculate accurately. For example, they use graphs for census work on the Victorian era in history, record temperatures in science and weigh and measure in design and technology. Mathematics lessons are timetabled for the ICT suite on a regular basis and good use is made of the interactive whiteboards in the classrooms.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good. It is both effective and challenging.
- Standards were below average, but are improving rapidly because of the good teaching.
- Marking is very positive and effective.
- Pupils are interested in their science lessons and they work effectively in groups.
- Attitudes and behaviour are both very good.
- ICT is not used extensively by the pupils.

Commentary

65. Pupils are enthusiastic about science and respond very positively to the encouragement of their teachers, working hard and achieving well. At the end of Year 2 in 2003, the pupils were assessed by their teacher to be well below the expected standard, but none of them had been in the school for more than two terms, and some for only a few weeks. The work of the current Year 2 pupils shows that the majority are achieving the expected standards and that some are likely to exceed them. There were only two pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2003, one well above and one well below the national average. The work of the current Year 6 group of eight pupils suggests that over half will attain the expected standard in the national tests. In both cases, the pupils have benefited

from good teaching, though those in Year 6 may not have had sufficient time to make the necessary good progress.

66. In both the Infant and Junior classes, the teaching was good. The pupils were challenged and expected to use their understanding of scientific principles and apply them to new situations. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and their use of precise scientific terms allows them to teach confidently and accurately. They have developed a style of questioning which enables pupils to consider the scientific issues, to discuss their ideas confidently in groups and to express them to the whole class. Marking enables the pupils to understand what needs to be done to improve their work. Because of the good teaching strategies, pupils are able to make choices and decisions. Teachers listen to what pupils say and show that they value their opinions. A great strength of the science teaching is the use of investigative techniques and a real sense of discovery. This was particularly well demonstrated in a Year 2 lesson where pupils investigating the behaviour of a toy car running down a ramp, came to their conclusions through trial, error, discussion and, finally, consensus.

67. Pupils are genuinely interested in their science lessons. They enjoy being young scientists and have a very good appreciation of scientific methods. They are confident and eager to explain their work and they do so with a good grasp of scientific vocabulary. Their positive attitudes and ability to work together in groups are both very strong features of work in science and they are able to develop their ideas well.

68. The subject leader is new to the whole-school role, and the management of the subject is satisfactory. The resources are appropriate and of high quality. Although ICT is used well to introduce and support the lessons, it is not used extensively by the pupils, for example, to record their findings or convert them into graphs.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment across the school are high.
- ICT tools are used effectively to support and enhance most curriculum areas.
- The subject is very well managed.

69. Only one dedicated ICT lesson was observed during the inspection. However, inspectors saw ICT used very extensively in other lessons, talked with pupils, examined their work and scrutinised teachers' planning. Pupils throughout the school attain at levels higher than those expected nationally. Children in Reception work confidently with the floor robot, and are amazed and excited when it obeys their instructions. Year 2 pupils are proficient at basic word-processing skills, are able to save their work and to print it. They talk confidently about the wide range of uses of technology in school and in their homes. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are knowledgeable users of the Internet and other sources of information for research. They present their findings by using a range of techniques including digital pictures. They can discuss the merits of using ICT to make things happen and are aware of its uses in the world in general. Pupils' confidence in using ICT is good throughout the school. Pupils with SEN make good progress, particularly when they have a teaching assistant with them at the computer to keep their thinking focused.

70. In a successful Year 4 lesson, pupils used the Microsoft Word 97™ word-processing program to reorganise and change text. In a very impressive opening session, they were keen to demonstrate what they had learned in earlier sessions by using a laptop computer linked to an interactive whiteboard. Few pupils were reluctant to volunteer, indicating a good level of skills. Their individual tasks were well prepared and carefully chosen to match abilities, with extension activities to challenge the more able. Pupils' attitudes were very positive and they all worked confidently. They were pleased by the results that they achieved. The teaching was positive and confident, based

upon very good knowledge of the program and excellent skills of questioning and enabling choices to be made.

71. Despite only one dedicated lesson seen, taking into account the extensive use in other lessons and the full range of evidence collected, teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants have been able to develop their own skills and they are able to teach with confidence and good technical knowledge. Teachers use laptop computers extensively for their planning, lesson resources and assessment records. Their use of open-ended questions and their positive and encouraging style enables pupils to develop their skills and understanding.

72. The management of ICT is very effective. The school has invested a considerable amount of money and training in ICT to provide high quality opportunities for the pupils although, inexplicably, it is unable to connect to and exploit the benefits of broadband technologies. The computer suite provides the opportunity for pupils to learn and practise new skills as a class and this, together with the professional development of teachers and other adults, contributes to the success of the subject.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. Although it is under used in science, good use is generally made of ICT is throughout the school and in many other subjects. For example, digital cameras are used in geography; recorded music is used extensively and pupils record their own compositions; word-processing is commonplace and the Internet is an increasingly familiar resource for information.

HUMANITIES

These subjects were not a focus for the inspection. In humanities, work was sampled in **history** and **geography**. Only one lesson of geography and no lessons of history were seen. It is therefore not possible to form an overall judgement about provision.

74. In the geography lesson seen, the teaching was good and the teacher encouraged correct use of geographical vocabulary. Pupils worked hard, clearly enjoyed the topic and all achieved well, including those with SEN. There is every indication from the scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussion with pupils that standards are at least as expected in Year 2 and broadly as expected by Year 6. The curriculum planned makes a good contribution to pupils' understanding and appreciation of other places and cultures. An evident strength is the link made with other subjects in order to make geography interesting and relevant. Good use is made of trips and visits, such as to Wick Country Park, to develop pupils' environmental awareness. The subject is well led and managed.

75. The requirements of the National Curriculum for history are met. No direct teaching or learning was observed. Judgements are, therefore, based on work sampling, an analysis of policy, curriculum planning, display and discussion with staff and pupils. However, teachers' planning reflects good subject knowledge, strong cross-curricular links and, as display suggests, effective use of resources to extend pupils' learning. There is evidence of pupils using their literacy skills and undertaking some research involving the use of ICT to develop their historical knowledge, skills and understanding. Visits to places such as Colchester Castle make a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. Subject management is satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assemblies and visitors make a positive contribution.
- Teaching and learning are good.

- The written record of pupils' work is limited.
- Opportunities to visit places of worship are limited.

Commentary

76. By the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils are developing an understanding of the patterns of the natural world and how they relate to the creation stories associated with the major religions. Younger pupils demonstrate an appropriate understanding of Bible stories, particularly those relating to Jesus and John the Baptist. By the end of Year 2, pupils know how some Christian families baptise a new baby and what the work of a Christian minister involves. Generally, pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major faiths such as Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism match expectations of the agreed syllabus, and the majority of them achieve well in this respect, at least at the oral level.

77. Teaching observed reflects good subject knowledge. Teachers pay appropriate attention to the use and meaning of words associated with religious festivals such as Harvest, Diwali and Hanukkah. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are encouraged to share their views on different religious practices. Most pupils respond positively showing respect for religions other than their own, although there is limited written record of their religious activities. The oral focus, however, enables pupils of all abilities to participate in the activity. There is no significant gender or ethnic difference in pupils' learning in religious education.

78. The programme of religious activities is consistent with the requirements of the agreed syllabus. Assemblies highlighting celebrations and festivals across cultures make a good contribution to pupils' religious awareness and understanding. This is evident in the themes covered throughout the year. All of this is a clear indication of the good contribution the subject makes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Resources include the use of visitors from the local church, but visits to places of worship are limited. Opportunities to track progress are included in the individual assessment folder. The subject leader has a clear understanding of what needs to be developed, as evident in her action plan, which is aimed at raising the profile of the subject by monitoring teaching and learning and strengthening links with the community.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils produce finished artwork of good quality.
- The range of materials and resources available to teachers and pupils is very good.
- Skills and techniques are developed as the pupils move through the school.
- Good use is made of ICT.

Commentary

79. Only two art lessons were sampled, and in these the quality of teaching and learning was at least good. However, it is clear from a scrutiny of sketchbooks, finished artwork and the rich abundance of art on display around the school that teaching is good overall and that pupils achieve high standards. The quality of artwork achieved by individual pupils and by classes is very good and is displayed with great care about the school. It includes three-dimensional work of high quality. Increasing use is being made of ICT for research and to present ideas and images to pupils.

80. The range of experiences offered to pupils is broad. They are able to experience and explore an impressive range of activities from drawing, painting and printing to three-dimensional modelling and sculpture. The programme is designed and planned to enable the pupils to develop their artistic skills and build upon their earlier experience. Art is used very extensively to support and enhance the other subjects of the curriculum. Opportunities are taken to draw inspiration and technical skills from the art of other cultures and the work of established artists. Art makes a very valuable contribution to the spiritual and cultural development of the pupils.

81. The subject is well managed. The subject leader has good technical expertise and is able to support colleagues with advice and resources. Planning for art across the school is logical and well structured. The range of activities is ambitious. Resources are very good for drawing, painting, printing and three-dimensional work.

Design and technology, music and physical education

Design and technology, music and physical education were not a focus for the inspection. Lessons and work were sampled in design and technology and physical education. No music lessons were seen. It is therefore not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in these subjects.

82. In the three lessons of design and technology seen, teaching was good. The lessons were very practical and clearly enjoyed by all pupils, who achieved well. There is every indication from pupils' work and discussion with pupils that standards are at least average in Year 2 and broadly average by Year 6. The curriculum covers the requirements of the National Curriculum, with appropriate planning for the mixed age classes and a focus on practical first hand experiences.

83. Pupils throughout the school are encouraged to make use of their writing, speaking and listening, mathematical and drawing skills to extend their design and technology skills. A review of work on display and pupils' books shows that older pupils experience the planned curriculum, with some evidence of pupils evaluating and modifying their work. Books show that the marking by teachers is detailed and helpful. The subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' social skills as they have regular opportunities to share equipment and work together. The lunchtime club, run by a parent, motivates pupils and gives older pupils the opportunity to design vehicles to a high standard. The subject leader has an action plan in place and a recording scheme has been introduced to ensure that skills are built on progressively.

84. Short observations of Year 2 pupils playing their percussion compositions and of a Year 5 and 6 class playing xylophone compositions using chords, demonstrated work of good quality. After school, the choir sang a range of technically demanding songs very well.

85. The physical education teaching observed was very good. Pupils were appropriately dressed for each activity, helped by very clear instructions and good demonstrations. They were managed well. As a result, their behaviour was very good and they took part with great enthusiasm. The school has not been able to be involved in competitive team sports so far because of the very small numbers in the significant year groups. Resources for all aspects of physical education are good. Opportunities for extra-curricular involvement, particularly in football, netball and athletics, are good. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in PSHE is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Personal, social and health education is given a high priority throughout the school.
- The subject plays a major part in the school's approach to developing the social and personal attributes and skills of its pupils.
- Pupils of all ages, from the youngest children in the Reception class to the oldest in Year 6, respond very positively.

Commentary

86. The programme of PSHE is thorough. Many of the issues and structures that underpin the school's objectives are contained in the programme and are taught at the appropriate point in the pupils' development. The programme includes units on drugs misuse and sex and relationships education. The latter has recently been reviewed. There is considerable flexibility to allow activities such as circle time to address issues of immediate concern to the children in a secure and supportive way.

87. A very notable strength of PSHE is the way in which every person is included and respected. Discussion with groups of pupils during breaks revealed their appreciation and confidence in being able to talk through a range of issues and occasional concerns in an open and democratic way. The activities make a very strong contribution to the social, moral and spiritual development of the pupils.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	N/A
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	5
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).